

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



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Staying connected

All my life I have been torn between giving all my time to one activity or another. Why can't I do it all? There is so much to do – I don't want to miss out. I remember my mother saying many, many years ago that I would be 'burned out' before I was 30.

My family has always been very important to me. I am happiest when my sons 'talk' to me regularly. Rarely is this a phone call when they are away from home – but a WhatsApp picture from Tom to show me the sunrise as he flies over Barcelona, a message from James about the next stage of his research, one from Jon (daily) about his flat or his work or almost anything and from Ben about his studies at uni or his friends – these connect me, albeit very briefly to their worlds. I don't know if they know how much pleasure this gives me. Even though they mostly don't live at home any more, they 'absorb' me. As any parent knows, you are always there when problems arise or just because you love them and are interested in what they are doing. And over the years, combining their health, welfare, schooling and activities with full-time employment has often been challenging.

My work – my day job in book publishing that is – involves both editorial and sales. I can never choose between them which I prefer. They are bound up with each other. While I am at a bookfair I get real joy and satisfaction over shared vision and a sale that is made. I enjoy making a relationship with the editor who comes to me to

discuss that new book. A sale made where that relationship, that connection, is not made (for whatever reason) is not as fulfilling. And while I am preparing the follow up and quotations after the sales trip (as I am now after the Bologna Bookfair) my mind is already working on the next book ideas or revisions to the existing projects.

My relationship with God and my church life has been very important through all of these things. It has not been separate from everything else I do; they too are bound up with everything else. Since I have been 'in Tring' – I don't live in Tring, in fact, but in a different county and diocese! – I have been a member at All Saints, Long Marston and then St Peter & St Paul. It is only more recently that I have been able to 'do' more actively. And the more I have done, the more I want to do. Serving on committees, taking part in Church services, being involved in the Friends of Tring Church Heritage, the charity walk for Christian Aid, Lent and Advent Housegroups and being involved with Comment – all these have connected me to the wider family of the church and through them I have grown to know people better as I have worked alongside them.

I have often felt throughout life 'an outsider', as if I don't really 'belong' in the way others seem to. I feel safest when I have a role as I do in home or work or church. Then just before Easter, our Rector, Huw Bellis, announced that he had made little rough wooden

crosses for everyone to take home with them. But he realized he had not made enough – and would have more during Holy Week. He asked



those who intended to come to other services over the next few days to hold back – FHB or Family Hold Back – and I realized I was Family here in church too. I belong. Of course I knew in my head that by being part of the church I was part of God's family and connected to all other members of that family. But at that moment I felt 'strangely warmed', as if that knowledge had reached some other part of me. It was a good feeling.

Over the last few months as the Parish Church has been exploring the effects of ageing and how we feel about and cope with the idea of death, I have been thinking about the different things people have been saying. I have been stimulated by the discussion; it has helped me to form my own opinions and crystallise my beliefs. It has also made me want to be involved in activities I currently know little about.

My mother may have been right about being burned out – I have much less energy than I once did or would like to have. But for as long as God gives me breath, enables me to stay mobile and in charge of my mental faculties, I want to stay connected to those around me.

The Editor

Live for today



Those who know me will recognise that I love a random fact or piece of trivia.

So, how about this one...

The month of May is unique in

the calendar. In any given year, no other month begins with the same day of the week as May and no other month ends with the same day!

This might be interesting (to some like me!) but we know instinctively that beginnings and endings are not the be

all and end all, it is what happens in between that matters.

Just like the losing contestant on the reality show, it is the 'journey' that counts, not just the ticking off of the way-markers passed.

It would be easy to look at the Christian year like that; Easter is gone, Ascension is upon us this month, next month is Pentecost and before we know it, the holidays are over then its Harvest, Remembrance, Advent, Christmas and we are back to Lent in the blink of an eye.

This month, do take the time to stop and smell the flowers, to appreciate

the moment, to live for today and let tomorrow come when it may!

I have referred to this poem before, but I hope it still speaks to you afresh!

*May the roads rise up to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
May the rains fall soft upon fields
And until we meet again
May God hold you in the palm of his hand*

Grace and peace.

**Andrew Openshaw
New Mill Baptist Church**

Footie and food

On Friday 26 May, Long Marston will be holding its annual village football match where Huw Bellis and Jane Banister turn up to cook burgers and hot dogs! We also have a bar, disco and curry available in the Victory Hall afterwards and 20% of the profit from the evening goes to All Saints Church.

Anyone who wishes to come and support us will be made most welcome!

Jane Banister, Tring Team



Living together in peace



In March we saw another home-grown terrorist, born this time a short 477 bus ride away from my home in Kent, carry out an attack of dreadful

savagery on his fellow citizens.

This has been said before but it is worth saying again: to describe this man as a Muslim terrorist, while accurate at one level, does not tell the whole story. Many members of the IRA in the times of the troubles were practising Catholics, but to call them Christian terrorists suggests a backing by the church of their actions when in fact the Founder of Christianity taught a message of love, not violence, and said that those who live by the sword will die by the sword.

The clear majority of Muslims in this country abhor the acts of violence perpetrated in their name. Perhaps you saw the spokesman for the Al-Khoei organisation condemning the attacks while standing outside Westminster Abbey? The Al-Khoei is a Shia Muslim organisation, a charitable foundation named after a Grand Ayatullah. It supports Muslims and others and has given a generous grant to the Commission on RE chaired by the Dean of Westminster. The spokesman said it is clearly not Islamic to attack innocent people in this savage way.

It is difficult to understand what makes a person hate his fellow countrymen and women so much that he will indiscriminately mow down people with a car, people who were merely walking peacefully on a bridge. Why

would he do that and then go on to stab a police officer?

We need to remember that the last time we were talking about an attack on an MP it was the late Jo Cox, the Labour MP for Bately and Speen in West Yorkshire. This was carried out by a white, extreme right wing terrorist, who repeatedly shot and stabbed the female MP. The fact that the recent attacker was a Muslim convert is as relevant as the fact that Jo Cox's murderer was a Brexit voter who shouted, 'Keep Britain independent'. Neither Islam nor the Brexit Campaign is responsible for the actions of deranged individuals who are so caught up with their own hatred that they think that by using violence they can achieve a justifiable end. The clear majority of Muslims hate violence and want to live in peace with people of different views. We should not judge Muslims by the action of one extremist, but I think you had worked that out already.

The name of Martin McGuinness has been in the news recently following his death. This reminds us of the hope of people of different religions living together after years of turmoil. For people of my generation there was often little hope of the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland living together in peace but by talking together over many years, a deal was hammered out which brought two real enemies, Martin McGuinness and Dr Ian Paisley, together.

Some people will tell you religion causes wars. It is just not that simple. While there was trouble between Catholics and Protestants in Belfast, there was not in Bristol nor in Dublin. It

is often when religion becomes entwined with extreme politics that the problem occurs.

Annette and I went on holiday to Pitigliano in central Italy last year. There was once a Jewish Community there which lived peaceably with the local Christians for centuries. When the Fascist Mussolini came to power things got more difficult for the local Jews. As this happened the local Catholics hid them in out-of-the-way farms and told Mussolini's henchmen that they had fled. The Catholics fed and shielded them until Mussolini was deposed. This information was not gleaned from the Catholics or a Christian book but from a display in the synagogue. Religious people were getting on fine; it was the doctrine of hatred for another religious group introduced by extreme politicians exploiting religious differences for political ends that made the difficulties.

It sometimes seems that Muslims cannot get on with Christians and vice versa – sometimes but not always. A few years back in Cairo where a minority of extremist Muslims were persecuting Christians, a bomb was exploded in a Church in the run up to Christmas. On Christmas Eve at another Church hundreds of Muslims turned up holding high a copy of the Holy Qur'an. They were showing solidarity with their Christian neighbours. They were saying by this action, blow up my Christian friend and you blow up me and the Qur'an. To physically destroy a copy of the Koran is a serious sin for a Muslim.

It is possible for people of different religions to live together and work together in peace.

Jon Reynolds, St Peter & St Paul

Recruiting a Team Vicar

One way or another, I have been involved in recruitment for twenty years, so it's great to be thrown a new challenge every once in a while, to keep things ticking over. When our Team Rector asked me to look over a job description for a new Team Vicar back in August 2015, I didn't really think twice about it. I had a read, popped along to a PCC meeting to share my thoughts and to take on board those of others, edited the initial document to reflect these changes and handed it back, happy to have been some help.

I now know that things are rarely that simple in Parish life. Nearly two years and three rounds of recruitment later we have still been pursuing candidates, through absolutely no fault of our own, and have met some wonderful people along the way.

When, some months later, the job description was finalised, I offered to place the advert for the Parish using my regular digital brokers. There was some mocking of my use of the word 'digital' and I quickly learned that THE place to advertise was a weekly *actual* journal that arrives on clergy doormats every Friday. So, I adjusted my perspective and got on with the task in hand. The advert was duly placed, an eighth of a page, in colour, to run for two consecutive weeks.

And again, my normal ways of working were challenged. In most businesses, a press advert is towards the bottom of the list of ways in which organisations recruit; social media has had a huge impact on our processes

and expectations. But there are special considerations when appointing clergy such as Safeguarding (the protection of children and vulnerable adults); the limited pool of available ordained candidates; and the need to be careful not to 'poach' from neighbouring districts. Picking up the phone and drawing potential candidates' attention to our advert was not an option, nor were we able to be creative in the same way as other organisations: we really did just have to sit and wait for candidates to get in touch.

So far, we have been very fortunate. In each round there has been a 'stand-out' candidate that has required us to change tack mid-stream – from 'can they do the job?' to 'will they like us enough?' and this is replicated daily in organisations that I have been working with over the last five or six years. In corporate life, recruitment (or Talent Acquisition as it's becoming known) is much more about communicating the employer's brand, their values and the benefits. The job itself appears somewhat secondary – supposedly because of responding to the needs of the Millennial Job Seeker who wants to match their brand with that of the employer. Less so in the Church of England although one might argue that a match on values is a pretty big requirement.

As we approached the recruitment market for the third time of asking, still with heavy hearts from the loss of our

friend Revd Sarah Eynstone, we had three candidates, whom we asked to carry out three assessed exercises – a session with children from



Tring School to deliver a contemporary message, a session with parishioners to deliver a Lent Course and a panel interview as well as a tour of the parishes and a meeting with the wider Ministry team. I mentioned in passing at a meeting we had that this was just like the processes I use at Lidl, seeing candidates from as many angles as possible – vital in any job, but perhaps never more so than when we are looking to appoint a Team Vicar?

One of the more modern challenges of recruitment is being robust in your process (knowing that you've got a good one) without losing the candidate's interest and enthusiasm for the role, and the key here seems to have been good, clear and consistent communication and moving as fast as our legs will carry us when we do have a decision to share. The temptation to 'oversell' the role has also been avoided and the team have been very open about what the role entails.

So now, having put away our notepads, we look forward to welcoming our new member of the Tring Team in June.

The next stage of the journey

Many of you will have heard through St Peter & St Paul's or through social media that the Tring Team has been able to appoint a new team vicar, Reverend Michelle Grace.

Michelle is currently curate in the parish of Oswestry with Rhydycroesau. We had five applicants and of these we shortlisted four. However, one got themselves a job before the interviews so only three came to see the post: Michelle and two other more experienced priests.

As part of their interviews they had to give a presentation on what it means to 'be church' in the 21st century. It was soon clear to us that Michelle was the outstanding candidate and we are

confident that we have made a good appointment. We were delighted when she said yes and was happy to accept the offered post. Current planning is that Michelle will move in June with a licensing on Wednesday 5 July at 7.30pm.

Michelle will live in Aldbury Vicarage and have responsibility for St John the Baptist, Aldbury. She will have areas of responsibility across the Tring Team and



importantly, she will join Jane Banister in the Tring School Chaplaincy. Andrew Dobberson, Assistant Head at the school, was involved in the interview day along with a number of students; they all agreed Michelle was the best candidate. It is another step towards us achieving our vision of chaplaincy within the schools across the parish. The rental income from the two other properties in New Mill are funding this part of Michelle's work.

We also have an application in for a curate and we look forward to a curate living in St George's House. Then our vision will be completed.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team

100 favourite hymns

We are now close to the end of our search for 100 favourite hymns. If yours has not yet been mentioned, please do write and tell me so it can be included. The last issue to contain your choices will be in July so the deadline is 6 June. After that I will list them all so anyone who wants to can add their voice to those to get *Tring's Top 10 Hymns*.

'When the music fades'

This is a lovely hymn that says that when the music ceases and everything else is stripped away, we then come back to the heart of worship. This is 'all about you, Lord Jesus, all about you' and what more can I add to that?

Thelma Fisher

High Street Baptist Church

*When the music fades
All is stripped away
And I simply come
Longing just to bring
Something that's of worth
That will bless your heart*

*I'll bring You more than a song
For a song in itself
Is not what You have required
You search much deeper within
Through the way things appear
You're looking into my heart*

Matt Redman

'Can it be true?'

This was number 36 from *Youth Praise* which was published in the 1960s. It captures a number of things for me: it was part of my early Christian life and as such brings back many memories; it reflects the ongoing challenge for me of knowing and daily re-knowing Christ and what he did for me – especially the last line; it was also the only one I ever got close to being able to play on the guitar...

Mike Watkin, St Peter & St Paul

*Can it be true, the things
they did to You-
The death, the shame,
and were Your friends so few?
Yet You returned again alive and free-
Can it be true, my Lord, it had to be.*

'God is here as we his people'

This hymn describes the ideal church – something we can aspire to!

St Martha's Methodist Church

*God is here! As we his people
meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure
what it is in Christ we share:
Here, as in the world around us,
all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of His Spirit
into open minds and hearts.*

Fred Pratt Green

'Lord Jesus Christ'

I cut my musical teeth playing each week for our 9.00am Young Families Service at St Andrew's Church in Bedford where I grew up. We often sang this hymn, which was quite modern then, and I've always loved it. I made an arrangement for our Church orchestra (which was quite varied!).

Anna Le Hair, St Peter & St Paul

*Lord Jesus Christ I would come to
you
live my life for you, Son of God.
All your commands I know are true,
your many gifts will make me new,
into my life your power breaks
through,
living Lord.*

Patrick Appleford

'O Love that will not let me go'

Inspiring!

John Allan

High Street, Baptist Church

*O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.*

George Matheson

'Lord of all hopefulness'

This is another of the hymns we sang at boarding school after evening prayers in the lovely drawing room of our Regency house. Singing this is a wonderful reminder of that room and my friends at that time. I love all the lyrics.

Anthea Fraser, St Peter & St Paul

This hymn also evokes fond childhood memories for Debs Berry and Carrie Dodge chose it saying that hope is one of the emotions that keeps her going through dark times.

*Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all
calm,
Whose voice is contentment,
whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give
us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at
the end of the day.*

Joyce Torrens

'Eternal Father, strong to save'

As I went along making my choices I had echoes of the past, from big events in cathedrals, to ordinary church services through the years, seasonal hymns that are right for the time of year and so on. The exercise brought back many memories, so thank you!

Margaret Whiting, St Peter & St Paul

Mac Dodge also chose this one. 'For those in peril on the sea': having had a near miss on the sea and having been involved with boats most of my adult life, this has special meaning and it makes me cry. Mind you, most good hymns do.

*O Trinity of love and pow'r,
Your children shield in danger's
hour;
From rock and tempest, fire, and
foe,
Protect them where-so-e'er they
go;
Thus, evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land
and sea.*

William Whiting

'Alleluia Sing to Jesus'

An oldie from my choir days as a child in the Midlands.

Afra Willmore

St John the Baptist, Aldbury

This is also one of Gill Kinsey and Jane Legg's choices.

**Alleluia! sing to Jesus!
His the scepter, his the throne.
Alleluia! His the triumph,
his the victory alone.
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion
thunder like a mighty flood.
Jesus out of every nation
hath redeemed us by his blood.**

William Chatterton Dix

'A New Commandment'

I love so many hymns that it's impossible to choose but this is one of my favourites. I love this hymn because I feel like this is the goal in life, to strive to live by this commandment, and I feel like every act that follows this commandment is a step closer to having God's kingdom on earth. The hymn also goes on to remind us what love is all about, which is beautiful. The tune is also lovely and I smile every time I hear it.

Pippa Wright, St Peter & St Paul

**A new commandment
I give unto you
That you love one another
As I have loved you,
That you love one another
As I have loved you.
By this shall all men
Know you are My disciples
If you have love one to another.**

John 13:34-35

'Christ be our Light'

Some lovely high notes which I love to sing.

Debs Berry, St Peter & St Paul

Also one of the Editor's favourites.

**Longing for light, we wait in
darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy
people,
light for the world to see.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered
today.**

Bernadette Farrell

Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

Despite being taken from a longer poem about the dangers of intoxication – particularly alcohol! – this hymn has always meant a great deal to me. The title reminds me that God is my Father; he is approachable and loving, despite being the Supreme Being. I also find it amusing that humans are described as having 'foolish ways' but find it apt that the poem says that humans are not in our 'right minds' if we are not focused on serving God.

When singing the hymn, I am taken on a journey – transported to the time of Jesus and his disciples. It is in this

time that I hear the 'gracious calling' of the Lord and am made to view the 'simple trust' of the disciples beside the 'Syrian sea'. (Oh, that in this cynical age, I could be as accepting as them!) The hymn speaks to me because of the sibilance, whispering in my ear that our Lord and Saviour 'knelt' to share with me – not just the disciples – the secrets of the universe when he chose to spend time upon this earth. What an amazing thought.

I am then reluctantly transported back to my own world where, however, I can call upon God to help me with my

very stressful life – although I always wonder what it would actually mean to have an 'ordered life'!

My favourite part of the hymn, however, is its denouement: the amazing music building to a crescendo where, I am reminded, that despite the noise and pressure of life, listen carefully and I will always hear the voice of God speaking just to me: 'O still, small voice of calm'. And I hear it every time and it is such an emotional ending.

Jo Webber, New Mill Baptist Church

Parish registers

Baptisms

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

**Cynthia Ward
Felix Carlos Price
Edward Gary Thomas McLaren
William George Tremain Stevenson**

Weddings

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

**Anthony George & Rosemary Stanyer
Adrian Jack Ross & Rachelle Louise Long
Benn Langdon & Stefany Abson
Christopher Slade & Rachel Austin
Jamie Agace & Charlotte Burgess
Alexander Jamie Davidson & Olivia Rose Palmer**

Funerals

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

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Molly Stratford 86
Andrew Minter 82
Kenneth Horwood 82
Emily Belinda 'Linda' Smith 49**



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When Mum has dementia

My mum currently lives in a home specialising in Alzheimers support. She's been there for a couple of years and seems very happy. Not that she'd be able to tell you how she's feeling anymore, but you get it through a particular movement or the odd smile. You notice clearly when she's exasperated because her eyebrows disappear under her hairline! That is one thing that has never changed throughout her illness.



Joy was diagnosed in 2003, but certainly for Andrew and me – we'd noticed for ages before that things weren't quite right. The memory loss was not 'normal' for someone of her age (60s) and she would keep asking the same question, just moments after having asked it! We were very happy with the diagnosis because it meant that my dad and brothers were finally able to see what we saw. We were in France at the time, so whenever we met up we'd see that things weren't quite right, and each time it got worse. I would send presents for the family over for my parents to distribute (pre-Amazon days!) and wonder why Mum had always opened them. So I began telling Dad what I was doing and for ages he wouldn't accept that there was a problem.

It was particularly hard for Dad to come to terms with. Mum had been the first girl from her school to go to university and this was a big deal for them. She went to Sheffield and studied theology under the tutelage of Professor F F Bruce. He became a family friend. In the end she became Head of RE at one of the local schools and, as was the case then, also taught English. She was a great teacher and really loved the job. However I think she struggled with behaviour from some of the boys. So in the summer of 1986 she took early retirement. It was the best thing she ever did.

Before retiring she would sometimes be a real pain at home! In times when she was really stressed she would ask me to do something in the morning (for when I came home from school) but by the evening had totally forgotten she had asked. So the potatoes would be sat peeled in a pan and she'd yell at me for doing them because she'd planned something else. We got used to this and just put it down to end-of-term stress so early retirement was an excellent idea. Later, when her memory started to go, she would show exactly the same behaviour. So I guessed fairly early on that things weren't right.

Fortunately, through good doctors and a great deal of help and support, both she and Dad were looked after. I'm not saying that it was perfect – they were let down by various organisations quite a few times. But those who showed compassion and dignity did so with great respect.

Joy celebrated her 81st birthday recently and her home had a little party with cake and balloons. Mum's cake had to be liquidised, but she still had some – and finished it!

Kate Openshaw
New Mill Baptist Church





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Will your anchor hold...?

Hearing that someone has dementia is hard to accept and having read things in the paper or seen programmes on TV, you may dread what you have to face. Thankfully everyone's experience is a different one. Your loved one may be a placid person or a volatile one. The time you have to care for them may be very short or many years. There is no doubt that it is very sad to slowly lose the person you knew.

My husband died three years ago. He was a very caring man and loved children. He would help anyone, anytime. He was always well dressed and would always wear a tie. The caring continued to the end – even towards the other people with dementia at the home he eventually went into. He continued to wear a tie even though sometimes it was over a t-shirt or jumper!

It's hard to think back at how it all started but we began to think something was wrong when we found that Bern was telling the same story again and again. As we walked along a path he would pick up bits he found there as if they offended him. He would do the same with little flecks on the carpet. By the time it was diagnosed I had to care for him which became increasingly demanding. I desperately wanted some time to myself and looked forward to the time when he went to bed. Once he was tucked up I could settle down and relax – only to find he would be back down five minutes later – and this would continue through the night till I suffered sleep deprivation and had to pay someone to care for him just so I could rest. Once when I popped over to a neighbour, he put on his tie over his t-shirt and wandered off to the station with a bundle of papers as if he were going to work – and was returned to me by a member of the church who had seen him by chance while he was on a cycle ride. Sometimes he had hallucinations and was convinced he was on the beach and the tide was coming in.

TV became reality. If he saw people arguing on a TV programme, he believed it was real and would physically go to intervene in the argument. Photographs became people. He would get upset if I turned out the lights in a room with 'people' still in it – the family photos in frames. When he watched football on TV he would line up all the photo frames so



the family could watch with him.

Dementia affects everyone differently. It seems to be that a quiet personality will continue to be a quiet person with dementia. My husband was an outgoing man but also the kind of man who would get angry quickly. Driving with him became a problem because as I drove he would become enraged with other drivers and try to sound the horn and become agitated. Some days he would be himself as if there were nothing wrong at all. Other days he would be a man with dementia who needed constant care. But he always knew who I was even though he often forgot the names of others.

I would call out to God to help me and sometimes I would be angry with God because he didn't seem to answer. But many friends in the church would help me, pray for me and support me and Dick Lovelace and Julie Marshall often took him out for a drive just so I could have some time to rest and have a break. When he was well he used to come to Church with me and when he was in St Joseph's he would come to the services organised there by High Street Baptist Church. He enjoyed the

hymn-singing, particularly old favourites from his childhood such as 'All things bright and beautiful' which seemed to take him back to a place where he was himself.

My advice to anyone who finds themselves in this situation is 'Get help'. We all think we can cope; we want to be there for our loved one. But sharing the load is essential to keep yourself sane and to prevent becoming ill yourself. You will be a better carer if you have support. 'Age UK' in Hemel were very helpful to me. I pray every day for carers and those with dementia.

A verse from an old hymn comes to mind: 'Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, when the clouds unfold their wings of strife? When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain, will your anchor drift or firm remain? We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll, fastened to the rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.' Praying for patience, strength and courage and having faith will get you through it. God bless.

Betty Harris
High Street Baptist Church

Lent Group Quotation

Gwen Hewison was 'captured' and attended a Parish Church Lent Group in March. When asked what she thought

about growing older, Gwen, who admits to being over 95 years old, answered, 'I don't know. I'll tell you when I get there!'



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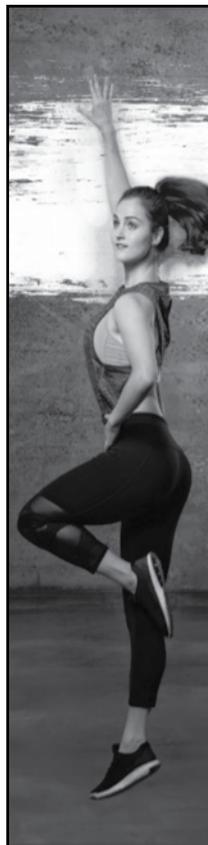
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Living with teenagers

You know when you tell your small children that they can be whoever they want to be? In an inspirational parenting kind of way? Well let me tell you – they will be taking you at your word by their teens.

My 16-year-old daughter, for example, has already mastered skills worthy of a top barrister, magician, politician, secret service agent, tabloid journalist and short-order chef and can demonstrate all of these before breakfast: as long as breakfast is served at 2.00pm obviously.

Take a text exchange we had last week. She asked if she could go to 'a friend's house'. It took all of my investigative journalism training and parenting persistence to drag out of her that the friend was a boy and that basically it was a mixed-gender meet up. She was as vague as an MP covering up a rent-boy scandal as to whether this boy's parents would be around.



She can disappear at will much as a magician or deep cover agent might. Her phone will miraculously fail to receive or send texts or accept calls when I am trying to track her down or need her to babysit. Oddly it works really well when she wants something from me...

We did have a tracker app for a while but I was 16 once too and knew full well that all that proved was that her phone was at a certain address. Its owner could be miles away. So we abandoned it. Actually, my eldest son uses it to track me but that's another story.

Don't get me wrong. It sounds like she's a nightmare and we don't trust her. That's absolutely not the case. I'm writing this with her full permission as a

bit of a laugh and to give those of you at the toddler stage a glimpse into your future. You see, when you are dealing with nappies and colic and tantrums and weaning, you think it will get easier. Well the sheer physical effort of it does but the emotional and psychological bit gets worse, I think.

It's like dog-training a particularly recalcitrant Doberman puppy: all giant feet and empty stomachs. And occasionally, like that puppy, they'll trash your house and throw up on the rug, especially if they've had one too many ciders.

You'd think at least you get a full night's sleep once you get past the baby stage but I've had many a broken night going to pick up teenagers or keeping a sleepy ear out for the door to click open and shut before I can relax knowing they are home safe.

Weaning was a breeze compared to finding something my teens fancy to eat. They will walk in, head purposefully to the fridge freezer then insert the top half of their bodies inside looking for something tasty which takes less than forty-five seconds to prepare.

Even a stuffed fridge, bulging cupboards and a delightfully arranged and colourful fruit bowl will elicit the complaint: 'There's nothing to eat' before they head to the village shop to buy some artificially-flavoured noodle-based snack or an item with more pastry than pie filling.

The stress of potty training and scraping them off your leg to get them through the doors into pre-school has nothing on trying to steer them towards good life choices with GCSE and A-Level options; then the hell of university applications or apprenticeships or whatever they choose to do post 16/18. No darling, being good at Minecraft is not something to put on your personal statement. And I wouldn't mention that you only want to do a course with no lectures starting before lunchtime.

You watch them ambling along, without a care in the world, it seems, as vital exams approach. You can't tell if the person staring at the screen is actually revising or focusing more on the music entering their ears though those darned ear buds. How come they know all the words to all the songs on their latest favourite album within a day of

it being released but can't learn three Shakespeare quotes for English?

The worst thing about parenting teenagers is that you have to let go of the controls as they loosen their grip on the apron strings. It's like that first time when you let go of the back of the bike when they are learning to ride without stabilisers – that fear is nothing compared to the terror of watching your precious baby head off for the first time driving a car.

Grit your teeth, bite your tongue, smile and nod – these are often the only options available as your growing children start to find their own way in the world. Difficult when all you really want to do is put your foot down and say 'no' to what looks like a stupid life choice.

We used to choose what pants they wore; we used to decide how they had their hair cut; we used to empty their potties. Now it seems we are redundant until it's time to clear up the mess in a different way. This, of course, is not restricted to teenagers. I'm sure I'm not the only so-called adult who still relies on a parent!

There are, of course, golden moments of pride when your youngster demonstrates that all that effort you put into making them a good citizen has paid off: a moment of achievement, or kindness or thoughtfulness can bring a tear to your eye. The time when you realise that your bird has flown the nest but is soaring high and enjoying their life is truly magical.

What teenagers don't realise is that parents remember being teenagers themselves. I still feel 18 in my head and the ageing face in the mirror frequently startles me. We want our children to learn from our mistakes, not their own, but the sad fact is, we have to let them learn their own way, whilst being prepared to pick up the pieces when it all goes wrong.

Now I'm going to make a nice, nutritious spaghetti bolognese which I am fairly sure will be rejected by my teens in favour of a ready meal out of the freezer. Ah well, more for me.

Afra Willmore
St John the Baptist, Aldbury



A pressing problem – or a gift from God?



One thing I have learned over the past half-century or so is that there is usually more than one way to look at an issue. That is certainly true of the current

state of congregational demographics. It does seem to be the case that a fairly negative view of the state of church congregations currently prevails within our Church hierarchy and amongst those social commentators who delight in forecasting decline and fall. *That is not my view.*

There is indeed a fair amount of dissatisfaction – at least in the Tring Team – with the fact that young adults and families are in short supply and that our pews, churches, committee meetings and events are over-burdened with ‘oldies’. Perhaps we need to look again and see things differently. Perhaps we need to see the positive side.

There has been a lot of discussion about ‘Ageing’ and the concerns and opinions of those at the mature end of life during the Lent season of 2017. It has been the focus of our Parish Lent Groups and our Lent Films and has certainly engaged opinions. In next month’s Comment there will be an article attempting to draw some conclusions out of all of this debate.

For now I should like to offer a point of view I have personally long found somewhat attractive, even re-assuring.

‘Oldies’ can be ‘goldies’

In the late nineties and noughties I was retained by a consortium of major consumer businesses led by Associated Newspapers to carry out a long-term study on the demographics of our older generation – the Third Age. The project was code-named Project Panther and the market in question was described as ‘The Grey Panthers’. It’s not a bad descriptor.

This study over the best part of a decade demonstrated quite conclusively that in our current era it is those over 55 who have the money, the health care, the capital assets, the leisure lifestyles and wide-ranging freedom of choice about how they live their lives. This piece of research and analysis tracked the growing empowerment of this group and

was, of course, focused on their value as a commercial market.

It has proved a very useful educational journey for me in the way I look at the current state of church congregations and ‘voluntary sector’ support in general.

The ‘Third Age’ is born

In previous times most people started out as young, dependant and ‘growing up’ and then you became a ‘grown-up’. Then you died. That was it – game over.

Through a combination of good fortune, good practice, together with economic and political stability, we have managed to create a life stage which simply didn’t exist in the middle of the last century.

A person retiring in the fifties had a life expectancy of 72 for males and 77 for females and they could look forward to a few years of pottering about but there were no great expectations of much beyond that. Nowadays ‘three score years and ten’ is something of a threshold to a brave new world and the average life expectancy is now 85 for men and 89 for women. We have over 1.5 million people over 85 in our population and a recent survey by Radio 4 divined that their preferred description was ‘The Real Seniors’. Current trends indicate that by 2050 there will be 5 million Real Seniors within our UK population.

As a society we have created people who live longer, are active for longer and they don’t half get about. They have 80% of the wealth, take 17% of the holidays and, interestingly enough, deliver 50% of charitable giving. In other words, they are a huge, active and available marketplace.

I think we could love them more.

‘Love the one you’re with!’

Churches, voluntary organisations and social affinity groups all bemoan the lack of availability of young adults and active families. However, this should not really be a surprise. Not only is the proportion of this group smaller in the population than was once the case but they’re also much more hard-pressed.

Working couples have children later in life and have to keep working in order to sustain them. Housing costs have driven many out of the market of home ownership and for those who

do own homes, a long-term mortgage commitment seems inevitable. Marriages end earlier for more people and the cost of divorce is corrosively destructive of the economic wellbeing of any family. There are very few lifetime careers in any sector and anyone who loses a job over the age of 50 is very unlikely to find anything remotely as rewarding to replace it.

Of course, we have an explosion of individual entrepreneurial sole proprietor businesses of various kinds to compensate for that. However, that creates its own pressure on hard-pressed individuals to keep on earning and concentrate entirely on material well-being. There will be no more life-supporting pensions apart from those we provide for ourselves.

All of this means that younger adults and those engaged in family life are almost completely committed to the economic treadmill for much longer. They don’t have the time, money or energy to participate in religious, voluntary or social activities, as they are completely absorbed in the massively challenging requirements of dealing with their families and their social obligations. In any town on any Sunday morning, the place that’s crowded out and packed with people trying to park is the sports complex. It is seldom the Church!

More and more children’s activities require parental transportation and supervision. These responsibilities and pressures combine to crowd out other opportunities and once-cherished traditions.

A whole new world awaits

But this frenetic nest-building and family-focus doesn’t last forever. Once you hit 60 or so, given that you’ve managed to make some pension provision and remained economically stable, the prospects for many are for the best part of thirty years of plain sailing.

Healthcare continues to improve for this group and they are committed to remaining fit and active as well as socially engaged. Let’s embrace and celebrate this group. The ‘Real Seniors’ are the real deal when it comes to making communities work and keeping our churches vibrant, open and welcoming to the needs of others. They have the time, the money and the energy to focus on priorities outside their

immediate economic needs, and very often life has taught them humility and the need for faith...

Celebrating our good fortune

Instead of bemoaning the lack of the missing generations (and I am not in any way suggesting that we should cease to encourage all markets to join in our community and worship) let us celebrate all the wonderful resources that we actually have.

It's not a case of either/or but rather 'All are welcome, All are welcomein this place...' as the hymn 'Let us build a house where love can dwell' has it.

Many are concerned that if we do not recruit more young adults into our church communities then once this current older generation fades away there will be no one with a church-going culture to replace them. I question that assumption. I think it is arguable that as people come to the end of their frenetic mid-life struggle for material survival they reach a stage where they are actively open and seeking for deeper, more spiritual fulfilment. Just as the young adult generation is too busy, distracted and frankly knackered to find the time to engage with church life, so the 'Third Agers' are actively available and motivated. They are ready to explore the religious and spiritual dimension and eager to experience all that faith might bring. A key responsibility for all church leaders is to ensure that we make it clear that they are warmly welcome.

A wise minister once said to me

that the best way to build a vibrant and engaged community is to give each member a sense of involvement and responsibility. I have found that very good advice. Our older market is particularly well-suited to share in the many tasks involved in running a Parish and also in leading and sharing in worship. One of the resources that is growing strongly in the Church of England is Reader Ministry. This role plays to the strengths of the older, more experienced members of our community who have the time, some of the wisdom and often a growing sense of the realities of human life – and the yearning for faith.

Having attended a recent Bishop's Conference for our Diocese it is clear to me that the relationship between ordained and licenced lay ministry is in a dynamic state. There is much opportunity to engage more members of our communities in 'ministerial' involvement – particularly in the pastoral area. By embracing the energies, skills and goodwill of our older generations we shall be helping our communities to grow and build.

Building for the future

It seems that the relationship between the generations in our society is in a period of change. The assumption that all new ways are better ways is not so strongly accepted and the role of the experienced and empowered older generation may have something to offer in the way of wisdom.

Of course, wisdom does not come automatically with age ('There's no fool like an old fool' is an oft-quoted truism). However, a lifetime's experience of making mistakes usually teaches even the most stubborn of us some basic common-sense – especially in respect of the importance of tolerance and consideration in building and maintaining relationships. Perhaps the shift in economic power from the younger adults ('Masters of the Universe' are a rare breed these days) who are often less affluent than their parents encourages a more open attitude towards those who were once deemed 'past-it'.

The future is not the past

What is certain is that this change of the balance of resources and energy in our society is not a short-term phenomenon. It will go on being the case that our Western society is increasingly dominated by the older generations for some decades to come. This seems to me a glorious opportunity to share in the responsibility to nurture faith and care for the well-being of others less fortunate across all the generations. 'To each in accordance with his needs – from each in accordance with his means' never seemed so apposite.

Let us work together to embrace the reality of all the opportunities we have been given. We are perhaps more richly blessed than we first think. So... 'Let us build a house where love can dwell'.

Grahame Senior, St Peter & St Paul

In memoriam: Dennis Aldridge

My first teaching post in 1965 was at Ashlyns School in Berkhamsted. Dennis Aldridge, at that time Head of History and Head of House, occupied the adjacent classroom. Dennis was always a gracious and helpful colleague; he possessed the gift of being always very effective without needing to be obviously assertive – a priceless asset in a schoolteacher.

After a year or two Dennis moved on to become Headmaster of Kings Langley School. Another year or two and Martin and I were married and came to live in Tring. Here was Dennis, again being quietly active and supportive at the Parish Church; he became Churchwarden and for decades led the Men's Society. He was an example of modesty and loyalty.

Carole Wells, St Peter & St Paul

Dennis sadly passed away on 13 April. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.



Songs of praise

Make a date to come to Tring Carnival on Saturday 24 June! And on Sunday 25 June Churches Together in Tring will be having a church picnic and St Peter & St Paul's Church will be hosting a Songs of Praise. Look out for more details soon.



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Daring to break with tradition

To the best of my knowledge in the previous forty-three years of my life, I have sung once a year (and normally no more than that) 'All Glory Laud and Honour' on Palm Sunday. Very frequently this would also involve a palm procession and part of the joy would be to find that the front of the procession would be singing a completely different verse from the back of the procession. As well as there being a set opening hymn the service would invariably end with 'Ride on, ride on in majesty'. There was a sense that these hymns were set in stone; so much so that when I produced orders of service for Palm Sunday (back in 2005) we printed the hymns into the order of service.

However, this year I found that I was planning the service with the young people from the Parish Church Youth Café and it made me think again about what were the essential ingredients for a Palm Sunday service. I think the children might have preferred more focus on the triumphal entry into Jerusalem; but for me tradition won and the service reflected more the beginning of Holy Week with the telling of the whole Passion story.

Would it have been Palm Sunday for you if we had just had the story about Jesus entering on a donkey without the Last Supper, the arrest, the trial and the crucifixion? And was it Palm Sunday for you without the traditional opening and closing hymn? It is certainly the first year I haven't sung 'All Glory Laud and Honour'. (I did sing 'Ride on' at the 11:30 service).

When I grew up there was no Worship for All services. Every Sunday was a Communion service except for the fifth Sunday of the month which was Matins (and the Bellis family got a Sunday off). Worship was either traditional or very traditional, but it was



this worship which fed me and brought me to faith. However, these days we recognise that having a less formal service each month is very important. By and large these Sundays will see our largest congregations in St Peter & St Paul. The music is picked for these very carefully. Cliff Brown, our organist, will sometimes advise that musically a hymn isn't suitable for the music group and would be better saved for another week when we have the organ (such musical nuances go over my head).

It is important to have a flow to the service as well, thinking about when we are celebrating and when we need to have calmer, more reflective music. Normally you would think about starting joyfully, having a middle period of reflection and go out joyfully; but you don't want the mood to be going up and down all the time. In a Worship for All service, we will often try to have a simple repetitive song for the very young, something like 'He's got the whole world in his hands' (or as was the case on Palm Sunday 'We have a King who rides a donkey').

Worship for All should mean all, not just the young, so a more traditional song is good (on Palm Sunday we went for 'The Old Rugged Cross' with Andrew Kinsey's wonderful solo for the first verse); and then one also needs to make sure that the songs fit the Bible readings and themes, and that we haven't sung

them too recently. Finally, you have to guess whether the congregation will know or like the hymns. It is perilous to assume just because you know a hymn that anyone else will. My approach is to pick a hymn I think no one knows so we can all learn it together. To be honest, I am glad that I only have to choose the hymns once every couple of months or so when I lead Worship for All services. It is a thankless task for Cliff who has to pick the hymns Sunday by Sunday.

In part Palm Sunday was a self-indulgent experiment for me. How would I feel about not singing 'All Glory Laud and Honour'? The answer was: fine. I discovered what was important to me in the worship: the procession and the beginning of the whole of Holy Week with its turning to the cross. I do however have a sneaky feeling that some may have missed our traditional hymns. Should we have sung them? Equally, do we have to sing 'Thine be the Glory' on Easter day every year even when there are loads of great Easter hymns? Do we have to sing 'We plough the fields and scatter' at Harvest even though the tune is dull and we have never ploughed or scattered in our lives? (The Editor objects to this last comment as she loves it! Definitely not dull...) Can we have Remembrance Sunday without 'Eternal Father, strong to save'?

Do I come to Church with a set of expectations or do I come to Church open to receive? What does it say to people who haven't grown up with these traditions? I really don't know the answer. I do understand the traditions behind these things, but I for one found it liberating not being constrained this year. If you weren't liberated, maybe I could ask you to explore why certain ways of worship are important to you, and if you are brave enough, write to the Editor.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team



The Berkhamsted Bluebell Walk 2017

Join the 49th Berkhamsted Walk on Sunday 14 May 2017 to raise money for The Children's Society and help change children's stories. In Britain today there are still many children and young people suffering hardship, abuse and neglect. Too often their problems are ignored and their voices unheard. Help us to make a difference to the lives of these vulnerable young people by taking part in the Berkhamsted Walk and raising sponsorship to support the work of The Children's Society.

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A prize will be awarded for the highest amount raised through sponsorship. A quiz to keep the children busy provides extra fun! Tea and cake is provided at the Court House on completion of your walk!

To find out more visit www.berkhamstedwalk.com and download sponsor forms or collect one from St Peter's Church, The Complete Outdoors, Berkhamsted Library or phone 01442 864968 to speak to Ann Browning.

Jane Hughes
The Children's Society Berkhamsted

Aldeburgh Music



Although my family was not musical, I had something of a musical background when at school and for some time afterwards. As

well as being a chorister, I played at one time or another the double bass, the tuba and the timpani. This probably tells you more about me than about my musical skills.

My secondary school had an unusual feature; it had an informal music room, equipped with a reasonable quality record turntable and loudspeaker system. It also had a selection of 78rpm records, which covered a fairly wide range of classical music. My main

memory of it is that it introduced me to the music of Benjamin Britten.

His reputation is beginning to fade and I suspect that most middle-aged and younger people know little of him apart from his 'Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra'. Although still popular, it is regarded as being a bit 'clunky' and not one of his best works.

I think that he was at his best when writing for young voices – I personally find his operatic and orchestral work much less interesting. A Ceremony of Carols, Children's Crusade, Let's Make an Opera and Noye's Fludde are among my favourites.

I am very lucky to have a daughter living at Woodbridge in Suffolk, about a twenty-minute drive from Snape and its concert halls. With her, we visit Snape a couple of times a year, depending on

what is being performed. A walk on the Aldeburgh seafront is also a regular pleasure, particularly in winter. As a family, we saw

the dawn of the first morning of the 21st Century on a nearby beach – a treasured memory. The plaque pictured here can be seen on Britten's former home on the seafront at Aldeburgh.

The management of Aldeburgh Music is now engaged in diversifying its appeal and encouraging young composers and artists, which in a way is commendable. Britten and his associates are now, sadly, a fading memory.

Bill Bradford, St Peter & St Paul





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On being a mother



I am very blessed to be a mother to three lovely boys and a stepmother to another lovely boy. My eldest son is aged 15, my stepson is 13, my next son is

also 13 and my youngest son will be 5 in July. Being a mummy was always on my 'to do' list: as a young girl when asked what I wanted to be, the answer was 'a lady with a baby in a pram and a dog'!

I fell pregnant relatively quickly with my two older sons without any problems. Fast forward a few years, my first marriage had ended and I had met (to my surprise: that's a story for another article) my wonderful second husband.

We decided quickly in our relationship that we wanted to have further children together. We presumed we would fall pregnant quickly; we had no reason to think otherwise – after all we already had children, albeit not together.

The reality was that we didn't fall quickly. In fact, month after month went past. Each month that passed made me yearn more and more for another baby. Each month I was convinced was the month we would fall; each month I was convinced my body was giving me signals that we had fallen but we hadn't.

Feeling of frustration, sadness and failure crept into my mind. I didn't share my feelings with anyone; I didn't think anyone would understand. After all we had children – I should have felt grateful and I felt selfish yearning for another child.

Eventually after approximately two years, my husband and I sat down and

talked about it. I think I probably needed answers as to why we were not falling pregnant more than my husband did. My body clock was ticking and my wish for another child had almost become an obsession, and I hadn't shared my feelings even with my husband.

We began the process of tests to get some answers and the tests revealed I had a condition called Endometriosis. I had treatment for it and was told 'You'll soon have that baby in your arms'.

I didn't soon have that baby in my arms though; we still didn't fall pregnant. We were told at one of our appointments that we could be offered one round of NHS IVF treatment. We lived in Herts and although Herts had a policy that meant you couldn't have NHS treatment if you had previously had children, we were being treated in Bucks and they didn't have this policy. We just had to wait another six months as you had to have been trying to fall for three years in total.

So, six months of waiting passed by but I felt hopeful: I knew there was a chance that we would be able to have another baby. I felt positive even though there were no guarantees being offered. Sitting in the hospital room when we returned to begin the process of IVF treatment my hopes were dashed when the doctor told us that within the previous six months, Bucks had changed their policy and now also didn't offer NHS treatment to anyone who had previously had children.

I was so upset! We couldn't afford private treatment and I felt hard done by that we couldn't add to our family. I loved our sons (and still do very much!) but I wasn't ready to not be a mummy to another child. I wanted to decide when I

physically wouldn't be able to have any more children. I didn't want the choice to be made for me. So, I shed lots of tears, my husband was to my emotionally irrational state a very rational, sensible and kind voice. Whenever we spoke about the situation he always highlighted the positives in that we had three beautiful sons, we had each other and it wasn't the end of the world. He doesn't know it but he really helped me cope with letting go of the obsession. I wasn't going to find it easy but I knew I was a lucky lady. I went through all sorts of feelings of sadness, guilt (I had already been given the gift of motherhood), jealousy (my brother and his wife had recently been blessed with the gift of my beautiful niece), longing to hold another baby in my arms etc. etc.

Our story has what we call 'our miracle' ending. We had lots to look forward to, we were getting married, we had our three beautiful sons, we were extremely happy to have each other and them. Not long after our wedding I had reason to believe that my body was once again playing tricks on me. I felt cross that my brain and body were still creating that longing that I was trying so hard to ignore. I ignored the signs, I just wasn't going to entertain all the hope then disappointment I'd experienced pretty much every month for years. Eventually I knew I couldn't ignore it any longer and did a test – which was positive! We'd finally fallen pregnant! I was so happy, but strangely scared too. It had been so long I just couldn't believe it was going to happen. I soon believed it when I saw our beautiful little baby on that first scan.

We didn't find out the sex of the baby in the pregnancy. I am so nosy





the thought of the people doing the scans knowing and me not knowing was like dangling a carrot in front of a rabbit! It drove me mad but on the 15th July 2012, it was so worth the surprise when our little baby was placed in my arms and my hubby told me it was a boy. After three years and nine months of waiting, we finally had our baby, our youngest son.

How does my faith fit into this story? Well my husband and I have always felt we were brought together by God. We

always felt we were 'meant to be' and we've never questioned why. When we thought we weren't going to have any more children, we felt that was God's wish even if it wasn't ours. It didn't stop us feeling sad but we felt his aim was for our family to be the five of us. We now believe that William was literally a 'gift from God'. We have no definitive answers why we had to wait for our gift but we believe the timing God chose was right for us. We haven't been blessed again since having William but I don't feel sadness, failure or despair.

I feel complete knowing that God has plans for us and that although we sometimes struggle if his plans don't match ours, he does have our best interests at heart. I trust in him that he is a loving, kind God who only gives us what he knows we can cope with – even if we don't know ourselves what we can cope with. Our situation has taught me to keep the faith, to keep believing that God's plans will work out. It's not easy, but knowing he is greater than anything else has helped me.

Sarah Johnson, St Peter & St Paul



Concert in aid of Rennie Grove

The Vale Symphonic Wind Band is providing an evening of light music, some classics including Brahms Overture 'Academic Festival', Bernstein's 'Candide' Overture and the March from Tchaikovsky's 'Sixth Symphony'; an original piece by the English composer, Philip Sparke – 'Jubilee Overture' as well as music from films and shows – 'James Bond', 'Out of Africa' and 'Miss Saigon' among the pieces.

The Concert, in aid of Rennie Grove Hospice Care, is at 7:30pm on Saturday 20 May in the Parish Church of St Peter & St Paul in Tring and the tickets,

available from Iain Rennie, are £10 with £8 for concessions.

The Vale Symphony Wind band has performed a number of times in the Court Theatre and the brass section has provided the music for the annual carol singing in the Tring Market square for many years.

Robin Jarvis, St Peter & St Paul



100 favourite places

Edinburgh



I studied there for four years and still get really excited at the first sight of Arthur's Seat. I just love the atmosphere of the city and the long views over to Fife and the Pentland Hills, often in unexpected places.

Anna Le Hair, St Peter & St Paul

Iceland



In July 2016 I had a holiday in this fabulous place! The scenery was wonderful and there is a freshness about it. The waterfalls and geysers were amazing – well worth visiting – and the capital Reykjavik is lovely.

**Thelma Fisher
High Street Baptist Church**

Cristalino Jungle Lodge, Amazon Forest, Brazil



We had a trip of a lifetime to Brazil a few years ago. This eco lodge set in the Amazon jungle allowed us to see giant river otters, exotic birds, capuchin monkeys and, an unforgettable experience, a sunrise over the Amazon forest from a 165' observation tower. To smell the sweet blossom mixed with jungle essence on the Amazon tributary was truly a spiritual experience.

**Carrie and Mac Dodge
St Peter & St Paul**

Perth, Australia



One of my favourite places is Perth, Australia. My father emigrated there at 72 years of age. Sandra and I were lucky enough to visit him on several occasions and I could understand my father's decision as I found it a beautiful city with an ideal climate and friendly people.

John Luddington, St Peter & St Paul

London



I just love our capital city. Full stop.

Anna Barrs, New Mill Baptist Church

Lee Abbey



A wonderful place but a long way to go! Beautiful countryside in Devon!

Sandra Watkin, St Peter & St Paul

Wineglass Bay, Tasmania



One of the world's most gorgeous beaches, sufficiently remote that out of season you can practically have it to yourself. On the – long, long! – walk down, be prepared to encounter some curious wallabies who will inspect your picnic with great interest.

John Lippitt, St Peter & St Paul

The Lake District



I visited the Lakes for the first time on a round trip through the UK. Years later, it was me who introduced husband John to the Lakes and we both fell in love with the beautiful and awe-inspiring landscape, the quirky towns and villages and the culture.

Sylvie Magerstaedt, St Peter & St Paul

Cathedral Close, Exeter



The Close is approached down Martin's Lane, past the Tudor Ship Inn, where Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh are (separately) reputed to have drunk, and the ancient little Church of St Martin. It holds precious memories of four happy years living and studying in Exeter.

Carole Wells, St Peter & St Paul

Doubtful Sound, New Zealand



Earlier this year I visited Doubtful Sound in the far south west of New Zealand. It is really a fiord as it was carved out by a glacier millions of years ago and much larger than the nearby Milford Sound. It is a difficult place to access – crossing a lake then travel over a steep pass on a dirt track. From our boat we saw white-headed albatrosses, bottlenose dolphins, and fur seals basking on the rocks. When the captain turned off the boat engines and got us to stand in silence, the feeling was quite overwhelming of being in the middle of God's beautiful handiwork.

Janet Goodyer, St Peter & St Paul

Tweet of the month

No doubt most people think that birdwatching is all about fun and relaxation and there isn't really a serious side to it. Of course some people think that going to Church is only serious and that there isn't really a fun and relaxing side to it. Indeed there are birdwatchers that think there isn't a serious side to birdwatching and churchgoers that think there isn't a fun side to going to Church. Hopefully both groups are small minorities.

For me the serious side of birdwatching can be the scientific study of birds i.e. ornithology, but I am not an ornithologist. My serious side is doing bird surveys and this takes two forms. One is the WeBS or The Wetland Bird Survey and this takes place once a month and naturally I do this at Tring Reservoirs. The other is the BBS or Breeding Bird Survey which is done twice in Spring and this I do on farmland over by Ivinghoe Aston. Both of these surveys are used to compile estimates of populations of birds and to understand whether the population of a species is

increasing, stable or decreasing and then to try to ascertain why and see if action can be taken to prevent decreases.

The wetland survey is meant to be done nationally at thousands of sites throughout the UK, ideally all on the same day; this day varies from one month to the next. It is mainly to monitor non-breeding water birds but is also done in the summer. The idea is just



to count all adult birds on the site for each wetland species present. Wetland species are ducks, geese, swans, Coots, Moorhens and heron species. Also other things can be counted such as gulls, terns and wading birds like Lapwings. The breeding survey involves walking along two one-kilometre tracks in a

one-kilometre square and counting all of the adult birds in five two-hundred metre stretches along both of the one-kilometre tracks.

These are both serious surveys of scientific and conservation value, and when the weather is bad they can be hard work. There are also fun moments while doing these surveys and I have found scarce birds such as Greater Scaup (see photo) and Garganey. Also doing these surveys has given me a systematic approach to looking through hundreds of ducks and resulted in me finding rare species.

So while birdwatching can look like it is always fun and relaxing it does have a serious side, but even that can be fun. Going to Church is like that and has a serious side but also has a fun side that should be appreciated and enjoyed. After all, while God is serious about many things he no doubt has a sense of humour and gave us a sense of humour and fun; it would be wrong of us to ignore that.

Roy Hargreaves, St Peter & St Paul

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CLUES ACROSS

- The small warrior (5)
- The large warrior (7)
- Files of the past (7).
- Happen (5)
- Countryside (5)
- Chosen (7)
- Ireland (4)
- Put up with (4) (2)
- Noisy row (6)
- Sound of music (4)
- Saint of the blind (7)
- Sound of warning (5)
- Afterthought (5)
- Ceremonial assistant (7)
- Speak well of (7)
- Area of Yorkshire (5)

CLUES DOWN

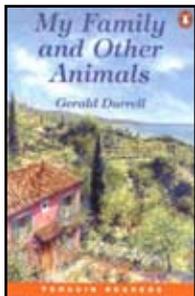
- Technical drawing (7)
- In charge of the church (5)
- Well disciplined (7)
- Hot water spring (6)
- Slack (5)
- One who does without (7)
- King of the Jews (5)
- Remaining (4)
- Isle of retreat (4)
- Spiritual realm (7)
- Answer (7).
- Unique character of Christ (7)
- '.....' Christian soldiers (6)
- Style of church architecture (5)
- Trinity (5)
- Kingly (5)

Answers on page 38

100 favourite books

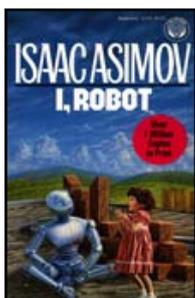
Some of these I have always wished to read and feel stimulated to begin now; others here remind me of when I read them long ago. Please send me your favourite book if you haven't already!

'My Family and Other Animals' by Gerald Durrell



This is still one of the funniest books I've read and which reminds me of reading it as a bedtime story to my daughters while on holiday in Wales.
Anthea Fraser, St Peter & St Paul

'I Robot' (and many others) by Isaac Asimov

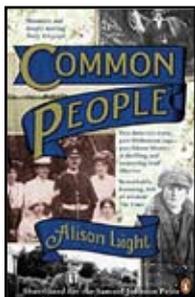


One of the best Science Fiction writers of all time. An ex-NASA scientist turned writer can mix fact and fiction with ease only to be almost matched by Arthur C. Clarke. He has got to be my very

favourite Sci Fi writer.

Mac Dodge, St Peter & St Paul

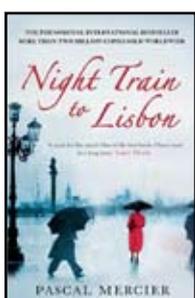
'Common People' by Alison Light



Because it is the book I should like to have written!

Nicky Bull, High Street Baptist Church

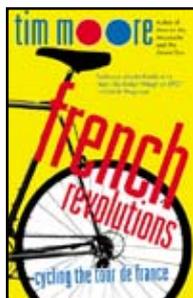
'Night Train to Lisbon' by Pascal Mercier



Very evocative, and rather disturbing in some ways too. I really loved it.

Anna Le Hair, St Peter & St Paul

'French Revolutions' by Tim Moore



An Englishman in France, riding the route of the Tour de France!

Andrew Openshaw, New Mill Baptist Church

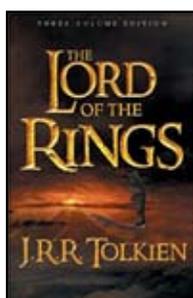
'The Tin Drum' by Gunter Grass



Magnificent, poignant, tragic magic realism.

Richard Abel, St Peter & St Paul

'The Lord of the Rings' by J.R.R. Tolkien



I read this forty years ago when a friend asked if I'd read it, and when I said I hadn't, said 'I do envy you, I wish I had that thrill to come – start with the Hobbit!' I was totally enthralled. It

was the first book I had read where the story divided and sent the characters off in different directions. The suspense between different threads of the story was so powerful, I was lost in it for weeks, and bereft when I got to the end!
Prue Senior, St Peter & St Paul
Also chosen by *Cliff Brown and Anna Le Hair.*

'Our Mutual Friend' by Charles Dickens



It is difficult to pick a favourite Dickens but this one has a brooding quality which I love. I like the way Dickens weaves a story and in this book the story twists more than the River Thames, which itself is almost a character in the story.

Jon Reynolds, St Peter & St Paul

'I could read the sky' by Timothy O'Grady

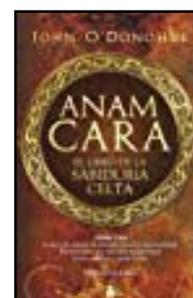


The book expresses the thoughts of a man who journeyed from the west coast of Ireland to work in the fields and building sites of England. He reflects on his life with such honesty, compassion

and humanity that this would have to be my desert island book so that I would not forget what humanity is all about. The introduction by John Berger begins 'I dare not go deeply into this book, for if I did I would stay with it forever and I wouldn't return'. He goes on to talk about the 'unsaid' between the words and sentences – like poetry, the words chosen arouse thoughts and feelings that are not on the page. When I pick up the book I cannot put it down without reading through it and I have lost count of how many times I have read it.

Jill Smith, St Peter & St Paul

'Anam-Ćara - Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World' by John O'Donohue



John O'Donohue was a philosopher and poet. He talks of the soul, the spirit which is deeply human in all of us. He is very much of the 'now' but full of the mystery of the present which is always past and

future too. He recognises that we need a shelter for our soul and our clay body is its only home here on earth.

There is a longing that rests in the shadow of our soul. It is the longing for belonging. 'Human presence is a creative and turbulent sacrament, a visible sign of invisible grace...friendship is the sweet grace of anam Ćara, the soul friend.'

'The anam-Ćara experience opens a friendship that is not wounded or limited by separation or distance. Such friendship can remain alive even when the friends live far away from each other. Because they have broken through the barriers of persona and egoism to the soul level, the unity of their souls is not easily severed.'

Tricia Apps, Corpus Christi

St Mary's, Puttenham

We are almost there!

By the time you are reading this edition of Comment we should be putting all our bits and pieces back into St Mary's again.

The walls have been painted a very soft light shade of cream which looks beautiful against the untouched stone of the window surrounds and the pillars. The tiles are down and nearly all grouted (in a colour to match the terracotta of the tiles). The radiators for the gentle heating in the chancel and tower are installed – just a little more plumbing to do. The lights are ready to be hung.

We just need the pews to be replaced and connected to their fixing strips, the pulpit to be refitted and the font to be relocated to its new position. Then all the protection material can be removed from the pillars and wall plaques and the organ can be unwrapped, the pedal board refitted and the organ tuned.

From such a depressing-looking start with everything stripped out of the Church, we have come full circle and are now looking forward to the glorious re-opening of St Mary's.

The Bishop of St Albans is due to be with us for a late afternoon Evensong service in May to which all those who

have contributed financially will be invited to attend if they so wish. More details to follow in due course.

The next update pictures should show the 'new' St Mary's in Puttenham – good for generations to come!

Christine Rutter, St Mary's Puttenham



Piano and more series

Anna Le Hair's generous series of short Sunday afternoon concerts followed by refreshments goes from strength to strength at St Peter & St Paul, Tring. The March concert comprised two popular Mozart pieces, the evergreen string serenade 'Eine kleine Nachtmusik' and the playful Piano Concerto No 12 in A major, performed by the Icknield Ensemble under the direction of Leon Bosch with Anna as soloist in the concerto. Leon was for twenty years principal double bass with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. As a soloist he has recorded an extensive discography and commissioned over three-dozen works for the instrument. Latterly, he has taken up conducting, having been encouraged to do so by his former colleague at the Academy, the late Sir Neville Marriner. He lives in Tring.

The Icknield Ensemble, led by Arwen Newband, was formed in 2014 as an extension of Anna's Icknield Trio and gives an opportunity for local musicians to play chamber music and works for chamber orchestra on an occasional basis. Both the serenade and the concerto benefited from Leon's precise direction and were well balanced between the different sections of the ensemble. Anna's playing of the concerto sparkled brilliantly and displayed the attractive mellow tone quality of the new piano. We learnt from the informative programme notes that the serenade originally had an additional minuet between the first and second movements – why was it torn out of the manuscript?

The whole concert was a most enjoyable musical and social occasion and a real treat, particularly for people who prefer a daytime event. A retiring collection was divided between the church and the piano fund.

Martin Wells, St Peter & St Paul

Piano & more series

Rebecca Whiteman Cello
Anna Le Hair Piano

playing an hour long programme of music
by Bach, Beethoven, Schumann and others

Sunday 14th May

at 3pm followed by tea

Tring Parish Church

Free admission, with retiring collection
Further details - 07753 567 704



Spring Fayre runs for a fortnight from 22nd April through to 6th May 2017.

A fortnight of events celebrating the arrival of spring in Tring. Our aim is to bring the local community together and promote well-being through healthy outdoor pursuits.

It includes guided nature and heritage walks, FOTCH Family Fun Day, a Spring Photographic Competition and special offers at local sports clubs.

The fortnight starts with the launch day on Saturday 22nd April on Church Square, High Street, Tring and features a petting zoo, local charity stalls and the photo competition launch.

For more information visit www.tringtogether.org.uk or look out for the Spring Fayre brochure.



Saturday 6th May is the Tring Together Job Show. After last year's resounding success the Job Show returns bigger and better. Many local exhibitors, a CV clinic and useful workshops all for free. For more information visit www.tringtogether.org.uk



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Our Hungarian Day

It seemed entirely appropriate that the week that Mrs May triggered Article 50 for the UK to leave the EU, High Street Baptist Church welcomed representatives from many nations to its first ever Hungarian Day!

Approximately sixty people – including three Hungarians, two Germans, half a Welsh person and a



quarter of an Austrian person – enjoyed a wonderful Hungarian meal and quiz.

Gabi, our intern, and her mum Agi – who came to Tring specially from Kecskemet – cooked chicken goulash and potatoes which were served with pickled gherkins. Pudding was makos guba, pieces of bagel soaked in warm milk then tossed in sugar and crushed poppy seeds. It was reminiscent of the old British favourite, bread and butter pudding.

While waiting (a very short time, it

has to be said!) for their meals, diners entertained themselves by answering the table quiz Gabi had prepared.

Questions included: Which of the following countries does not have a border with Hungary? Ukraine, Croatia, Bulgaria or Slovenia?

Which of the following inventions is not Hungarian? Ballpoint pen, Vitamin C, battery, noiseless match?

Quizzers also got a bonus point if they could tell us whether megszent-ségteleníthetetlen-ségeskedéseitekért is a real word!

Although our languages, histories and cultures can be different, working with someone from another country has been a fantastic experience for people at High Street Baptist Church. Despite Brexit, the world is more connected today than it ever has been and our young people are getting a taste of (quite



literally when eating goulash) the wider world and its wonderful people.

As it says in Acts 10:34-35, 'Then Peter began to speak: "I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."'

God willing, when Gabi returns to Budapest in July to study psychology at university, we will welcome two more international interns, and will get to know another culture or two and make friendships that we hope will last a lifetime.

Gabi is a reminder of Christianity's borderless existence. Walls cannot be built that will keep Christians from sharing the good news with one another and our neighbours.

And now for the answers to the quiz questions above: Bulgaria does not share a border with Hungary; the battery was invented by Alessandro Volta, an Italian, and megszent-ségteleníthetetlen-ségeskedéseitekért is indeed a real word and means something like 'for your [plural] continued behaviour as if you could not be desecrated'!

Gabriella Nagy and Hannah Asquith
High Street Baptist Church



Hungary Quiz

- Which of the following countries does NOT have a border with Hungary?
A) Ukraine
B) Croatia
C) Bulgaria
D) Slovenia
- The currency of Hungary is called...
A) Euro
B) Forint
C) Shilling
D) Zari
- Which one of these pictures was taken in the capital city of Hungary?
A)  B) 
C)  D) 
- Which of the following inventions is NOT Hungarian?
A) Ballpoint Pen
B) Vitamin C
C) Battery
D) Noiseless match
- Which of the following statements about Hungarian language is FALSE?
A) There are two letters that are pronounced exactly the same.
B) There are letters that are composed of two or three other letters.
C) megszent-ségteleníthetetlen-ségeskedéseitekért is a real word.
D) Unlike English, Hungarian doesn't have dialects. It is spoken the same way in every part of the country.

Busy or intentional?



It is now nearly six years since we left France and my previous 'proper job' and we came to Tring to allow me to be the minister at New

Mill Baptist Church.

Although it was not especially apparent at the time, looking back at my work at PPG (a global US chemical company) it would appear to have been marked by four characteristics; namely task, timetable, team and travel. Perhaps unsurprisingly, task and timetable head the list. Management by objective was the name of the game, and from the annual target review to the daily grind, the primary objective was to do what was required and to do it on time (and in budget!).

However very little could be achieved alone; teams were always needed, sometimes large, sometimes small, but there was little room for the 'lone ranger' or maverick, solo player.

Finally, in my role, travel was almost always involved. At one point the ten people who reported to me were based in ten different countries across Europe. Much could be achieved by phone and email but nothing could compare to a face-to-face encounter, to see not only the local context but to offer the chance to share a beer or two afterwards!

Coming to Tring and Baptist ministry you might expect that much would be different.

Certainly the 'driven' nature of a US corporation, always looking at how Wall Street was treating the share price, is no

longer present. Timescales in church life are much more relaxed and I'm certainly not earning as many frequent flyer miles as before.

I enjoy meeting with ministry colleagues and throughout the training process there was a good network of support and connection with other ministers, but for me, in the day to day, there is a much greater reduced sense of 'team' and much more working 'alone'.

All the above would merit greater reflection but for now, I want to concentrate on the final characteristic; that of 'task'.

One of the classic essay titles given to Baptist ministers through their training is to reflect on the nature of ordination: of what it means to be 'set apart' for ministry. In a denomination that would claim the priesthood of all believers, there is no ministry activity that is reserved for a minister. Leading worship, offering prayers of forgiveness, presiding at communion, taking a wedding, funeral etc., all these could be done by anyone from the congregation. Essentially Baptist ministry is 'task'-oriented; ministers are set apart to 'do' stuff!

So, having said we are set apart to play a certain role, then what is that role?

Historically, to be a Baptist was to be outside the norm, to be a dissenter. At various points that was a dangerous thing and there was a sense that the minister was very definitely the chaplain to and even the guardian of the church 'family'.

These days, denominational loyalties are considerably weaker and in a society that does not 'join' as much as it used to, preferring more fluid and

flexible arrangements, all membership organisations (and at its most basic level that is what a Baptist church could be seen as) are facing similar issues.

For some Baptist churches and ministers the solution has been found in an 'attractional' model. People are drawn to church by worship style or ministry, to a certain demographic or even slick marketing.

None of these are of themselves bad, but for me, and my ministry at the moment in New Mill, the 'attractional' model of ministry does not seem to fit. Instead we have been and are working on an 'invitational' model where people become involved in church life through relationships built up over time; where ministry focuses on those not 'in' the church but rather on those outside.

For me, this has meant that the task of ministry is spending as much time as possible with our toddlers and carers at Tuesday Tot Spot, at our Thursday Community Café and at our Friday Youth Club. It has led to me being a Governor at Tring School and Dundale Primary and Nursery; taking on a trusteeship at Tring Charities and working on our developing relationship with the Princes Centre, who have started to meet as a Day Care Centre twice a week at New Mill.

The challenge is to be intentional and not just to be busy: to look outwards but not to neglect the 'family'. The nature of my activity in switching from the corporate world to ministry has changed considerably and yet ministry itself is changing. As always, the search is for the wisdom to bring an unchanging gospel to an ever changing world.

Andrew Openshaw
New Mill Baptist Church

Tring Parish magazine May 1917

John Henry Anderson, of the 44th Canadian Battalion, was severely wounded on 3 April and taken to the 22nd Casualty Clearing Station, France, where he died the next day, after having his leg amputated. The chaplain writing to his mother says 'he was too weak to talk, or to be talked to much, but, as I knelt by his bed, I could just hear him joining in the Lord's Prayer'. Five years ago, Jack was one of the large party who left Tring for Canada, and about two

years ago he joined the Army there, and has been, for some time, with his gallant countrymen, in the thick of the fighting. In earlier days he was a keen Member of our Church Lads Brigade and one more, therefore, of the old Company to give his life for King and Country. RIP.



The life-transforming love of Jesus

There's a lot about this job that stops you getting too self-important. I remember being at some event, when one of my colleagues heard someone in the crowd whisper, 'Isn't that the Archbishop of Canterbury over there?' and the person's friend hissed back, 'Nah – too short.'

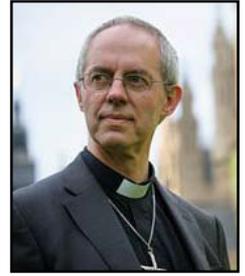
When I meet Jesus Christ at the judgement, I know one thing. He isn't going to care what size of archbishop I was or, I think, whether I was an archbishop. What matters is that I loved him and sought to follow him and above all that I trusted in him alone for my life and my future. Because the most

important thing I have ever done is to become a follower of Jesus – I took my first steps with him about forty-two years ago. Over those years he has been a faithful friend, a sovereign Lord, compassionate, forgiving, my ever-present Saviour, everything in my life and the heart and foundation of all I am. Through the hardest and most painful times and in the best and most joyful times in my life, Jesus has walked alongside me, he's never left, even when I've wanted him to. When I felt ready to give up hope, he picked me up and it's his love that has healed me and

strengthened me.

Following Jesus has been the core point of my life and that's one reason I want everyone to hear his voice calling to them and to learn what it is to find his love, his call, his direction, his purpose... I want everyone to know the life-transforming love of Jesus.

Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury



'Eight till Eight'

Tring's response to Justin Welby's Global Prayer Initiative

Are you interested in experiencing and exploring some different ways to pray? Would you like some ideas on how to rekindle or expand your prayer life? Maybe you'd like to pray, but don't know where to begin? Many people feel like praying when they are experiencing strong emotions, but prayer can strengthen, calm and lighten us throughout every day.

You are invited to drop in to St Peter & St Paul's Church in Tring town centre on Saturday 3 June, at any time from 8.00am until 8.00pm. There will be displays and some short periods of led prayer throughout the day, with plenty of time between for you to share the experience with others, to try out some ideas for yourself, or just to listen and be open to God's prompting.

Why are we doing this?

This is our response, as Christian churches and organisations in Tring and the villages, to Archbishop Justin

Welby's call for a world-wide wave of prayer from Ascension Day on 25 May to Pentecost on 4 June. You might also like to be involved as an individual – or as a family – in the 'Pledge to Pray' during those days. Have a look at the 'Thy Kingdom Come' website for information and resources for this www.thykingdomcome.global.

What's happening on 3 June?

Prayer – of all sorts – all day. Led prayer of different types will be for five or ten minutes, then there will be space for exploring displays and trying out prayers that you, personally, choose. There will be sessions of prayer through music, poetry, drama, interaction, meditation, art and more. Some prayers will be geared towards children and families. There will also be opportunities for you to ask others to pray for you. You could join us for a short service at one end of the day or the other. Or come to share in the 8.30 Prayer Breakfast. Call in for a while at any time during the day. If you're there around lunchtime, you could bring a

packed lunch with you. At some point you might like to go on a Prayer Walk. You choose – it's up to you.

How will it work?

Save the date now – Saturday 3 June. Look out for posters and the timetable of events nearer the time. Make your choice or just drop in when you can. In addition to the breakfast, there will be coffee/tea/squash and biscuits on offer throughout the day. Come when you like; stay as long as you like.

How can I find out more?

Please contact St Peter & St Paul's Prayer Ministry Team c/o Mike Watkin (890407) or Anne Nobbs (823971). You will also find more information and resources available on www.thykingdomcome.global.

Anne Nobbs, St Peter & St Paul



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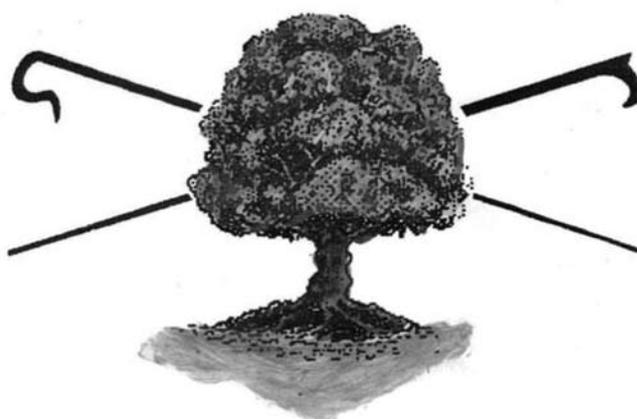
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Playing the organ in country Churches

I started playing the organ in Churches, in a small way, during my long vacations at university. I went (was sent) to live with my aunt in Norfolk. She was a missionary to the rural parts of the county. I accompanied her and her companion around the various (tin) Chapels that were her 'patch' and played some old harmoniums for the hymns. I think that is where I learnt better sight reading...

After I married Pam we lived in Old Harlow where I was part of a rota of organists for two churches, with several services each Sunday. This was in the early 1960s so these services were all Book of Common Prayer.

After we moved to Broxbourne, my only organ-playing was for the Guides' Thinking Day services in the Parish Church. There were some long gaps between any Church attendance until we moved to Broad Oak, Heathfield. My daughter, on a visit, let it be known in the village Church that I could play the organ and I took on the Sunday morning services. By that time, in the late 1990s, we had all these new series of services, so I was playing all types of hymns and worship songs.

After a few months, the Vicar who had been playing the organ in the Parish Church for his own services retired, so I picked up a second service for every Sunday. That series of services was Matins twice a month and Communion for the others. After the interregnum, during which I was choosing the hymns, the new Vicar brought in even more different hymn books, so I was using three or four books for each service. I enjoyed playing at the Parish church, which had a listed Green-built organ dating from 1793 not long before he died.

When we installed a new sound system in 2001, I managed to use a microphone above the organ to improve the audibility of the accompaniment for services like Carols at Christmas when the Church was really full – the organ being rather tucked away.

I was asked to play for different services in other rural Churches when the resident organist was ill or at work. Again, this led to using different hymn books and getting to grips with 'new' hymns.

Then we came to Tring. It is here that I have played in a greater number of different (small) rural churches. Revd



Ian Ogilvie is, or was, licenced to the adjacent diocese, so I was asked to play well outside the Team Parish. I think one of the first was in Ilmer – which in fact is not a village, but only a hamlet with several farms and a few houses. And a small Church! I played for a wedding there – and felt rather nervous as it was a totally new experience with a strange instrument and people who didn't know me.

I have played at all the 'country' Churches in the Tring Team (Wilstone, Pottenham, Long Marston, Aldbury) but not at St Peter & St Paul. I prefer the simpler organs. Being a piano player originally, I have not learnt to play the pedals properly, so I have to choose the music carefully.

I also played for a time at Drayton Beauchamp which like quite a lot of country Churches is at the end of a 'No through road'. It has a lovely, fairly modern organ but as you have to park the car in a field with sheep, you have to keep the gate into the Churchyard secure and remember to close the gate

to the road after exiting!

I was also asked to play in Buckland Church for a couple of services and for their Open Day. Similarly

for Wigginton – I was one of a rota to provide music for their Open Day. I was asked to play at Pitstone Church which is now closed and only open one day a year – very interesting: worth a visit if you can find out the date.

Then, some five or six years ago, I was invited to St Nicholas Cublington one evening to see if I would like to play for their morning services three Sundays a month. I even had the choice of instruments! I played there for three and a half interesting years. About two years were an Interregnum, with services taken by several retired priests. This again was a very interesting old Church with a dwindling congregation. When the new Vicar/Rector arrived, the parish went from four to eight village churches. I think they all had a reduced service schedule.

Most recently, I have played at St Cross, Wilstone, on a regular basis for quite a number of years. Pam and I attended the Lent Group recently and we are often at the Coffee Mornings and other events. I like the organ there and the people; and I think they like the music that I provide before and after the services.

Clive Russell, Tring Team



Wedding workshop



I'm sure you would agree that St Peter & St Paul's is the perfect place for a wedding. Purely on aesthetic grounds, it is a beautiful back

drop to a very special day.

Rev Huw Bellis is planning a very user-friendly service, making everyone feel very welcome and finishing with a

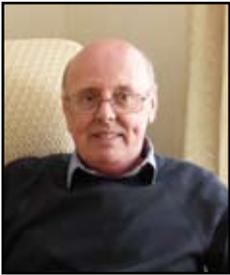
slice of wedding cake and a warm 'hello' from members of the congregation. This will be followed by a delicious lunch and there will then follow a light-hearted hour's discussion on the reasons why getting married in a Church is a very important and special event.

The date for the workshop is Sunday 14 May and if you would like to come and help you would be most welcome, especially if you can share some thoughts on your own wedding day.

Vivianne Child, St Peter & St Paul



Games at High Street Baptist



Wednesday Games Afternoon did not come about in a flash of inspiration, it was more like putting ingredients into a slow cooker and opening the door

to discover a marvellous aroma and a delicious meal awaiting you after a day out!

To consider that I was relatively new to High Street Baptist Church speaks volumes about the welcoming, accepting and amazingly friendly congregation that gave me such encouragement and offers of help to get the idea off the ground. I was in the Conservative Club one lunchtime about to have a game of dominoes and mentioned the games idea to Roy, the treasurer of the club. He disappeared up the stairs and reappeared with a cheque for £50 saying, 'Would this help to get you started with a few games?' So with cheque in hand, grinning like the Cheshire Cat, I marched over to the Church to deposit the cheque with Kevin our Operations Manager, who looked at me and said 'We'll match that. Should help get you started.'

So it was that I spent some money on a few games and with help from my dear friend Carolyn we ordered some stuff on-line and she very kindly organized a striking big poster which we have outside the Church on Games Day. It was whilst talking to Carolyn that it occurred to me that there are very few places in Tring where it's possible to just sit quietly, pray or simply enjoy some peace, so I approached our Minister, Andrew Cowley, who at once agreed and allowed me to use the Church.

It was decided that Wednesday from 2.00pm-4.00pm would be a good time and so at the social group meeting I attended I was asked if tea and coffee would be available. Mary and Peggy said they would love to provide that and typical of folk at High Street, not only do they keep everyone well supplied with tea and coffee, but they are always bringing with them delicious cakes, biscuits and chocolates. We open the Church during the afternoon as a quiet space, with some relaxing background music playing and on our big screen, changing images of flowers, woodlands and country views. Gabi, our intern, immediately set to work putting together a playlist of lovely music to accompany the pictures and on Games afternoons

works hard to ensure that everyone has a good time.

So what do we do on a Wednesday afternoon? We ask for a very modest voluntary contribution of £2.00 that helps toward running costs and we have on offer card games, board games, dominoes, connect four, shut the box, etc. There's a large jigsaw puzzle that is very popular which we are able to put away and bring out each week, a pool table and table football. We are always open to any suggestions for other games. Tea, coffee, cake and biscuits are all included in the entrance fee. The Church is open for those who would like to light a candle, pray or just sit and enjoy some quality quiet time. We are always pleased to see new faces, so why not come along and join us for a cup of tea, slice of cake and some good fun.

You will have gathered by now that Wednesday Games came about, like that wonderful slow cooked meal, with ingredients from the congregation at High Street, local organizations and the helpers that turn out each week. God bless you all.

Norman Cutler
High Street Baptist Church



Yarn bombing brings a community together

For a couple of years I have been involved in the yarn bombing in Church Square and St Peter & St Paul, Tring. We started in the summer of 2015 to celebrate the 700th Anniversary of the Tring Charter. A number of craft groups, led by Sally Spriggs, decided to decorate the centre of the town. Something that was quite new to us: could we be daring and decorate the town at an early hour of the morning? And how would that go down? And would enough people get involved to make it a big enough statement?

The answers were yes, yes and yes!



And the result was tremendous, both in the groups that took part, and the admiration of so many in the community and visitors alike. The smiles on people's faces, the children cuddling Elmer the Elephant, complete strangers who came to chat while we were erecting it and keeping it tidy; the wonderful knitted bicycle that welcomed the crowds to watch the women's national cycle race. All of that made it so worthwhile!

So, how to follow that? The following Christmas, our group decided to make some bits to decorate the Parish Church porch as well as the Church Square. We had knitted paper chains in the bus shelter, knitted fairy lights decorating the Church archway as well as baubles, pom-poms and icicles in the trees. We erected a mobile with hanging Christmas trees in the Church porch and knitted a Nativity set for the display case. Again we were blown away by the positive comments and the pleasure it gave so

many people.

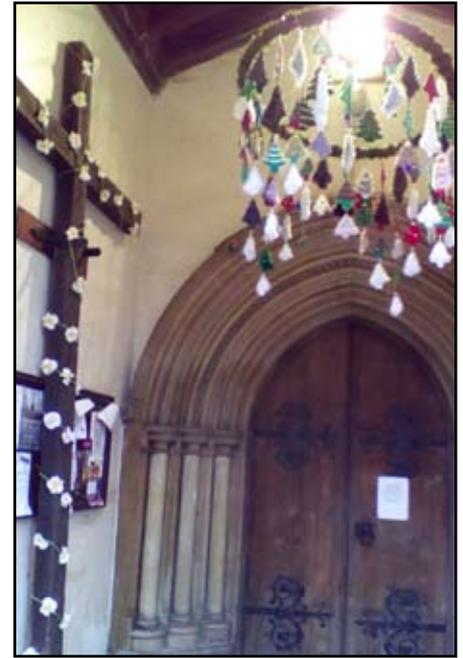
So the summer of 2016 was looming and what better way to mark the occasion of the Queen's 90th birthday than another yarn bomb. This time John Cole-Morgan co-ordinated various groups and the theme was a tea party fit for Her Majesty. So the square was adorned with ninety knitted soldiers on guard, a teddy bears' picnic, tablecloths with delicate sandwiches and cupcakes, all knitted or crocheted with love and care. The Church porch had a giant teapot hanging in mid-air with slices of battenberg cake, swiss-rolls and cups and saucers around it; everything was decorated with knitted red, white and blue bunting, flowers and pom-poms. Afterwards, some of the items were sent to the palace for Her Majesty and we were honoured with letters of thanks from her. A lot more of the items were auctioned and £2000 was raised and given to local charities.

More yarn bombing happened at Christmas 2016, again much to everyone's delight with reindeer, candles and flying angels to add to the fun.

As well as all the knitters and crocheters, we have a number of helpers we couldn't do without who turn up early in the morning to climb ladders, attach items with cable ties, make tea, take photos and then help with running repairs in the following days – lots of people, all coming together with the common aim of making our town attractive and enjoyable.

So what is next? In September we are having a 36-hour knitathon in Church Square, knitting hats for Innocent Smoothies, for which 25p will be given to AgeUK for each hat made.

The big project for 2018, which is being organised by the Crafty and Wine group, is the Poppy Project, an installation at the Parish Church to commemorate the 100 years anniversary of the end of World War I. As this is



planned to be on a very large scale we have already started knitting and crocheting poppies, involving many people and groups in Tring and further away. And we need lots more! We are also making 116 fractured poppy patchwork rings, one for each of the 116 men who gave their lives and are remembered on the War Memorial in Tring.

Please think about how you would like to support this project. We need donations of red DK yarn or money towards the cost of it, large black buttons, 6" wooden embroidery rings, people who will knit or crochet poppies (we will supply the patterns). Also you can sponsor the cost of a patchwork poppy or make one yourself: kits will be available soon.

We are launching the project to the wider community at the FOTCH Family Fun Day on the 6 May so come and visit us there. More information about the knitathon or the Poppy Project, or offers of help to me on 01442 824929 or jjgoody@ntlworld.com.

Janet Goodyer, St Peter & St Paul



Wanted: clean empty pots!

Are you a hoarder of pots? Would you like to donate them to the Gardening ladies (sorry about being gender specific but we are all female) so we can provide a wide range of plants on the FOTCH Family Fun Day?

Currently there are hundreds of seedlings and small plants growing in readiness for Saturday 6 May, The Big Day. But chances are they will all



need potting on... Please call, text or WhatsApp me on 07968 312161 if you can help or email annetter@ad-publishing.com.

Annette Reynolds, St Peter & St Paul

Wanted: Helpers at First Saturday Lunches

Lunches are held on the first Saturday of the month in Tring Parish Hall for people who are on their own, usually after losing a partner.

We work with two teams, alternate months from 12.00 noon – 3.00pm approximately. The cooking is under control but we need Kitchen Helpers and Drivers to transport the diners to and from their homes.

We all enjoy ourselves – so if you'd like to be part of a team and wish for more information, please ring Sheila Whitehead on 01442 822226 or Pam Russell on 01442 826533. We need you!
Pam Russell, St Peter & St Paul



Wanted: a home for a ballerina

A seventeen-year-old ballet student studying at Tring Park is in need of a temporary home in Tring from September, to enable her to complete her studies.

If you have a spare room in your home you could rent out to her, providing breakfast and the use of a washing machine, please contact the Editor on 0845 868 1333 or annetter@ad-publishing.com.



A big thank you!

Those of you who have a subscription to Comment help us greatly. Of course you can buy a copy from the Parish Church and put your £1.00 coin (old style or newly minted) into the hole in the wall.

If you choose to buy on subscription, however, you can have it hand delivered to your door and pay once a year. The advantage of this for the Comment Team is that we know how many to order. Some months we don't have enough copies; at other times we have copies left over and 'wasted'. If you do want to take out a subscription, please tell me or the Treasurer Chris Hoare or our new Distribution Team, Frank Dalton and David Whiting (details on page 38).

We would also like to say a big thank you to Sheila and Brian Whitehead who handled the distribution so efficiently for many, many years. You were brilliant!



In memory of Pat Gray

Heather Patricia Grey, known to all as Pat, loved Tring and was involved in so many things to do with the town.

She was a committee member at the first AGM of Beaver Swimming Group in 1985 and went on to become chair from 1991-1998. Whilst taking part in many NASCH Swimming Galas, Pat became the team manager.

Pat was also very politically minded.

She served on the Town Council and was Deputy Mayor at one point. She contested many elections before becoming a Councillor on Tring and was very dedicated, serving on many committees.

The Pensioners' Club was Pat's idea and also helping with the Tesco Shopping Bus for the elderly.

Pat also wrote poetry and succeeded

in winning a competition which afforded her a time in the United States.

Pat died on 18 February 2017 at the age of 86. She left her body to medical research and teaching so there was no funeral, but a memorial service was held in April.

We were friends for many years and she will be a big loss to all who knew her.

Olive Conway

Churches Together in Tring

I have said before that one of the most pleasing and rewarding aspects of Christian life in Tring and the villages is the way all the churches in the town work together. There is a general lack of suspicion and openness to others' expressions of faith and witness that is not always found in other places in this country or abroad. No one thinks that their expression of faith is 'the' church; we are indeed, Churches Together in Tring (CTT). Like all organisations and places where people come together with common cause, CTT has had its ups and downs over the years and is continually faced with the challenge of the reasons and purpose of its existence.



For me, working together between churches – ecumenism – is not an optional extra, not something we do when we have the time or because our parents told us to 'play nicely with the other children'! The challenge today to

all churches is how to be one in Christ. This would appear to be not only a question of organisational pragmatism but is a mission imperative.

So, how do those who are followers of Christ in Tring, as churches in the town and in the formal expression as CTT, respond to the challenge? For me, the last thing we need are more meetings, committees and reports. We need to find ways to build networks and relationships that are light on their feet, that enable us to continue to be 'better together'.

We have reduced the number of formal CTT meetings to just four a year. The aim was to reduce formal business to a minimum to allow time for a speaker or presentation of general interest – to act as a resource and platform for idea-sharing and networking rather than something that sucks on our will to live!

All are welcome – you don't need to be a formal representative to attend – so please do come along. Even better, if you have a topic or speaker in mind, then do let me know. Dates and venues of meetings are advertised in Comment so do please take note and get involved!

Our Good Friday walk and open air service are one way to demonstrate that churches work (and walk) together

– though maybe a silent, sombre march to the beat of a mournful drum is not the most obvious way to show our vibrancy and relevance.



As a contrast, we plan to have a presence at the Tring Carnival on Saturday 24 June. We hope to have the 'chill out' tent along with activities to fit this year's theme of 'wheels'. Please consider volunteering for an hour or so (either let me know directly or via your church CTT rep) or at worst come to the carnival with friends and actively encourage them in our direction! We can do much on our own as churches, but a larger event like the Carnival is a place where our combined resources can be put to great effect.

In our busy world, committing time and energy to our own church life can be challenging enough, I realise, but please do pray for our life together as CTT, and if possible do be the answer to your own prayers by getting involved in practical ways!

Andrew Openshaw
New Mill Baptist Church



St Martha's Methodist Church

FRIENDSHIP CLUB

The Club continues to meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 2.30pm. On 2 May, Val White will visit to speak about the Cinnamon Trust.

CONCERT ON SATURDAY 13 MAY

A recital will be given by Denise Harrison (piano) and Maddie Deane (soprano), the programme will include music by Haydn and Brahms. The retiring collection will be shared between St Martha's Building Fund and the Hospice of St Francis.

CONCERT ON SATURDAY 10 JUNE

Alexander Ardakov returns to give a piano recital. The

programme will include Beethoven's variations on 'God save the King' and the third piano sonata by Chopin. Admission by programme £12.00 (St Martha's congregation who book in advance £9.00), proceeds to be shared between the performer and the Building Fund.

ST MARTHA'S CHURCH COUNCIL

A reminder that the Church Council will convene again on Saturday 20 May at 10.00am at the Church.

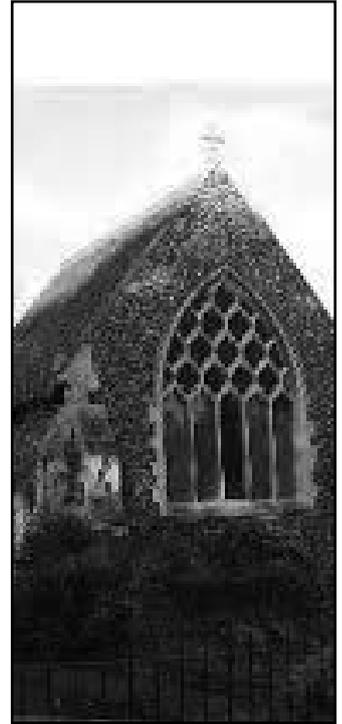
7 May 10.00am
Morning Service
John Watkins

7 May 6.00pm
Communion Service
Revd Rachael Hawkins

14 May 10.00am
Communion Service
Revd Rachael Hawkins

21 May 10.00am
Morning Service
Dr Edmund Marshall

28 May 10.00am
Morning Service
John Benson



New Mill Baptist Church

TOT SPOT

Tuesdays @ 10.00-11.30am
2, 9, 16, 23 May

BRIGHT HOUR

Tuesday 9 May @ 2.30pm
The Speaker is Mr Tommy Masters

KNIT & NATTER

Wednesdays @ 7.30pm
3, 10, 17, 24, 31 May

THE MILL CAFÉ

Thursdays @ 11.00-2.00pm
11, 18, 25 May

FRIDAY CLUB

Fridays @ 6.00-7.15pm
5, 12, 26 May

7 May 10.30am

Morning Service
Revd Andrew Openshaw

14 May 10.30am

Morning Service
Mr Aubrey Dunford

21 May 10.30am

Morning Service
Revd Andrew Openshaw

28 May 10.30am

Morning Service
Revd Alan Cookson



High Street Baptist Church

@MYEG

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Youth Group for years 7 to 13

ACTIVITY ROOM

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

COFFEE FOR A CAUSE

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

TOTS

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

GAMES AFTERNOON

Wednesdays 2.00-4.00pm
Traditional games, puzzles and refreshments

PLAY CAFÉ

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

FRIDAY CAFÉ

Fridays 12.00-1.30pm
Freshly cooked lunches

WHO LET THE DADS OUT

First Saturday of the month at 8.30am to 10.00am

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

Service at 10.30am with Junior Church and Crèche

SUNDAYS @ 7

First Sunday of the month at 7.00pm



Tring Team Anglican Churches

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

Sunday 7 May

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

Sunday 14 May

8.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
10.00am Holy Communion BCP Aldbury
10.00am Holy Communion Long Marston
10.00am Sunday Worship in Wilstone
10.00am Worship for All Tring
11.30am Holy Communion BCP Tring
6.30pm Evening Prayer Long Marston

Sunday 21 May

8.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
10.00am Sunday Worship CW Wilstone
10.00am Holy Communion CW Aldbury
10.00am Holy Communion CW Long Marston

Thursday 25 May

10.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
8.00pm Holy Communion CW Tring

Sunday 28 May

8.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Long Marston
10.00am Holy Communion Aldbury
10.00am Worship for All Wilstone
3.30pm Evensong Puttenham
6.00pm Holy Communion Tring

Weekday Services

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

Baptism Preparation

Sunday 14 May 11.20am St P&P Emmie Hobbs Room
Churches Together in Tring
Saturday 6 May 8.30-9.30am Prayer Breakfast

Dacorum Foodbank

Weekdays 10.00am St P&P

Meditation

Thursdays 8.00pm Corpus Christi

Coffee Mornings

Saturdays 10.00am St P&P
Tuesdays 9.00am Aldbury
Tuesdays 10.30am Wilstone

First Saturday Lunch

Cancelled this month
For those who have been bereaved to meet and eat with others. Contact Margaret Oram for information on 01442 824575.

Afternoon Tea

Tuesday 23 May 2.00-3.30pm All Saints, Long Marston

Youth Café

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

Young Adults Group TAYA

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

Mothers' Union

Thursday 4 May 2.00-3.30pm Tring Parish Hall

Book Group

Sunday 28 May 6.45pm St P&P

FOTCH Family Fun Day

Saturday 6 May

Reopening of St Mary's Puttenham

Sunday 14 May 6.30
with the Bishop of St Albans

Stick Sunday Service

Sunday 21 May 4.00pm



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)

Team Vicar
(Aldbury)
Vacancy

School Chaplaincy and
Team Vicar
(Long Marston, Tring School)
Rev Jane Banister
01442 822170
jcbanister@btinternet.com

Associate Priest
(Wilstone)
Rev Didier Jaquet
01296 660961
didier@tringteamparish.org.uk
(Day off Saturday)

Diocesan Lay Minister
Mike Watkin
01442 890407

Parish Co-ordinators
Roy Hargreaves
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Ted Oram
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Church Wardens
Chris Hoare (Tring)
01442 822915

Ian Matthews (Tring)
01442 823327

Andy Stephenson (Aldbury)
07548 696965

Annie Eggar (Aldbury)
01442 851854

John Barron (Puttenham)
01296 631351

Christine Rutter (Puttenham)
01296 668337

Ken Martin (Wilstone)
01442 822894

Rev Jane Banister (Long
Marston)
01442 822170

Mothers' Union Branch Leader
Sandra Watkin
01442 890407

Tring Team Administration
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Hall Bookings
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tringparishhall@hotmail.com

Hall Secretary
Barbara Anscombe
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Bandb33@talktalk.net

Safeguarding
Jenny Scholes
01442 825276

ST MARTHA'S METHODIST CHURCH

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

Senior Steward
Rosemary Berdinner
01442 822305

AKEMAN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

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Rev David Williams
01442 827881

Administrator
Emma Nash
01442 827881

CORPUS CHRISTI ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Canon Vincent Berry
51 Langdon Street
01442 823161
tring@rcdow.org.uk

HIGH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

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89 High Street
adcowley@btinternet.com
07920 430739

Assistant Minister,
Kevin Rogers
kevinrogers@
tringbaptistchurch.co.uk

Administration/facilities hire
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01442 824054

NEW MILL BAPTIST CHURCH

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Rev Andrew Openshaw
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01442 825157
minister@newmillbaptist.org.uk

JUSTICE & PEACE GROUP

affiliated to
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michaeldemidecki@gmail.com
www.justiceandpeacetring.org

OUR CHURCHES ONLINE

www.tringteamparish.org.uk
www.tringchurchmusic.org.uk
www.stmarthas-tring.org.uk
www.tringbaptistchurch.co.uk
www.newmillbaptist.org.uk
www.akemanstreet.org.uk
www.parish.rcdow.org.uk/tring

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Crossword puzzle answers

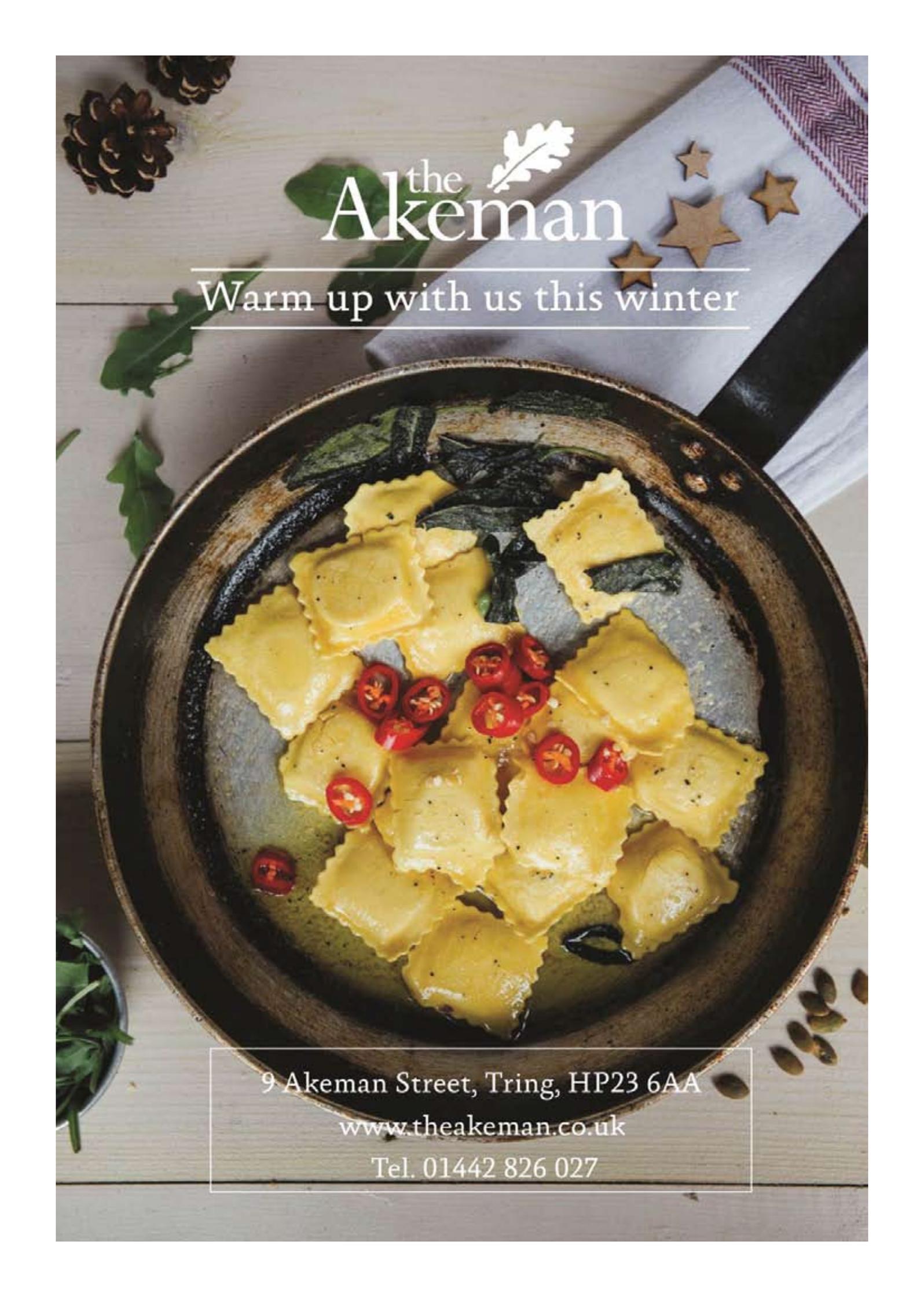
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ANSWERS ACROSS

1. DAVID
4. GOLIATH
8. ARCHIVE
9. OCCUR
10. RURAL
11. ELECTED
13. EIRE
15. MAKE DO
17. FRACAS
20. NOTE 22.
DUNSTAN
24. SIREN
26. RIDER
27. ACOLYTE
28. COMMEND
29. DALES

ANSWERS DOWN

1. DIAGRAM
2. VICAR
3. DRILLED
4. GEEZER
5. LOOSE
6. ASCETIC
7. HEROD
12. LEFT
14. IONA
16. KINGDOM
18. RESPOND
19. SINLESS
21. ONWARD
22. DORIC
23. THREE
25. ROYAL



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