

COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCHES IN TRING



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A sense of the 'Other'



Welcome back to
Comment after the
summer break. Look
out for a few changes
over the next few
months. Will you
notice them?!

A few months
ago, Huw Bellis
talked to those of us in St
Peter & St Paul's about an experience
which came from the funeral part of his
ministry.

In the 'old days' cars would
respectfully follow a hearse along the
road. Increasingly now drivers overtake

on the inside of roundabouts because
whatever they are doing in their lives is
more important than offering respect to
the dead or to their grieving family and
friends.

He also told us of an incident
which caused horrified noises in the
congregation – of a man carrying
his young son's coffin as part of a
procession with a horse and cart when a
man beeped and shouted abuse at him
to get out of the way. The father gave
the tiny coffin to the undertaker and
went to explain to the driver (in terms
that anyone who has ever grieved would
understand) what was happening.

The problem is that that so often we
have lost a sense of the 'Other'; 'we' are
the centre of our own universe. The sun
and planets revolve around us and what
we want to do – so much so that we
have no time to think of the feelings or
needs of others. Huw invited us all to be
God-centred, not self-centred.

Summer is nearly over and 'normal'
life now resumes for those whose lives
lose their regular pattern over that
period. Whether it's harvest or Autumn
or 'so many days till Christmas' for you,
that seems a good message to take into
the next season.

The Editor

Giving thanks for harvest

Many of us this month will be celebrating
harvest festival. It is a chance to give
thanks to God for the food which
sustains human life, acknowledge God
as creator and commit ourselves to
be responsible stewards for our world.
While harvest festivals are not just
about farming, we do turn our minds to
appreciate the gathering in by those who
work in agriculture.

Despite living in a house backing on
to fields and working in a store based
on a farm, I still feel quite disconnected
from what is actually involved in
farming. I understand enough to know
that the existence of many a farmer
is precarious, incredibly hard and
incessant. I am glad that in the church's
calendar, we do have some time to think
about and express our gratitude to those
who work in farming.

Without in any way diminishing the
thanks we owe our farmers, I started
to wonder about work more generally.
When do we think about the harvest of
our own efforts, which for some may
be the most demanding, stressful and
time-consuming thing we do all week?
In what sense do we 'harvest' from our
own jobs?

There is, of course, the obvious: our
pay. Sadly for many that will be the limit
of the meaning of their job. The harvest
can be valued in the number of zeros
behind the first number. The thing is,
the pay is great for a short time but it's
soon gone. It is rarely sufficient in the
first place; we are soon after more. So
what keeps us heading in on a Monday
morning?

Surely the harvest of our efforts
ought to be more meaningful? Given
the huge amount of time our jobs now
occupy, there must be more purpose
than a wedge of cash? And where does
God fit in all of this?

We should rid ourselves, and
quickly, of any thought, that where we
work and what we do is beyond God;
that God is unable or unwilling to be
known and made known at work. God
is as present in the supermarket, the
boardroom or the building site as he is
in Church. It's us who change: we open
ourselves to his message in prayer but
not necessarily when we start looking
at our emails in the morning. There is
no reason why we shouldn't – and it
might be quite good if we did – start to
approach our work (as with all our life) as
something to dedicate to God and being
alert for the signs of his presence.

Even then, I would also urge that
we identify further indicators of a good
harvest from our work which can be
challenging and fulfilling – stretching us
to use our skills and talents to the fullest.

Our work can enable us to pursue
our hobbies and other interests. We
need to be careful our work can be done
without taking over all other aspects
of our life. Are we able to spend time
with our families, get away and actually
do something we find fun? This seems
to be a growing problem. Our sheer
availability by email, text or on the phone
means time off becomes rarer. We need
to rediscover that time off is a good
thing.

Our work can contribute to the

broader well-being of
society. We cannot all
be doctors or work
in the emergency
services but that
doesn't mean our
work does not
have wider benefit.
Are we involved
in industries or sectors that
create good jobs, improve society's
living standards, or, for example,
empower or enable others?

Often, when our work doesn't satisfy
these criteria we start to ask ourselves
whether we are in the right job.
Unfortunately many feel powerless to do
anything about it. Indeed, from my own
experience, it is when we lose control
of our work and the demands that are
placed upon us that work becomes
difficult, stressful and draining. However
for others work is where we derive some
of our identity, are able to practise our
strengths and where we are able to
make a positive difference to the world
in which we live. And for that, as in all
things, we need to give God thanks.

I am glad that we take some time in
the church's year to give thanks for the
harvest of the crop but I hope that in the
midst of the produce, the prayers and
the hymns of 'We plough the fields and
scatter', we all might grab an opportunity
to think about the harvesting of our own
time and efforts and ask ourselves: what
end are we truly pursuing?

Didier Jaquet, St Cross, Wiltshire



Harvest festival



As a teacher, one of the first whole school events in the new term is Harvest Festival, which can be as late as mid-October or as early as mid-September.

At Aldbury, my current school, the children prepare a harvest hymn to sing, bring up their gifts and some of the older children do a reading and the prayers. In some schools, however, each class is expected to 'do' something – a song, a poem, a piece of drama, recount the history of harvest etc. – and everyone in the class has to be involved. In schools where there are ten classes this can make for a lengthy service, and if it is a September harvest then the teacher may have only had the class for two weeks, making it a little stressful for all concerned, I suspect.

Last year I was working at two schools during harvest, and managed to panic the entire staff of one school, where they follow the ten classes 'doing' something format, by announcing that harvest was next week, when in fact this was Aldbury's date, and they actually had another month. We prefer mid-October.

When I was at primary school, for our harvest festival in Church, Class One (4-7-year olds) always sang, 'Here are red apples for you and me, We eat them to make us grow strong...' I can't remember the rest, but I remember looking forward to being promoted to the Class 2 song when I was seven. In our harvest festival, we also had prayers thanking God for the harvest of the mines and of the sea, as we were in Cornwall, as well as the fruit and vegetables. Class 3 (there were only three classes) were allowed to miss some lessons before the service to set up the displays of produce. Again, a much-anticipated promotion.



At our local Church in the fishing village of Portloe, as in quite a few parishes, the Church harvest festival took place on Monday evening, and comprised the mysterious Evensong service from the even more mysterious Prayer book (this was when we used the Alternative Service Book) with a few jolly harvest hymns. During the service, the men were out in the fishing boats catching crabs, and would bring in their catch at the end of the service. Then all the produce was auctioned off, including the crabs, and there were always enough crabs for all those who wanted one.

After my dad moved on from Portloe, we went to North Cornwall where we joined the newly-formed Bolventor Team Ministry, at the time the largest in Cornwall, with three priests covering eleven parishes. The parishes were all several miles apart, so it stretched from Bodmin Moor right up to the River Tamar. As there had been mixed feelings about the creation of the team, someone (possibly the Archdeacon) had the bright idea that it would be marvellous for all three clergy and their wives and children to go to each Church for their harvest festivals.

There were seven of us clergy children, and we saw each other eleven times over three weeks. (In order to prevent harvest dragging on for eleven weeks, tradition was broken in certain churches and days other than Monday had to be used.) Together we found our places in the Prayer Book, although finding, and certainly singing the psalm was challenging. 'Not "Amen" again!' shouted three-year-old Anna, at one point. We also got to hear the two other priests preach – we normally only heard our own dads preach – and timed each sermon. My dad was never over six minutes, but one of the others was always at least fifteen.

Every harvest festival was followed by a harvest supper, and each church prided itself on outdoing its neighbours. Some of the churches went for the traditional 'bun-fight' of sandwiches, sausage rolls and cakes. One church did a sit-down ploughman's supper, but the one we all agreed was the best served enormous hot pasties followed by scones, jam and clotted cream. Usually the clergy and the seven children (and by now we were connoisseurs of

harvest suppers) were first in the queue. One church broke with tradition entirely and had a garden-party style supper in the churchwarden's large and beautifully tended garden. This I remember was more of a glorified cheese and wine evening, and we did not find this as substantial as a pasty, although the garden had a stream and small wood which we found worth exploring.

Interesting though the Archdeacon's experiment had been, it was not repeated the following year. People would comment, 'Isn't it lovely to see the children?' (and presumably the rest of our families) and try to give us jobs: 'Wouldn't you like to take the collection bag around?' and one church, which didn't have a choir, moved us all up to the choir stalls. Our respective mothers stayed in the front pew, which meant that not only did we get into an awful tangle finding the Nunc Dimittis without assistance, but we were also separated from the supply of Polo mints.

After leaving the Bolventor team we moved to another parish in North Cornwall, Kilkhampton. The harvest festival here was followed by supper, including wine, and entertainment. The entertainment included the local amateur theatre players and various light musical items. Sometimes the entertainment was ad-hoc, especially if the wine had been flowing, and on one occasion a very glamorous lady called Peggy, who was nearly eighty, got up onto one of the tables and danced. I was at university by then, so missed what must have been a memorable moment.

Here in Tring our harvest gifts are practical donations for DENS – non-perishable store cupboard items, cleaning products or toiletries – but I do miss the unmistakeable smell of a church laden with fruit and vegetables for harvest.

Gill Kinsey
St Peter & St Paul



The eternal question

The eternal question: will it rain? This country's great dilemma perplexed the residents of Wilstone twice within five weeks: on 25 June for Open Gardens/ Open Village and again on 30 July for the St Cross Strawberry Tea. Sunshine was more important for the former than the latter, the Tea at least had the refuge of the Church building but the Garden event had no such luxury.

St Cross had a vested interest in both days as the Church was very fortunate to have been chosen by the village as one of the beneficiaries of Open Gardens.

Did it rain on 25 June? No, it didn't, the BBC forecast was wrong, and the village enjoyed a warm sunny day. The main road through Wilstone was closed and lined with stalls, entertainers, pop-up cafes, and lots and lots of visitors. In the Church grounds the congregation and friends of St Cross hosted Bric-a-brac, books, tombola, children's activities, and inside the Church cream teas and a photographic display of Old Wilstone. On the adjacent village green there was a wonderful plant stall run by Churchwarden Ken Martin, in association with the village Allotment Society, hugely successful and a great compliment to the Open Gardens event. And at the end of the day, the sun was still shining.

Five weeks later the BBC forecast was even more negative and this time they were a bit more accurate. Showers, be they light or heavy, are a nuisance to all concerned and so the decision was made on the Saturday evening (St Cross are very decisive!) to hold the Strawberry Tea in the Church. We love our pews (don't ever suggest getting rid of them) but their great advantage is that they are not fixed to the floor and can be moved to give activity space within the Church and provide seating at the same time.

St Cross is a bit short on muscle power these days but Olga and Ken's grandson-in-law was in Church with them on Sunday morning and organised a swift and efficient job of rearranging the space.

Thus it was that at 3.00pm – weather showery! – that we opened the Church to welcome nearly seventy people to St Cross to indulge in all things fattening. Sandwiches, cakes, scones with jam and cream, and three large bowls of strawberries (and



more cream) were devoured with great relish by visitors from across the parish, including some walkers on an afternoon stroll in the area. A raffle added to the fundraising effort and it was prior to drawing this that Revd Didier Jaquet asked the people to pause and remember the anniversary of the Battle of Passchendale, to acknowledge the display of poppies, and the remembrance candles burning on the altar throughout the afternoon. A prayer for peace concluded the silence.

It goes without saying that everyone connected with St Cross would like to say a big, big thank you to all those people who helped at the Strawberry Tea and to those who provided all the refreshments; and also to the village

committee who worked so hard over the previous eight months to organise Open Gardens/ Open Village. Both events raised much needed funds for the Church and we are very grateful for all the support we receive.

But perhaps more important is the sense of community and friendship which is engendered and multiplies on these occasions, as people come together to enjoy the hospitality of a small village. St Cross was really thrilled to have been nominated by the residents of Wilstone as one of the recipients of Open Gardens, as the support we receive from the village both in practical and social terms is as important to us as the financial benefit. To be recognised as a valued component of the local community is very special. Similarly at the Tea, so many people said how much they enjoyed being in the Church for the afternoon, easily able to talk to other people, and catch up with friends from across the locale.

Don't worry if you missed it – we will be doing it all again next year – in the meantime look out for new drainpipes, drainage gullies, and smart outside paintwork as this is where the funds will be directed over the next few months.

Alison Cockerill, St Cross, Wilstone





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500 Years of the Reformation

In the last edition of Comment, Sylvie Magerstädt mentioned some of the events being held in Germany this year to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Luther's 95 Theses, the symbolic beginning of what has become known as the Reformation. But who was Martin Luther, and what was his legacy?

Talking to various church folks, it's clear that some people know a lot about Luther, while others will admit to knowing next to nothing. In a recent episode of the TV quiz show 'Pointless', the question 'Who was the German Reformer said to have nailed his 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg?' was correctly answered by only 23 of 100 members of the public – albeit far more than were able to name the current Archbishop of Canterbury. First year undergraduates on an Introduction to World Religions module, we find, tend to know very little about him: a student once told me that Luther had been greatly influenced by Gandhi. Initially baffled by this hitherto unknown evidence for time-travel, it suddenly dawned on me who he was talking about: Martin Luther King.

Some of the details of Luther's life have become the stuff of legend, and there has been no shortage of movies about the more dramatic aspects. Born in Eisleben in 1483, his university studies seemed to be leading to a career in law. But one of the legends is that, caught in a dangerous thunderstorm, he prayed that if God saved him, he would become a monk. Informed of this, his ambitious father strongly disapproved of this plan. But Luther stuck to his word, joining an Augustinian order. Transferred after some time to Wittenberg, he went on to take a doctorate in Theology and to go on to teach at the new university there.

Perhaps the central insight of Luther's theology was an inner experience, attributed to reading Romans: that justification is by faith alone. There is nothing you can do to 'earn' your salvation: God's grace, not your own good works, is what saves. It was this central insight that led to his famous opposition to church corruption, especially the sale of indulgences. Luther became outraged at how the church raised money by promising 'time off' Purgatory for the souls of those prepared to cough up. This was widely seen as 'buying salvation'. Such church corruption was part of the target of the infamous theses that Luther – again, according to legend – nailed to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on 31 October 1517. Historians dispute whether Luther ever actually did this, and if he did, it is not quite the act of defiant protest that makes for such a cracking film scene. The door in question served as a sort of university notice-board, so what Luther was doing was announcing propositions for an academic debate. But given the widespread dissatisfaction with church corruption, the theses sparked great interest. They were translated from Latin into German within weeks, Luther's fame spreading in large part because of the early sixteenth century equivalent of the internet: an exciting form of new media invented a few decades earlier and by now coming into its own commercially – the printing press.

The times were ripe for the Reformation's message, and things moved fast. Several times asked to recant and submit to the authority of the Pope, Luther was eventually excommunicated in 1521. He publically burned the offending document. But the movement was growing. When Luther was summoned later that year to the Diet of Worms (a formal assembly attended by the Empire's biggest fish: the Holy Roman Emperor, various princes, bishops and military leaders), he travelled through the German states to the city of Worms as a folk hero,

preaching to large crowds as he went. But Luther knew he was at risk of execution, the fate of an earlier reformer, the Bohemian Jan Hus, a century beforehand. Asked again to recant his teachings, Luther responded that he would indeed recant if his accusers could prove him wrong using the Bible alone. When they could not – his accusers' arguments depended upon giving greater weight to Church tradition – he refused to do so, legend adding what the historian Diarmaid McCulloch calls 'the most famous thing Luther probably never said': 'Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise'.

On his return home, Luther was 'kidnapped' for his own safety by his sympathetic protector, the Elector of Saxony, Friedrich the Wise. Held in seclusion at the Wartburg, a castle in Eisenach, Luther spent his time translating the New Testament into German, the availability of the Bible in vernacular languages being one of the Reformation's most famous elements.

Another striking element of Luther's story – this one undeniably true – is that the former monk went on to marry a former nun, Katharina von Bora. Married in 1525, the couple went on to have six children, a busy enough household made busier by their sharing a house with Luther's sister and her children and sometimes student boarders. This is not just a biographical detail: it signals a shift from a world in which the religious life at its highest was held to be that lived by monks and nuns, to a world – closer to our own – which came to view the family as an arena in which just as valuable a Christian life could be lived.

But why does Luther, who died in 1546, matter today? What were his central ideas about Christianity, and what was their legacy? The next article in this series will try to address that.

John Lippitt, St Peter & St Paul






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CLUES ACROSS

1. Hidden secret (6)
4. 3rd of the Trinity (6)
9. Act of piety (7)
10. Not the beginning but the end (5)
11. 'All we like' (5)
13. Joseph's second son (7)
14. However (3)
15. Special card for a card game (5)
16. In the past (3)
17. Used when Elijah left the earth (7)
19. Easy and well paid job (5)
21. First saint (5)
22. Look attentively (7)
24. '.....' is the Lamb' (6)
25. Addressed by God (6)

CLUES DOWN

1. Bishops' vestments (5)
2. Home for nuns (7)
3. A very long time (3)
5. Foretelling (9)
6. Ancestor of Jesus- Luke 3,27 (5)
7. Shocking experiences (7)
8. Occasion of great happiness (11)
12. Name applied to Abraham (9)
14. Favourite seat in Church? (4)(3)
16. Profligate (7)
18. Focus of worship (5)
20. Give way (5)
23. Salty water (3)

Answers on page 34

Celebrating harvest

Harvest is considerably earlier now than it was years ago as different strains of wheat and advances in farm machinery allow most crops around this area to be harvested from the beginning of August. Indeed this year some fields were cut during the last week of July.

A few years ago Revd Huw Bellis commented that it would be nice if one of the churches in the Tring Team could celebrate harvest at the same time as it was actually happening. Thus St Cross hold their Harvest Festival celebrations on the first Sunday in September. As well as a service at 11.30am,



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partly outside, partly in the Church, there is also a harvest lunch at the Village Hall. Everyone is welcome. Telephone Olga on 822894 or me on 824394 to book. If you are reading this after the event, sorry, but do make a note for next year and come and join us!
Alison Cockerill
St Cross, Wilstone



The Princes Centre

Over the past few years our county councils have been trying to save money and one of the ways they have done this is by closing down the various day centres that were once available. Last December the one in Tring that took place at the Victoria Hall on Akeman Street was closed. All the clients are now bussed into Hemel Hempstead, which makes for an extremely long day if you happen to be the first on the bus (and therefore the last to get off it).

The same happened in Princes Risborough some years ago, but by Bucks County Council. They had a really useful and practical building and were able to take elderly clients and also adults of all ages with learning disabilities. This caused a huge problem in the town so by working with everyone, including Churches Together which played a big part, they decided to set up their own charity called The Princes Centre. They bought the building from Bucks CC for £750,000 and five years ago set themselves up as a day centre. They often win awards for being the best business or having the best day care.

Being a charity means that they don't have huge amounts of money, but they are very good at applying for grants and receiving much needed cash to update



the centre and the gardens and the access to it.

Due to their success the Trustees wanted to open another centre and Tring was an obvious choice because of the aforementioned closure of the Victoria Hall Centre by Herts CC. A place was found at the newly refurbished hall at New Mill Baptist Church, initially for Mondays and Fridays. Staff were found and full training given. In Tring we only take older clients, some with varying forms of dementia – but not all. The clients come for 10.00am, having been collected by me usually, or dropped off by their nearest and dearest. They stay with us until 3.00pm and then the chariots arrive to take them home!

We feed them a freshly cooked two course meal, or they can bring their own lunch. They pay separately for their lunches, but can drink gallons of tea or coffee which is part of their normal bill of £35.00 each session. For this we do all kinds of activities from crossword solving, playing cards (the current favourite is 'Sevens'), doing a 500-piece jigsaw, to the more energetic Armchair Exercises. Bingo is very popular and so we always make sure that the prize basket is kept topped up with something yummy. I'm still learning all the names for the numbers, but if I forget them it will usually get shouted out with glee!

We cater for all the clients' needs whilst they are with us, and if that means helping them in the bathroom then we do it. We thoroughly enjoy spending our days with them and I love hearing all their life stories. Clearly there are some

that I could repeat in my sleep because the ones with dementia forget that they've already told me a million times. But these are people just like you or me, who possibly have no one to talk to during the day and just want to socialise. Some of them are fighting different battles like Parkinsons or heart disease and so our job is to enable them to be as independent as possible.

In Tring we have only five clients on a Monday. We would love to have more and could cater for them. Come and visit us if you would like to see what we do, talk to our clients and get their opinions. What we really need is for local people to start using us and seeing that it's in their town, good value for money and great fun.

Do call us for more information on 01442 822828. The phone is on answer machine when we're not in the building. Alternatively you could contact Kim Challinor at kim@princescentre.org.uk.
Kate Openshaw
New Mill Baptist Church



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A good life deserves a good death

As autumn turns towards winter we traditionally celebrate All Saints' Sunday and All Souls, a time to acknowledge that great parade of Christians who have gone before us and also to remember those whom we see no more. All Souls and All Saints both contain the word 'all' and are fully inclusive celebrations encompassing the whole community.

It is the nature of life that for all people it ends in death – yet that is often seen as the last taboo in our modern society. It is hardly permissible to discuss it, yet we all must face up to it. The church surely has an important role for the community in that regard.

An occasion for all comers

Everybody is welcome to join in on Sunday 5 November. We're currently putting the final touches to the programme. It is still a work in progress but the overall shape is there.

The idea is that the day should provide the opportunity for everyone to join in and also for anyone interested in any one aspect of the subject to come along and join in for just those sections which appeal.

We start with the usual 8.00am and 10.00am services, when the theme will be explored in the sermon using St Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:19: 'If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied'. We then move across to the Parish Hall where over coffee we will go through a process of interactive discussion on all aspects of death and dying using a programme called 'Grave Talk'. This has been developed by the Church of England specifically for such an occasion. It is fully interactive and does make it possible for people to talk through difficult issues without embarrassment.

There will then be a relaxed informal lunch in the hall. This will feature short presentations by specialist speakers ranging from solicitors and undertakers to medical and hospice operators.

In the afternoon these expert individuals will be available in different parts of the Church for anyone to talk to and cover any specific queries. The idea is that if you have any concerns about any aspect and want to have further direct discussions, this would be a

good opportunity to make arrangements and plan a future meeting. In effect we are setting up a dedicated 'information exchange'.

There will then be a short concert of reflective music in the Church, which will hopefully be led by Anna Le Hair; a time to relax and contemplate followed by the traditional All Souls service at 4.00pm.

We very much hope that it will be of interest to many of our individual members. If there are any aspects of this that you would like to see

covered, please do let me know in advance.

The event will be free but we will be issuing tickets to make sure we sort out the catering arrangements appropriately. Please contact either myself or Annette Reynolds and book your tickets if you would like to come.



What is the point of it all?

As you may recall, we as a Parish focused on issues to do with ageing and dying in our Lent study groups this year and it certainly led to some lively debates. It is also the case, as I learned at the conference I attended in June ('Taking Funerals Seriously'), that the whole business of funeral and bereavement ministry is changing and developing throughout our society. Surely we owe it to our community to keep up with these changes.

One of the most 'stimulating' quotations used in the Lent study groups was 'the job of a Parish priest is to prepare his flock for death'. That certainly led to plenty of debate.

However you view that statement and its limitations, it is inarguable that the role of the church ministry team within a community is to engage fully with end of life issues and to ensure that there is help and support available for all members of the Parish.

Making the most of the end game

In April 2017, Richard Harries (former soldier and Bishop of Oxford) gave a Lent talk on Radio 4 entitled 'The Point of Old Age'. He raised very pertinent questions: Is old age just a matter of waiting in the departure lounge for death to take us? Or can we make something special of this time? We look forward to discussing such matters openly and making sure that what we provide as a Parish is effective and appropriate.

To quote Richard Harries again: 'The special gift of old age is to slow us down to celebrate the gift of life itself'. Hopefully on 5 November we shall start to do that better. With your help, we will.

Grahame Senior, St Peter & St Paul

The Church of St Peter & St Paul, Tring

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Cold Meat (Tinned)	Washing up liquid
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The question of gay marriage

Back in February a report about gay marriage in the Church of England was produced. Since the motion was lost, one member of Youth Café brought it up and we started having discussions. All of us in Youth Café support gay marriage and hope that the Anglican Church can as well. From our discussions we decided to send a letter to the Archbishop. Unfortunately the response was not quite what we had hoped for. Following that we wrote a letter to the Bishop of St Albans and to our surprise he wanted to meet us and discuss gay

marriage in the church.

So four of us went with Michelle Grace, the new vicar in our clergy team, to St Albans at the end of July to discuss gay marriage with Bishop Alan. The issue was as expected incredibly complicated. Part of the argument against was involved with the core parts of the Anglican faith: scripture, reason and tradition. The focus of the argument seemed to be that it would not be in alignment with the tradition of marriage in the church. The importance of tradition was stressed and whether

many couples today see the purpose of marriage to have children, especially when many couples marry having already had children. He also brought up that to allow gay marriage would require a new code of sexual ethics and the church would have to reconsider its opinions on marriage.

I'm not sure if I agree with some of the arguments. However, it was helpful to gain a better understanding of the church's opinion. Despite there being many of us who support gay marriage, there is a wide array of opinions in the church and it will certainly take time to change. The Bishop did affirm that although the church does not yet allow gay marriage it will support and welcome all people.

Overall the four of us felt meeting with the Bishop was useful and a brilliant thing to have done.

Eliza Bellis, St Peter & St Paul



the church should change its long-held position on marriage. Another point was that one of the purposes of marriage is to have children which cannot happen without a third party in a gay relationship. However, I would question how

Cleaning toilets for the glory of God

As I was cleaning the Church toilets one Friday morning, I thought to myself, 'It's a shame I can't get paid for doing this.' But then I realised that if I did get paid I would be doing it for the money and no longer for the glory of God. 'HA!' I thought, 'I clean toilets for the glory of God!'

It is so easy to forget sometimes why you are doing a thing. I started cleaning the Church toilets in the first place because I wanted to give back to the church that gives me so much.

Since I was a teenager the Church has been a safe place for me to go. If I was worried about something, struggling with something or my teenage hormones just made me not want to be where I was, I would go to Church.

When my brother Henry passed away I felt upset, angry and depressed. I didn't want to leave my house for weeks. But I went to Church every Sunday because it was the only place I wanted to be. I felt safe, emotionally safe. I knew that however I felt in Church it was OK and I felt surrounded by God's love and

care; not only directly from God but also through everyone else there.

So, I have always wanted to give what I can to the church. I always put what I can into the collection plate. When I was at school it wasn't much, when I got a job it was more and when I got a promotion it was even more. But since my husband and I decided to start a family, the amount of money that I can give has gone back down to 'not a lot'. I decided that if I can't give much money at the moment then maybe there is something else I can give – my time.

I started going into St Peter & St Paul's on a Friday morning to help out with the Traidcraft stall that Moira Hargreaves runs. I took Meredith with me when she was only a baby. When I heard that we needed a new volunteer to clean the toilets, I jumped at the chance! Weird, I know. But I really wanted to give more to the church that gives me so much and here was a job that needed doing and I could do it without it interfering with my mothering duties.

So I got into the routine of going to

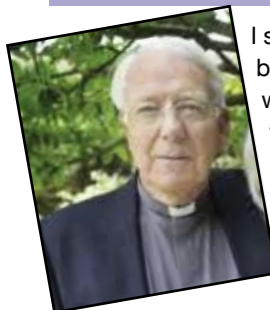
Church every Friday to clean the toilets and help with Traidcraft. But somewhere along the way I forgot why I was doing it. That didn't stop me from doing it anyway but I forgot to rejoice. It had just become another chore to add to the list, something else that needs doing before I can relax or do something fun.

I have now remembered why I do it and that is for the glory of God – to give back to God's church for all I have received but also to give regardless of what I have received. God loves me so much that he gave his son for me and I love God so much that I want to clean toilets for God and for his people. Money doesn't come into it. So now when I clean the toilets I feel God's love and rejoice!

Pippa Wright, St Peter & St Paul



Why I am an Anglican



I suppose if I had been born in Tibet I would have been a follower of the Dalai Lama. Let's face it, we are all prisoners of our background in one way or another. But I was born in England in a nominally Christian society, even if only a minority of us actually practise our faith.

So why am I an Anglican? I guess because I was brought up as one, though it was only when I was at Cambridge University I really became a convinced and committed believer. This was through the ministry of a remarkable man, Mervyn Stockwood, Vicar of the University Church and later Bishop of Southwark. He preached the importance of faith, not just as a spiritual concept, but as showing concern for the needs of one's fellow human beings. This hit home to a young man who liked enjoying himself but did not always think of the needs of others. God became real to me and I found his reality in the Anglican church.

Eventually, after trying to escape for quite a while, I became convinced God wanted me to be ordained; and after being accepted and trained I became a priest in the diocese of Southwark. Like so many other young men, I went to work in the diocese led by our Cambridge mentor, Mervyn Stockwood.

I learnt a great deal about Anglican worship as one of three curates in Clapham Common, a multi racial and

poor area of South London, where my rector was Area Dean. We would be sent out to churches all over the deanery of Clapham and Brixton to fill in. One week it might be the very High Anglican church on a local Housing estate, where processions, much ceremonial and incense was used – I learnt there how to swing a thurible of incense around – and the next week it could be a very evangelical church in Brixton where I had to stand at the North End of the Holy Table (the word altar could never be used!) in a black cassock and preach for at least twenty minutes! Our own church in Clapham was very similar to St Peter & St Paul, Liberal Catholic, but not extreme.

But that experience taught me a lot about Anglicanism. We are a coalition of believers rather than a church with rigid doctrines we all MUST believe. I suppose it suits my temperament as I try to see all different points of view and not be too dogmatic. I am happy to swing the incense or to preach in a church where even a cross behind the altar is seen as idolatrous. We all find God in different ways and need to understand that as, I believe, the Anglican Church does. But I must admit the most exciting time I ever had in a pulpit was in a black Pentecostal church in California, where my remarks were punctuated by the 1000 strong congregation, with 'Amen', 'Yeah Man' and 'Praise the Lord!' NOT very Anglican!

I said that practical Christianity was what led me to faith. As I learnt it, this can mean visiting a lonely person,

working with difficult young people on the streets; or just being there for another person who needs to pour out their heart. For me personally the greatest achievement in practical faith was the seven years fighting (yes, I mean that, not physically but verbally) to build a Cheshire Home for disabled people in Sevenoaks. There was often fierce opposition, mainly based on the fear that the price of their house might go down by having disabled people living nearby! But Leonard Cheshire himself was a deeply committed Christian and gave us wonderful support. Seeing our first residents settle in and become a family was one of the great moments of my life.

A last word on this: I was thrilled to see that the FIRST people to offer help after the Grenfell Tower tragedy were St Clements, the local church whose priest and people gave shelter in the Church and hall, and provided food at 3.00am in the morning. That is truly loving God and your neighbour as yourself – many of the victims were Muslim immigrants, but the parish church showed that God loves all men and women in need. Thank God for the Anglican Church! We get enough brickbats thrown at us, but when the chips are down we are God's hands: 'Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to me' (Matthew 25).

We Anglicans are far from perfect, but this church is where I find myself loved by God and try, however fitfully, to love my neighbours as myself.

Ian Ogilvie, St Peter & St Paul



Twenty years ago, I was ordained in Southwark Cathedral, and this anniversary has led me to think about all that has changed in that time. Services, baptisms, funerals, weddings, assemblies and visits still fill most of the day, but technology has altered how we carry out these tasks beyond all recognition.

Nobody looks twice at a woman in a clergy collar now, but 1997 was only three years after women were first

allowed to first preside at communion in the Church of England.

One of the memories that still makes me smile is that of packing my shopping in the supermarket and a woman coming up to me and saying, 'I think it's marvellous!' Clergy wear for women has also improved dramatically although the gold silk clergy dress that one London outfitters has on sale for £1,495 seems a little excessive, and I fear I am not trendy enough to carry off the Casual Priest designs from Sweden.

I have been incredibly blessed in the parishes where I have worked, and one thing that has not changed has been

the commitment and the care, the faith and the dedication of those who are 'the church'. Twenty years on, I cannot imagine doing or being anything else. We should give thanks for all the gifts and vocations that God has given to each of us.

We are delighted to welcome the Revd Michelle Grace in the Tring Team who took her first service on 9 July at St John's. Michelle will be working across the team with responsibility for Aldbury. She also works with me at Tring School. It is wonderful to have her with us!

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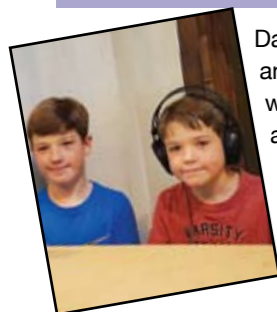


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Dads 'n' lads 'n' daughters 'n' dogs



Dads 'n' lads is an annual camping event which takes place in a small field, about half an acre, next to the Cecilia Hall in Puttenham. It first started in 2009 so dads could spend time with their kids. Mums, teeth-cleaning and vegetables are not allowed. (Mums do come and help take down the tents though!)



On the 2012 camp someone brought a big bowl of cous-cous and it wasn't touched for the entire weekend and it is now a long-running joke that cous-cous must not be eaten, as it looks like it could be a healthy food, which is not a Dads 'n' Lads thing.

There is always a race to get your tent up first, and this year some people even went and stayed a night early. Ray Willmore has to get there early as he has to have enough room for his big tent (for those who don't know he has lots of kids!).

Every year we play a game of rounders. Didier is in charge of rounders and the whole event. The dads also have a big supply of beer and they sit



around the fire and drink some Tring Beer. When it starts to get dark, us kids play Zombies and Slender. Julian always brings some magic fire powder which makes the fire go different colours. Another tradition is that a few dads try to see who can stay up the longest. Huw and Ian Munroe are the main contestants.

This year the kids all brought nerf guns and had lots of nerf wars. Later we had another game of rounders and I



[Nicholas] was caught out by Poppy the dog (who belongs to Steve Berry). This year there were quite a few more people than the other years, which was good, but sadly there was no Bellis family and no Nettle (Nettle belongs to Huw).

Luckily, we had great weather and it was nice and warm the whole time. We

did have a small sprinkling of rain but it was only a short shower. It was quite funny that Didier decided to sleep in his sleeping bag and a box for some reason, and not his tent. This year everyone kept saying 'In yer face!'. This came from Josh saying it to his dad, Rob,



when being competitive at rounders. We gave Huw the challenge to fit it into his sermon and he actually managed it!

The next morning we all walked to Wilstone Church down the canal for the 10.00am service, encouraged to do so by our dads with the bribe of Haribo sweets. While we were walking we were overtaken by a cyclist who then fell in the canal and got all muddy!

Some of the mums met us at Church, although the Aldbury mums had gone away for the weekend, and so those families had to take their own tents down.

Dads 'n' Lads is a great way to make new friends. We know quite a few of the children from the other churches as a result, and it is an event we look forward to all year.

Nicholas and Rowan Kinsey
St Peter & St Paul



What is an 'ethical' flower?

I love flowers and some of you might know I organise the Church flower rota at St John's in Aldbury (always looking for volunteers!).

However, I also have a professional interest as I am currently leading a research project on 'ethical' flowers. This is funded by the British Academy and Leverhulme Trust to look at how safer and improved conditions for workers in flower supply chains might be promoted. As people had been asking me about this, I offered a talk at St Peter & St Paul's to explain the issues and consider what role the church might take. After all, flowers adorn churches weekly and are used to mark many of our key life events.

Do you know where the flowers in your vase are from or who has cut and packed them? Does this matter or have any implications for what we might be saying with the flowers we give, buy, or put in our Churches?

At Coventry University we are currently asking questions about what an 'ethical flower' might be, and the issues involved are fascinating, complex and directly related to the challenges of global supply chains. Flowers are a very particular type of product though, imbued with cultural meaning, used to mark significant life events such as weddings and funerals, and to express our thanks, regret or love. On a practical basis they are also particular due to their very limited shelf life, with high consumer expectations of presentation, needing specialist care in transportation in a similar way to food crops.

Key environmental issues for flowers include the use of chemicals to increase production and prolong life, the impact of wild flower harvesting on biodiversity, and water use on farms. Impossible to separate from these are key social issues



that impact communities and flower workers, which are being exacerbated by newly developing countries such as Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Colombia, aggressively pursuing flower exports.

A rise in direct buying from supermarkets is also intensifying competition and pressure to cut costs. Investigations into conditions on some farms by organisations like the Kenya Human Rights Commission, report that the largely unorganised, female workforce suffers discrimination, precarious employment, poor health and safety protection, and sexual harassment.

Key political issues are linked, such as land rights, and favourable tax and conditions offered to attract flower investment in warmer/poorer/cheaper countries. A recent example involved riots on foreign owned flower farms in Ethiopia, related to unrest over Government land policies and provincial boundary disputes.

What does all this have to do with us buying flowers in Tring? I would argue, quite a lot. It is not only a question of where you stand on ethical consumerism and whether you wish to support good practice with your purchase. Price and security of supply are important considerations. According to Mintel, about 90% of flowers sold in the UK are imported and it is a £1.8 billion industry, with 70% of us having bought flowers as a gift during 2014 and the average UK consumer buying flowers for themselves seventeen times a year. As 40% of our flowers are still imported via the Dutch auction house, our own politics of Brexit is another aspect. Without sustainable supply chains, then availability, price, and likely quality too, will become an issue for all flower buyers.

And what of the ethical question? Efforts to increase awareness of these issues have been more pronounced in other European countries. But this might be about to change. A surprising fact is that the industry has already been attempting to address issues by certification of some supply chains that reach certain standards, in terms of employment and/or environmental practices. However, our research shows that the myriad private certification schemes are complex, going well beyond the Fair Trade label that is

usually the only one recognised, and are largely hidden so they cannot inform buying decisions.

With my colleagues at Coventry, as well as collaborators at the University of Amsterdam, our research is finding a lack of understanding or awareness of these certifications not only amongst consumers, but also florists and even wholesalers. There is an important opportunity here, both for retailers to appeal to the growing ethical awareness of consumers, and for consumers to promote improved environmental and social conditions. Our ongoing work is developing mechanisms to facilitate benefits being experienced throughout the supply chain.

For today, if you are off to buy flowers, asking questions about their origin and any certification is a great first step. Churches may well have a role to play in this given their association with flowers, just as many have supported fair trading. Getting the conversation started and demonstrating there is interest in the ethics of flowers is the important thing, and can help towards a positive change in practice for all.

Jill Timms

St John the Baptist, Aldbury

Jill is a Senior Lecturer at Coventry University. Contact her for updates on the project, have any comments about the above or ideas of who she should speak to. Email: Jill.timms@coventry.ac.uk or follow her tweets: @JillTimms.



Return to Burma



In 2011, Burma, or Myanmar, as it is now called, opened its doors to the outside world for the first time in over sixty years. The last time I had seen my relatives in Burma

was when I was about six, when our ship called there on its way to England and we disembarked for a few weeks to say 'goodbye'. Both my parents had Burmese mothers but British fathers, as my grandfathers worked for the Colonial Service in Burma, my father's father as the Forestry Commissioner there and my mother's father as Chief of Police in Rangoon. Both my parents attended Mission Schools and described themselves as 'Christian', though since both their mothers were Buddhists, religion in our family was always fairly fluid.

Though born in Burma, I spent my early childhood in India and only came to England when I found I was having difficulty with reading the blackboard at school. In those days, of course, there were no eye specialists in India.

I have few memories of our brief stay in Burma on the way to England, but those I have are quite vivid. I can remember the timber-framed house we lived in, its walls made of matting, and the geckos in the rafters, catching flies; and the hurricane lamps we had at night and the millions of fire flies that danced round their flames – so many that their bodies were ankle deep when the house boys swept them up each morning. I can remember my diminutive maternal grandmother, and how I used to help her pound the sandalwood to make the paste she used for hand-creams and make-up. She wore her long, black hair

coiled up on top of her head encircling wreaths of jasmine, and always smelled of sandalwood and jasmine. I can remember climbing up the hundreds of tiny steps barefoot to the Pagodas with her, stopping occasionally on the various broad platforms along the way to buy candles or flowers from the stalls there, and then trotting beside her to visit the shrines while she tended to the various Buddhas, washing some, placing garlands around others and praying before her favourite ones. When I became really fidgety, she would scold me gently and tell me not to be so impatient and to say a prayer.

'But I don't know any prayers to say to Buddha,' I would complain.

'Why, then, just say "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild",' she would reply.

England was truly a different world in every way from what we had known before. In the first place, it was so cold, as we had arrived in the middle of winter and had our first introduction to snow. It was strange, too, spending most of our time indoors, as out East most of our days were spent in the open, either in the gardens, in the markets, visiting friends, or watching the many street processions – taking part in some ourselves, as I can still remember sitting high up on the backs of swaying elephants and holding on to a rope while bells jingled and trumpets blared. It was strange, too, not being surrounded by an extended family, as in Burma and India we had had a host of relatives or friends of relatives, all considered to be part of our family. My mother, however, soon surrounded herself with friends and neighbours whom my sister and I indiscriminately called uncles and aunts, so ours was very much an 'open house'.

There were so many adjustments that had to be made: the use of money

being one of them. In Burma, people mistrusted banks, so any money that could be saved was invariably turned into jewellery, as this could be easily worn or hidden. Barter was the system that was very much in use amongst the ordinary people then, and more often than not people were paid in kind for what they did. If someone was good at making clothes, he would do this in exchange for vegetables that someone had grown, or chutneys or cakes that they had made. On one occasion, my grandmother had helped a family who were ill by doing various household tasks for them for some months, and her payment in kind was to find a huge elephant tethered to her gate. She had no idea how to look after it, so rented part of a forest to keep it, and in the end the elephant wandered off to another part of the jungle. Sadly, she never saw it again. When we first came to England, my father, who was in the Army, had given my mother several gold sovereigns to keep us going, and so unworldly was she that she would give a sovereign to



anyone who showed her the simplest kindness, such as showing her the way to a bus-stop or the station.

At the time that we came to England, my mother had both British and Burmese



passports, but the Burmese government insisted that she give up one of them. After Burma gained its independence, the Military took over and the regime became very harsh, so my mother opted to give up her Burmese passport. This made the Government so angry that she was told she could never return to Burma again. This became particularly hard for her when her mother fell seriously ill, and she begged to be able to visit her. All her pleas were in vain, however, and she never saw her mother again. In the years that followed, our contact with relatives became increasingly difficult, as often letters never arrived, and parcels were stolen. In the end all correspondence ceased altogether.

This made the opening of Burma's doors to the world all the more exciting in 2011, and I was determined to re-visit the place of my birth if I could. The opportunity finally came two years ago in 2015, when my husband and I touched down in Myanmar.

By now, of course, my mother had died and I had lost touch with all my relatives. However, our daughter, Heloise, had visited Burma the previous year and had managed to track down three branches of the family, one of which was still living in my mother's old house in Rangoon. Word had been sent of our intended visit, and when we arrived we were quite overwhelmed by the welcome we received. I suddenly found I had at least thirty cousins and their families living in different parts of the country, and during our visit, was introduced to many of them. It was like suddenly finding the other half of myself, and was all very emotional.

Our visit started in Rangoon, or Yangon as it is now called, where we met two of my cousins and their families, one of whom now runs her own flourishing jewellery business where even President Obama bought some ear-rings for his daughters when he visited. We were royally entertained and

shown all the sights before we flew on to Bagan and Mandalay and then on to Pyin oo Lwin to visit my father's old school, where we stood in the hall and imagined what it would have been like when he was a boy there. Later we went on to Taunggyi, high in the hills in the Shan States, where my mother spent her childhood and where four of my cousins and their families now live. So often my mother had told me of the great market there where she had first bought little pieces of cloth to teach herself to sew and make the curtains for their house, so it was quite an experience to wander around the market and mingle with all the jostling tribes from all over the



district, all in their traditional dress and haggling over the prices of meat, fish, vegetables, and all manner of household goods spread out on the different stalls, as they have done for centuries.



Inle Lake is a huge, natural lake several miles wide but fairly shallow formed by the many streams running down the hills from Taunggyi and meeting at the bottom, and here is a wonderful floating village of houses built on stilts, floating gardens and a whole host of small craft shops making silk, weaving, fashioning gold and silver items and making paper. All manner of small crafts are on the lake, from Tugs to Tourist boats, working boats and fishing boats, with the famous Leg-rowers, who fish standing on one leg in the boat while the other leg is wrapped round an oar steering the vessel while their hands are full of the long fishing nets or conical-shaped basket traps. It is a wonderful place to watch people going about their everyday lives, and made a lovely ending to our holiday.

Boarding our plane to return to England, I thought back on the amazing trip we had had: the smiling, friendly Burmese people, who were just as my mother had described; and the kindness and friendship of the many relatives whom I had met for the first time and who had made us feel so welcome. Myanmar is a beautiful country, where the people have a very practical way of expressing their faith in Buddha, by caring for his shrines, taking every day events to his temples, such as discussion groups, celebrations for a birthday or graduation, and generally including him in all they do like a friend. Wherever you look you will see a Pagoda or images of Buddha, so that he is never far from anyone, and the country is full of the sounds of birds and temple bells and the scent of flowers.

We hope very much to visit the country again one day, but if this is not possible, we feel we have built bridges between ourselves and our relatives, and we hope that our children and theirs will visit each other in the years to come.

Jenny Revel, St Peter & St Paul



The Battle of Passchendaele

The Third Battle of Ypres, better known as the Battle of Passchendaele, was fought between the army of the British Empire and that of the German Empire. It was the last major battle fought by British forces in the First World War. The aim was to advance the allied front line some five miles from a short distance to the East of Ypres to the Village of Passchendaele. The British attack started on 31 July 1917.

Initially, heavy shelling in advance of the attack had made the battlefield very dusty leading to poor visibility making progress against a determined enemy very difficult. Subsequently bad weather turned the dust into a boggy quagmire of thick mud which seriously hampered the attacks and resulted in some men and animals being drowned. The village of Passchendaele was finally reached in early November after over three months of fighting. Over 60,000 British soldiers, including twelve from Tring, were killed.

On 30 July, on the 100th anniversary of the eve of the start of the battle, a special Service and Vigil was held in St Peter & St Paul's Church to remember and honour those brave men. Following the Service a two minute silence was observed at the War Memorial and wreaths were laid by the Mayor of Tring, the President of the local Branch of the Royal British Legion and Mark Betton, whose great, great uncle died at Passchendaele.

A half muffled quarter peal was rung in the memory of the twelve dead men after the service.

Sir Michael Simmons KCB, AFC



The Poppy Project 2018

This craft installation is planned for the autumn of 2018 to commemorate the 100 years since the end of World War I. It will also mark the refurbishment of the War Memorial planned to be completed next year.

Similar projects throughout the world have been installed in the last few years and it was the inspiration from these that have led our craft group to want to do something similar in Tring. Many will remember the field of knitted and crocheted poppies at the Chelsea flower show last year by an Australian group called 5000 Poppies; the group has also put in installations in Fromelles in France and Melbourne Cathedral among other places. The Poppy Project in Tring will not be on the same scale or even look the same as those installations, but we have lots of ideas that will be appropriate for Tring.

It will be centred on St Peter & St Paul, the churchyard and the war memorial area. We are still working on designs. Bearing in mind we have a Grade 1 listed building to adorn, and we don't know how many poppies we will have, we must be flexible. But all the poppies donated will be used, and we know some people are fired up to make loads! We have individuals and groups helping us with this already and it feels like a wonderful community project.

So the main focus is on knitting or crocheting red poppies (we have patterns that are quick and easy) and they will be installed in stages leading up to 11 November 2018 when the full impact will be revealed. We are also making 116 fractured poppy patchwork roundels, each embroidered with the name of one of the serviceman remembered on our war memorial.

If you would like to be involved in the installation there are many ways to help and they don't all mean you have to knit! If you would like to knit or crochet then contact me for a pattern. Whether you make a couple or a hundred, they will all be valued.

If you would like to make a patchwork roundel, we have packs that cost £4.00 and can show you how to complete it if needed. Or you can pay for

someone else to make one by donating £4.00. We are collecting red yarn (not wool as it gets too heavy when wet) for others to knit for us. We also need black buttons about an inch diameter for the centres. We will need help sewing the backs onto the patchwork roundels and for attaching the knitted poppies to the backing. We will need help putting up the installations next autumn too.

If you would like to help in any way or contribute towards costs, do get in touch with me on 01442 824929 or jjgoody@ntlworld.com. Many thanks.

Janet Goodyer, St Peter & St Paul



Tring War Memorial refurbishment

Since the previous article on the plan to refurbish the memorial, things have moved on if rather slowly. We still believe that ours was the first free-standing memorial to be dedicated after the end of the First World War, being on the 28 November 1918. Unfortunately wear and tear over the past ninety-nine years has taken its toll and there is a crack around the main column and the pointing

between the blocks where the names are displayed has deteriorated, resulting in the slippage of some of the lettering. It also will benefit from being gently cleaned.

Tring Town Council provided a grant, part of which has been used to allow us to obtain the necessary drawing and specifications to obtain a faculty, the memorial being on church ground, and the War Memorials Trust have offered a grant to cover 75% of the actual work. One of their conditions for offering a grant is that there should be a contribution from the local community and we are inviting you to join us in helping to refurbish and make it a fitting memorial to those Tring residents who have made the supreme sacrifice in two world wars and in Afghanistan. If you would like to help, please send

your contribution, however large or small, payable to the Tring Team Parish and mark it 'For the war memorial'. If you can gift aid your donation, please sign your name and add your address so we can recover the extra 25% from the taxman. If we have any money left over after the project is complete, it will be donated to Armed Forces charities.

I hope you will be able to support us in this project to ensure that the Tring War Memorial remains at the centre of the town and helps us to 'remember them'.

**Ted Oram
St Peter & St Paul**



Times change



There are times when parish life can seem timeless. Teas in Puttenham and strawberry teas in St Cross, Wilstone, are events which could as easily have happened in our churches 100 years ago as they do today.

But time does change. In July four of our Youth Café teenagers went to discuss with Bishop Alan the rights and wrongs of same sex marriage. Keen and passionate, they wanted to understand how the Bishop's worldview did or did not fit with 21st century teenage life.

How different the world was for the teenagers from our parish 100 years ago.

In June 1917 Gordon Asquith of Park Road, Tring, completed his training at Sandhurst and became a 2nd Lieutenant. He wasn't sent to France until October, waiting until his 19th birthday so he would not have witnessed the beginning of the battle of Passchendaele. However, it was a battle that was to claim the lives of at least a dozen from our parish.

On 2 December C Company of the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry began to advance. After only fifty yards they came under heavy machine gun fire and all the officers and senior NCOs became casualties. Gordon was missing. It was at first assumed he was taken prisoner. We don't know how long his parents held onto that hope before he was declared dead.

Huw Bellis
St Peter & St Paul



Parish Party

As the finale to the carnival this year, supported by the generosity of the Shardlows of Tring Brewery, the Tring Team invited everyone to a barbecue on Pound Meadow which was very well supported by Anglicans and some of the other churches in Tring. A brass band helped us have our own Songs of Praise in the Carnival Tent – and a good time was had by all.



Benjamin Britten's War Requiem

Recent articles in Comment about Britten have reminded me of my own memories of his War Requiem.

This major work was composed for the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral and first performed there on 30 May 1962. The cathedral, designed by Sir Basil Spence, adjoins the ruins of the 14th century building, which had been destroyed in a devastating German bombing raid in November 1940 during the Second World War. Immediately after the destruction, Provost Howard of Coventry bravely made a commitment not to revenge but to forgiveness and reconciliation with those responsible. This led to the cathedral becoming a world Centre for Reconciliation and the establishment of the Community of the Cross of Nails, which has some 200 partner churches and other organisations throughout the world working for peace, justice and reconciliation.

The theme of reconciliation strongly appealed to Britten, as a life-long pacifist. Today we enjoy a strong friendship with the re-united Germany and it may be difficult to envisage the time when it was an enemy. However, in 1962 memories of the Second World War were still fresh and indeed there

were still alive many survivors of the First World War. War films depicting heroic action by the British or Americans (depending on who made the film) were still popular, perhaps more as morale-boosters in the time of uncertainty following the Suez crisis and the loss of the British Empire. However, the need for reconciliation and the burgeoning peace movements were signs of the times and this helps to explain the enormous impact of Britten's work.

The War Requiem is on a very large scale and comprises a setting of Requiem Mass in Latin, interspersed with settings of poems written in the First World War by Wilfred Owen, the celebrated soldier-poet, who was killed in action only a week before the armistice in 1918. His concern was for the men under his command and he aimed to show 'the Pity of War' and not in any way to glorify it. The Latin text is sung by a soprano soloist, chorus and boys' choir accompanied by a large orchestra and organ and the Owen poems are sung by tenor and baritone soloists accompanied by a separate chamber orchestra. It was intended that the first performance should have a Russian soprano, Galina Vishnevskaya, an English tenor, Peter Pears, and a German baritone, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, to represent reconciliation of former enemies. In the event, the Soviet authorities, for political reasons, refused to allow Vishnevskaya to take part and she was replaced at short notice by Heather Harper.

On 9 January 1963, as an 18-year-old student, I attended with my parents the third performance in England at the Royal Albert Hall (the second had been in Westminster Abbey). The soloists this time included Vishnevskaya in addition to Pears and Fischer-Dieskau, with

the large orchestra conducted by Meredith Davies and the chamber orchestra conducted by Britten himself. For me the most memorable impression was the impact of the Owen poems, showing Britten's genius in setting words to music. Some phrases have been unforgettable, for example 'What passing bells for these who die as cattle?' in Anthem for Doomed Youth and 'I am the enemy you killed, my friend' in the haunting Strange Meeting about two former enemies who meet in death. That poem ends with 'Let us sleep now...' and Britten links it to In paradisum and the moving conclusion.

That performance took place during the sessions for the famous Decca first recording of the War Requiem, which I bought at Foyles – a rather extravagant outlay for a student. Looking back over fifty years later, the work can be seen as a very ambitious occasional piece and a child of its time. The Requiem Mass setting was much influenced by Verdi's Requiem, but the Owen settings represent Britten at his best and these will be particularly relevant as we remember the closing years of the First World War and the centenary next year of Owen's death.

Incidentally, during our visit to Leipzig earlier this year Carole and I visited St Nikolai's Church, a partner in the Community of the Cross of Nails, and took a photo of the Coventry cross displayed in the chancel. Sylvie Magerstaedt mentioned this Church in her article in the July/August edition of Comment.

Martin Wells, St Peter & St Paul



Out with the old...

Where in Tring will you find these doors? Unless you are fairly fit, it's unlikely that you will ever see them! But St Peter & St Paul's has just replaced – and not a moment too soon – the three doors to the Tower of the Parish Church. Enjoy!
Annette Reynolds, St Peter & St Paul



Tweet of the month

In June this year we went to Scotland for a week. Anyone who regularly reads my ramblings probably thinks that I only go to Scotland for my holidays. Not quite, but it is a country that I like to visit. As always when I go up there I will have a list of things that I'd like to see that I can only see in Scotland or are easier to see there than anywhere else in Britain.

Grouse are birds that I associate with Scotland. Indeed, within Britain, Ptarmigan and Capercaillie are only found in Scotland and their interesting names are derived from old Scottish Gaelic. Red Grouse and Black Grouse are found in England, Scotland and Wales but are fairly restricted in England and Wales and probably easiest to see in Scotland.

All four British grouse species are declining in Britain – Black Grouse and Capercaillie are declining rapidly with Capercaillie's population thought to be fewer than 1,200 birds now. Because human disturbance is thought to be a contributory factor to the decline of the Capercaillie I decided not to go looking for them at the height of the breeding season and it is also a difficult time of

year to look for Black Grouse. So this year I set my sights on just seeing Red Grouse and Ptarmigan on this trip.

Red Grouse was relatively straightforward to see as they are found on moorland down to quite low altitudes and I was able to see and photograph them from my car along quiet roads that



went across suitable habitat.

Ptarmigan is probably the hardest bird in Britain and breeds mostly on mountains above 600m altitude and does descend to lower altitudes in winter. It also stands out for the dramatic way its plumage changes from mainly dark grey in the summer to white with

a dark tail in the winter. Both plumages are very effective camouflage in those seasons – providing it snows in the winter. Glenshee Ski Centre is a great place to see Ptarmigan and in winter they can be seen by the roadside, but in the summer you have to go up to the top of the mountains to see them. I went up on the chair lift and walked down and in doing so saw quite a few Mountain Hares, numerous Red Grouse and one really confiding male Ptarmigan right at the top.

Unfortunately the Ptarmigan's hardiness may well be its undoing as a British species. Global warming is changing the conditions in Scotland such that it may become too mild for the Ptarmigan and cause it to become extinct in Scotland. In Genesis 1:26-27 we are told that

God gave us dominion over all animals. Surely though with authority or control over all animals God also meant us to take responsibility for their wellbeing and look after this planet too!

Roy Hargreaves, St Peter & St Paul

'Simply walk' at College Lake

Walking for Health offer a free walk every Wednesday morning with trained leaders and no need to book. You can just turn up at 10.15am to sign on and the walk starts at 10.30am.

I trained, with several other volunteers, with Bucks County Council and the walks started in January 2017 at College Lake. The Nature Reserve offers a beautiful setting for walking and there are opportunities to observe the wildlife through the seasons. For fitness reasons we like to keep a steady pace but several of the leaders volunteer at College Lake Reserve and are happy to point out birds, flowers or butterflies of interest. You might want to return and

have a closer look on another occasion.

We have several regular walkers but would love to see some new faces. Most of us stay for a coffee and chat in the café after the walk.

The idea is to offer a chance to people who would like to get out and about to improve their health. Everyone knows that walking brings health benefits to your heart, lungs and circulation as well as lightening your mood. However, it isn't always so easy to make a start and keep going without some encouragement.

'Simply Walk' at College Lake offer a walk of about forty minutes on fairly flat ground and a longer walk of about

two miles around the reserve. We are keen to welcome people who fancy a short walk. Several of our walkers are recovering from a stroke or hip and knee replacements. I suffer with asthma problems so I'm not the fastest walker in the group but I really enjoy sharing the wildlife with companions and making new friends. College Lake BBOWT Reserve is at Bulbourne, Tring HP23 5QG.

Both Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire have Walking for Health websites if you wish to try a variety of walks. Check out the opportunities at: www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/walkfinder and tap in your postcode.

The network as a whole is managed in partnership with the Ramblers and Macmillan Cancer Support. If you are interested in supporting our small group at College Lake, Bulbourne, as a leader of the weekly walks, please come along and we can tell you all about it!

Tessa Oliver, St Peter & St Paul



Success, failure and faith

On the simplest level, I think we all want to be successful – if we need or want to do something, and as a consequence decide upon a course of action, we do so hoping that the outcome of the action will be the one we desire. If we are lucky, then we might view ourselves, and be viewed by others, as 'successful'.

However, things perhaps immediately become more complicated. I might have achieved what I set out to do, over the shorter or longer term, but if what has been done is not of ultimate value then can I really be described as successful? Perhaps, we need a broader definition of success than simply having achieved a short-term or long-term objective. Furthermore, can we compare the success of an individual with the success of a group of people, such as a family, a team or even a nation?

Notions of success and failure are potentially even more fraught and complicated when we look at churches and church life!

I have regular opportunities to meet with Baptist Minister colleagues and often we ask each other 'So, how are things at (insert name of church)?'

Maybe others find this question easier to answer, but I'm never quite sure what a good reply is. Sometimes, this is simply the ministerial equivalent of talking about the weather and a superficial 'fine' is all that is expected and required but if the questioner genuinely wants to know, what is to be said? Again, this may just be me, but I am immediately thrust into evaluation mode: how should I assess life at church? How are things, really?

One of the most obvious ways for ministers (and others) to compare churches (and by implication their

success) is by size. Baptist Churches maintain a list of members, and this number is requested by the Baptist Union each year as part of their information-gathering exercises, so ministers generally know exactly how many members they have in their church. For better or worse, here as in much of life, bigger is usually seen as better. There is a 'large' church network and there is a 'small' church network! The two churches where I minister are both very much in the 'small' network.

Now, with the missional imperative under which all Christian churches work, growth – bringing more people into relationship with Christ – can only be a good thing, but often we forget that growth is not always reflected in numbers (of members or of bottoms on seats on Sunday mornings). Growth in faith and discipleship is often unseen, part of each person's individual faith journey. Growth in relationships, internally and externally, growth in confidence to share matters of faith with neighbour, friend and colleague, growth in the ability to see God at work in his world and to join in – these are all hugely important but difficult to measure and record.

So, what happens when there is little or no growth apparent? A colleague of mine had the difficult task of overseeing the closure of the church where she had been the minister. A very small but faithful group had tried hard over many years to secure the future of the congregation but had not been successful. Had they, had she, failed? These are very difficult questions, and often only a longer-term perspective will bring insight. Certainly, the seven-figure sum released by the sale of

building and land will offer opportunities for other 'growth' projects within the denomination, but the personal impact on those who turned the key and switched out the lights for the last time (which they literally did at the last service, singing the final hymn in the car park looking at the locked, darkened building) is hard to understand.

For me, a key aspect in reflecting on success and failure in church life is to remember some of the images Jesus uses. It may be well worn, but the image of the sower, speaks volumes to me.

The sower in the parable is NOT a farmer; seed is scattered without a great deal of care; growth is NOT the sower's responsibility. As a church perhaps, we are to help folk whose lives are beaten down, like the hard path, or choked by the weeds of life, become more open to the seed. Remember all the soil in the field will be fundamentally the same; just some light gardening, stone removal, gentle turning of earth needed, perhaps; for all soils, all lives, have the potential to be fruitful.

We are not landowners, just tenants; we are workers who will all receive the same wage, irrespective of the length or perceived productivity of our labours.

So, whether your life, Christian or otherwise, as an individual or corporately, feels successful or a complete failure or somewhere in between, I hope we can all keep on, keeping on.

**Andrew Openshaw
New Mill Baptist Church**



Men's Society

Seven men gathered at The Half Moon in Wilstone at the end of June to discuss the topic 'Politics and Prayer'.

Apart from agreeing that we should pray for our leaders, MPs and those in authority, the discussion got sidelined into subjects such as burning tower blocks and the NHS. These, of course, should be some of the active concerns of our politicians who should be seeking the overall benefit for the populace.

Too often they are hidebound by party dogma or self interest. Hence, this is why we should be praying for good government.

Jeremy Buckman kindly agreed to organise a Summer Lunch with our Ladies at The Greyhound, Aldbury, which was held on Wednesday 9 August.

Our next monthly meeting will be at The Half Moon, Wilstone at 7.30pm on Wednesday 6 September when the

topic for discussion will be 'The Relevance of the Ten Commandments'. As usual supper is available.

Further details from John Hawkes (tel: 01442-824199).

David Whiting, St Peter & St Paul



'Piano and More' Concert

On Sunday 23 July another successful 'Piano and More' concert was held in St Peter & St Paul's Church.

Anna Le Hair and Jane Glover played piano solos by various composers including Janacek, Rachmaninov and Chopin, and Colin Stevens and Margaret Flanigan brought proceedings to a rousing finish with a spirited

performance of a Czerny piano duet.

'Piano and More' resumes on Sunday 17 September at 3.00pm, when Leon Bosch will conduct a small string ensemble in Tchaikovsky Rococo variations, with Helen Godbolt as cello soloist.

Edmund Booth, St Peter & St Paul



100 favourite hymns

A year ago we started to collect the 'favourite' hymns of Comment readers. In case you haven't been keeping count, here is the 'Top 100' of those chosen.

A new commandment

Abide with me

All for Jesus

All I once held dear

All over the world

All praise to our redeeming Lord

All things bright and beautiful

Alleluia, sing to Jesus

Amazing grace

And can it be?

Angel voices ever singing

At the name of Jesus

Away in a manger

Be known to us in breaking bread

Be still and know that I am God

Be still for the presence of the Lord

Be still my soul

Be thou my vision

Before the throne of God above

Breathe on me breath of God

Brother, sister, let me serve you

Calon Ian

Can it be true?

Count your blessings

Dear Lord and father of mankind

Eternal father strong to save

Father I place into your hands

Firmly I believe and truly

Forth in thy name I go

For ever with the Lord

Gaudete

Give to our God immortal praise

God be in my head

God is here as we his people

Glory to thee, my God, this night

Great is thy faithfulness

Guide me O thou great redeemer

How great thou art

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

I cannot tell how he who angels worship

I the Lord of sea and sky

I vow to thee my country

I will sing the wondrous story

In Christ alone

In the bleak midwinter

Indescribable

It came upon the midnight clear

Jerusalem

Jesus Christ is risen today

Jesus Christ the apple tree

Let all mortal flesh keep silence

Like a candle flame

Lo he comes with clouds descending

Longing for light

Look ye saints the sight is glorious

Lord Jesus Christ you have come to us

Lord for the years

Lord of all hopefulness

Lord of the dance

Love divine all loves excelling

Loving shepherd of thy sheep

Make me a channel of your peace

Meekness and majesty

Morning has broken

My song is love alone

Now the green blade riseth

O for a thousand tongues to sing

O love that wilt not let me go

O Jesus I have promised

Once in royal David's city

One more step along the road I go

Onward Christian soldiers

Praise my soul the king of heaven

Praise to the holiest in the height

Shine Jesus shine

Silent night

Soul of my saviour

Such love

Take my life and let it be

Tell out my soul

Ten thousand reasons

The angel Gabriel from heaven came

The Church's one foundation

The day thou gavest

The greatest day in history

The Lord is my light and salvation

The Lord's my shepherd

The old rugged cross

The servant king

The strife is o'er

There is a green hill far away

Thine be the glory

Thou didst leave thy throne

Through all the changing scenes of life

Trust and obey

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

We plough the fields and scatter

We three kings

When I survey the wondrous cross

When the music fades

You shall go out with joy

Were you surprised by those that made the top 100? Plenty of my favourites were not mentioned by anyone else. If you have a burning desire to tell us what you would choose and why it is your favourite, I am sure we can still find space for it. Do write and tell me.

And for those who want to know the most popular of these, chosen by the greatest number of people from the various churches in Tring, the Top 10 (well 16, actually) are:

1 Guide me O thou great redeemer

2 I the Lord of sea and sky

2 Dear Lord and father of mankind

2 O Jesus I have promised

3 Be still and know that I am God

3 Morning has broken

3 The Lord's my shepherd

4 Amazing grace

4 Be thou my vision

4 Lord of the dance

4 My song is love unknown

4 Shine Jesus shine

4 Tell out my soul

4 Ten thousand reasons

4 There is a green hill far away

4 Thine be the glory

News from Bishop Wood School

Mrs Linda Hardman, head teacher at Bishop Wood School, is leaving to go on to a different job. Linda has been a truly wonderful head teacher and it has been my privilege to work closely with her in my time as Team Rector.

Linda, a Roman Catholic worshipper, has brought her strong faith to the leadership of Bishop Wood School. Her vision for the school was that everything is underpinned by Christian love. Her favourite assembly song is 'I'm special because God has loved me'. Linda has treated every child as a precious gift. She has treated her staff with care and

compassion, and has fought for them, as well as pushing them to excellence. She is patient and generous with parents.

The school has consistently had outstanding academic attainment levels and Linda led the school to be recognised as an Outstanding Anglican School. Visitors to the school comment on its wonderful ethos. I am sure much of this has flowed from Linda's own faith and ministry. She will be greatly missed but we are truly thankful for all that she has done.

Huw Bellis, Tring Team



Fairtrade Tring

Members of the Justice & Peace Group, affiliated to Churches Together in Tring, and others gathered at a special event in Tring on Saturday 15 July 2017 to formally unveil one of three new signs proclaiming Tring a Fairtrade Town.

We were delighted to have the Town Mayor of Tring, Councillor Mr Gerald Wilkins with us. It was a very special occasion for the town of Tring, celebrating the successful renewal of Tring's Fairtrade Town status for two years, following the Town's long commitment to promoting Fairtrade principles.

Tring was first awarded the Fairtrade status on 20 October 2007 in recognition of the strong support for fairtrade within Tring and the achievement of five qualifying goals, such as a wide availability of fairtrade products in local shops and catering outlets, high levels of support from local people, businesses, Tring Town Council, faith groups and schools.

Thanks to the ongoing support of the public and campaigners, an increasing number of farmers in developing countries are now selling their products on fairtrade terms, bringing them a stable income, and the chance to trade their way out of poverty.

Fairtrade helps small-scale farmers ensure they earn stable incomes and have long-term contracts with companies. In addition, they earn the Fairtrade Premium, which they invest as the farmer-owned co-operative democratically chooses, in projects that will benefit their business community.

The FAIRTRADE Mark independently certifies that products meet economic, social and environmental standards. As such, it is the most widely recognised ethical mark worldwide. Tring is now one of more than 600 Fairtrade Towns across the country.

We presented the renewal certificate of Tring's status as a Fairtrade Town to the Town Mayor of Tring Town, Councillor Mr Gerald Wilkins who responded, 'Thank you Michael for your presentation on behalf of the Justice & Peace Group of the renewal certificate of Tring's status as a Fairtrade Town in this year, the tenth anniversary of the first grant of its status. I am very pleased that Tring has renewed its Fairtrade status and am delighted to accept this certificate on behalf of the town. I would like to commend for its work the Justice & Peace Group, affiliated to Churches Together in Tring, who have acted for all these years as the Fairtrade steering group for the town.

'It gives me great pleasure now to unveil one of three new signs for Tring which announce to all those entering Tring from either London Road,

Bulbourne Road or Aylesbury Road that Tring is a fairtrade town. These signs are welcome additions to signs first put up by these approach roads to Tring in 2015 as part of the celebration of the 700 years since King Edward 11 signed Tring's original market charter in 1315.'

The Justice & Peace Group is made up of people of all ages and from very different backgrounds. We believe in justice and peace for the world and for every individual within it. We champion respect for the environment, human rights, the afflicted and assistance for the needy. We act as the Fairtrade steering group for Tring.

We meet on the last Wednesday of each month (except in December) from 7.30pm to 9.00pm. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 27 September at Corpus Christi Church Hall, Langdon Street. Do join us!

For further information see www.justiceandpeacetring.org or contact me on michaeldemidecki@gmail.com or 07887 980004.

Michael Demidecki
Justice & Peace Group



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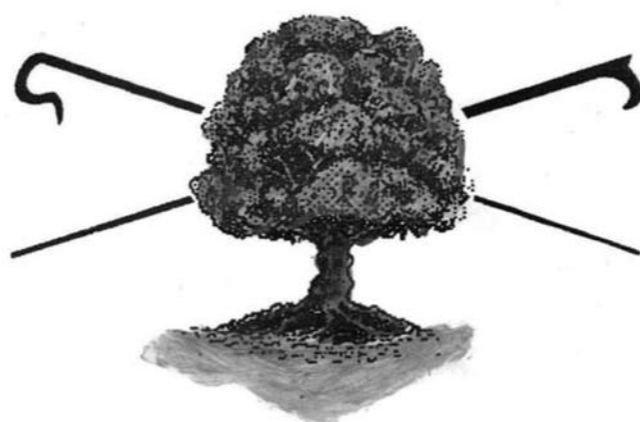
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The Grenfell tragedy

Imagine fleeing from your home in the middle of the night with only your pyjamas and slippers. No mobile phone, no credit card, no insurance documents, no proof of identity. No way of contacting anyone and in trauma.

Imagine three weeks later you are still in emergency accommodation away from your support network; nowhere to cook, no ethnic food. School has restarted, but no uniform, no sportswear, missing friends. The only clothes you and your children wear were donated by the local community.

All too imaginable now.

Now we know how the fire raged through the cladding, but not how the unthinkable happened. The iconic picture for me was from a video taken from an approaching fire engine showing three enormous separate fires. But each day new revelations came.

When John Humphreys announced that you could identify all similar buildings with a couple of emails I shouted out in anger. I have worked in a Housing and Estates Department so know the impossibility of this.

In the early 1990s I was involved with upgrading tower blocks, and have professional knowledge of the more recent advice which was not accepted.

But I did not realise how easy it is to circumvent building and fire regulations; though we continue to do it on the much smaller scale of house extensions where the consequences...

I have also done some work, computer cabling, in a local authority disaster management centre. The Grenfell disaster is not the worst scenario if you live under the Heathrow flight path. Rehousing is extremely difficult in the midst of a housing crisis.

After being made redundant in 1992 I did an MA in Development Practices at Oxford Brookes; this included a module on Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation, largely concerned with earthquakes and hurricanes. Since then I have realised that the principles are applicable over a wide range down to the personal. We can easily back up all our vital information, with a friend or a cloud, or carry a copy round in a memory stick – but still we don't.

In the 2007 floods in Cokermonth, where I had holidayed, the churches responded well – even those themselves flooded. Even Railtrack managed to build a temporary station in two weeks!

Churches Together in Tring should develop their own plans. The churches and mosques in north Kensington with

their immediate and continuing response showed that grass roots communities are tremendously important with their local knowledge and contacts.

Earlier this year there were two major power failures in Tring. A believable scenario would have Pond Close or similar sheltered housing without power for 24 hours – no lift, no heating or lighting, no hot meals for vulnerable people.

I am a member of the prayer ministry team at St Peter & Paul's. Within that we pray not only for church people, but also over national and international events. I still pray for the follow up from the Haiti earthquake.

Pray for the residents of Grenfell still in temporary accommodation and the ongoing work of the various enquiries. Love your neighbour as yourself and, in particular, 'treat people as you would have them treat you' applies not only to individuals, but also to organisations.

Leslie Barker, St Peter & St Paul



Parish magazine August & September 1917

Second Lieutenant Douglas Rew was for over two years Assistant Scout master to our Troop of Boy Scouts who are not likely to forget the interesting problems he used to set them on Saturday afternoons, and help that he gave in the Allotments and on the football field, or at the fretwork table in the Clubroom. He sometimes took a class in Sunday School, but spent most Sundays in St Giles, Cheddington, where he used to read the Lessons. He joined the Artists' Rifles, and obtained a commission in the Essex Regiment, training at Halton Camp. He was twice wounded in France, but returned to duty until 28 June 1917 when he was 'called to higher service' while visiting two of his men during a heavy German bombardment. RIP.

Lance-Corporal Henry Richard Philby, 2nd Bedfordshire Regiment, was killed on the 27 July 'somewhere in France'. He was called up from the Reserves at

the commencement of the War and sent out to France with the first Expeditionary Force. He was sitting in a shelter when a shell came through the top, killing him instantaneously. The place where he was killed was in the same district where his brother met his death.

We have received news also of the deaths of Frank Foster who was killed in France on 6 August and of Oliver Wilkins who was killed whilst acting as runner in an attack made by the Battalion on the enemy position early on 16 August. Oliver was for some years a chorister in our Church, a member of the Tring Troop of Boy Scouts, and afterwards joined our Church Lads Brigade. He enlisted in the Bucks Regiment when he was only 17 and went to France on 30 March 1915. He was home in England for some time suffering from severe shell shock, but returned to the front in May 1917. May God accept the lives they have given.



In memory of Maureen Parnell

Maureen always said that joining the Girl Guides was the making of her: it opened up a whole new world and she forever lived by its motto ‘Be Prepared’. Through Guiding she developed a strong community spirit and was always ready to roll up her sleeves to help out. Her unwavering levels of energy never failed to impress. She was involved with many local organisations; she pickled onions for the WI, picked up litter for ‘Tring in Transition’, campaigned against low-flying aircraft, petitioned to save green spaces from development, sang in the Church choir, walked dogs for the Chiltern Dog Rescue Society, drove less able ladies to Church and regularly donned her indispensable rubber gloves to clean the loos at St Peter & St Paul’s.

Born in Malta to Irish parents, Maureen was the first of four daughters. She spent her early years in Gillingham, Kent, where she met her husband, Gordon Parnell, a scout leader, and they married in 1953. They had four children: Sharon, Elaine, Philip and Nigel. Philip died just a few days after his birth.

Maureen loved being a mum and was very happy bringing up her children. Her domestic skills were second to none, excelling at baking, dress-making, tailoring, knitting and curtain-making and



she was also a dab hand at DIY.

In the late 1990s, following a stint in hospital, Maureen found her true vocation in life: nursing. Although by then in her late thirties, she was so

inspired by the profession that she studied for her ‘O’ levels to qualify for training. Nursing became her passion and she spent the next twenty years taking on various nursing roles before ending her career as a District Nurse.

In the mid 1990s, Maureen discovered Tring. She was in awe of the rolling, unspoilt countryside of the Chilterns, a big contrast to the Medway Towns where she had lived for most of her life. It was, she said, her paradise and the place she wanted her ashes to be scattered. She went on to live in Tring for twenty-two years, tending her beautiful garden, making wonderful friends and was blessed to have kind, supportive neighbours.

Maureen died on 1 June aged 84 after a brave struggle with cancer and her funeral service – which she had arranged well in advance and expecting no one to come – was held on 16 June. Many of her friends and family filled the Church.

Another year, another Megastick Walk



Why the ‘Megastick’ Walk?

St Peter & St Paul have a regular monthly walk for families, friends and dogs. Sticks feature on these walks for both children and dogs – thus ‘Stick’ Sunday. When we decided to walk a sponsored half marathon each year for Christian Aid, we started to call it the Megastick Walk.

Why do I do this sponsored walk? I keep asking myself this question! It must be like childbirth. Each year I say ‘never again!’ but the pain quick fades and I find myself looking forward to it come September.

At first only two of us walked around and between the five Churches in the Parish, noticing with every step that we lived in the Chilterns as we walked up and down hills, across fields, through woods and along the canal. It is a beautiful walk (better if the weather is kind and we don’t get our boots stuck in muddy ploughed fields). Of course

there are mad runners too, but year on year more people have walked with us or behind us and last year most of The Youth Cafe came too (though as they seemed to get back before us without overtaking: it is my contention that they cheated!!).

This is my fifth year and needless to say each year I am older and less fit. My husband is amazed that I don’t walk all year and then do fourteen miles without training. But we raise more money for Christian Aid walking than we ever did doing house-to-house collections. It’s worth the blisters and aching muscles for the cause. And there are other benefits too. We talk as we walk so get to know each other better!

Come and join us on Sunday 17 September, starting at 11.00am at St Peter & St Paul’s. Collect some sponsorship money of your own (contact me for forms) or offer to sponsor someone else walking the half marathon. If you want to take part but walk a shorter distance, a group also leaves from Wilstone. You don’t have to belong to the Parish Church (last year Baptists joined us) and you don’t have to belong

to any church. Walkers can enjoy a barbecue prepared for our return – if they get back in time!

In previous years I have had my sponsorship doubled by a keen sponsor. Will someone do it this year too? Do contact me if you can help!

Annette Reynolds, St Peter & St Paul



In memory of Peter Dickenson

Mr Dickenson, Peter, Sir, Mr D, just some of the names used for Peter during his time at Long Marston School by the 800 pupils who passed through his care in the twenty years he was Head.

Peter was persuaded to apply for the position in 1989 by the then deputy, Mr Aldrich, who thought he would be perfect for the school. The thing that struck him during a visit prior to applying was the wonderful potential – for the lively children he encountered, the beautiful large grounds he saw and the shabby building and mobile classroom that needed rather more than a bit of TLC. He had a vision for what he saw. Thankfully he applied.

Peter loved tradition, one of them being to make regular entries in the School Log book such as: 8 September 1989 ‘The end of my first week at the school. Most enjoyable!’

Maypole, Harvest Festival, the Nativity and Christingle all became annual traditional Long Marston events. The hazard of over 100 children holding lit candles precariously inserted into oranges never put him off – he just ensured staff were at the ready with buckets of sand and water – and bated breath! He loved Christmas time and we knew when the boiler suit went on he was off to buy the biggest Christmas tree he could find for the hall. This love of tradition and community gave the school its wonderful ‘family’ feel.

Peter was never one for bureaucracy or red tape. His priority was always the pupils, staff and school. This was demonstrated recently when the Attendance Officer commented: ‘He was such a lovely man running a wonderful school but... he was the most challenging head I had to deal with!’

No matter how often I asked him for information in a particular way, he always justified that his way was the best way for his school.’

Where staff were concerned he let you do your job acknowledging that you were a professional whom he respected and appreciated.

He wanted children to be well rounded. He ensured that the breadth of education – as well as being academic, allowed every child to take part in sport,



music, art and drama. Peter instilled a strong sense of responsibility and ‘caring’ amongst pupils. He led by example in his quiet way, never raising his voice. When questioned how he managed this he said there is no point in losing your temper with children, you need to show them you are in control. This quality was recognised in a performance appraisal of Peter’s. ‘Peter seems to have an “aura” that commands respect as soon as he walks into a room, yet he is still very approachable.’

Peter loved interaction with the children. For the first fourteen years as

Head he taught 50% of the time (and taught three of Comment’s Editor’s children). He was found in the playground daily, his presence always felt. He knew each child by name and remembered them long after they had left.

Peter’s love of sport was evident throughout his time at Long Marston, with a healthy dose of competitiveness thrown in. Recently when pupils came to pay their respects they recalled tactic meetings, that he always had spare kit available for those who had forgotten theirs(!) and the frequent mention of his beloved Peterborough United.

However, for him, the highlight of the sporting year was Inter-Village Sports Day. Mr D was very proud of the fact that when he retired Long Marston had won for twelve consecutive years! On the day of his funeral Long Marston School were hosting Inter-Village Sports Day which they regained last year and retained this year in honour of Mr D.

During twenty years at the school he certainly made his mark: in the grounds which he developed, to the buildings that he changed, with many additions including the office which I had the privilege of sharing with him for ten years. But most importantly his legacy for the children. He took the mantra ‘Every child matters’ to heart. He left an indelible mark on their lives as the ‘Book of Remembrance’ bears witness to.

To end in the words of Mr D himself ‘Listen to what people are saying. They are saying it for a reason. It might be right or wrong, but listen and think about it. Listen, discuss and talk. In the words of Green Day “Silence is the Enemy”.’

Goodbye Mr D, an inspirational leader, colleague and friend.

Belinda Brett, Long Marston School

Parish registers

Baptisms

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

**Marco Wren
Elijah Wyatt
Max Deacon
Jessica Teresa Jones
Charles Francis Alexander Heath**

Weddings

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

**Matthew Wade & Lucy Huxtable
Andrew Bullock & Janine Coates
Colin Baker & Charlotte Owtrim
Mark Griggs & Angela Joyes
Ian Ewers & Helena Jackson
James Hamilton-Heward & Emily Ramirez**

Funerals

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

**June Guest
Phyllis Willis
Shelley Gibbs
Graham Whitham
Alan James
Kathleen Day
Kevin Wilson**

St Martha’s Methodist Church

BIKE AND HIKE
St Martha’s will be opening its doors once again to bicycling and other visitors on Saturday 9 September between 10.00am and 6.00pm. If you can help by spending an hour in the Church to help visitors see inside as part of their tour, please liaise with the Senior Steward.

CHRISTIAN AID CONCERT
On Saturday 7 October at 7.30pm there will be a concert of piano music given by David Berdinner and pupils. This year will focus

particularly on Nocturnes, Preludes and Mazurkas by Chopin. Refreshments served. Admission free. Retiring collection for Christian Aid.

SALVATION ARMY RETURNS TO ST MARTHA’S
We have a date for a return visit from the Aylesbury Fellowship Band – Saturday 16 September. Please note this in your diaries. We look forward to another Salvation Army style evening which was so popular last time.

HARVEST FESTIVAL
The morning service on 24 September will be our celebration of the Harvest Festival, with Revd Rachael Hawkins leading the service.

1066 CLUB
St Martha’s would like to put in a plug for the 1066 Club, a club for partially sighted people that meets in Berkhamsted once a month. Transport is provided, including from Tring. If you would like more information, please phone Mary Cutler on 01727 860 695.

3 September 10.00am
Revd Rachael Hawkins

3 September 6.30pm
Circuit Welcome Service
High Street Methodist, Harpenden
Revd David Chapman

10 September 10.00am
Bob Blencowe

17 September 10.00am
John Benson

24 September 10.00pm
Harvest Festival Service
Revd Rachael Hawkins

Kings Church

Every Sunday 10.30am
The Nora Grace Hall

New Mill Baptist Church

TOT SPOT
Tuesdays @ 10.00-11.30am
5, 12, 19, 26 September

KNIT & NATTER
Wednesdays @ 7.30pm
6, 13, 20, 27 September

FRIDAY CLUB
Fridays @ 6.00-7.15pm
15, 22, 29 September

10 September 10.30am
Morning Service
Mr Steve Brehm

BRIGHT HOUR
Tuesday 12 September @ 2.30pm
The Speaker is Maggie Mackenzie

THE MILL COMMUNITY CAFÉ
Thursdays @ 11.00-2.00pm
14, 21, 28 September

BIKE 'N HIKE
Saturday 9 September All Day

17 September 10.30am
Morning Service
Revd Andrew Openshaw

3 September 10.30am
Morning Service
Revd Andrew Openshaw

24 September 10.30am
Harvest Festival
Mr Bob Little

High Street Baptist Church

@MYEG
Mondays 7.30-8.45pm
Youth Group for years 7 to 13

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

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

WHO LET THE DADS OUT
First Saturday of the month at 8.30am to 10.00am

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

GAMES AFTERNOON
Wednesdays 2.00-4.00pm
Traditional games, puzzles and refreshments

FRIDAY CAFÉ
Fridays 12.00-1.30pm
Freshly cooked lunches

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP
Service at 10.30am with Junior Church and Crèche

COFFEE FOR A CAUSE
Tuesdays 10.30am – 12noon
Coffee in the foyer in aid of BMS World Mission

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.

1st Sunday of the month
8.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
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
No services in Puttenham

2nd Sunday of the month
8.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
8.15am Holy Communion BCP Puttenham
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
6.00pm Evening Prayer Long Marston

3rd Sunday of the month
8.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Wilstone
10.00am Worship for All Long Marston
10.00am Holy Communion Aldbury
No service in Puttenham

4th Sunday of the month
8.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
10.00am Worship for All Wilstone
10.00am Holy Communion Aldbury
10.00am Holy Communion CW Long Marston
3.30pm Evensong in Puttenham
6.00pm Alternative Communion CW Tring

5th Sunday of the month
8.00am Holy Communion BCP Aldbury
8.00am Holy Communion BCP Tring
10.00am Holy Communion CW Aldbury
10.00am Holy Communion CW Tring
10.00am Sunday Worship or Holy Communion Long Marston
10.00am Sunday Worship or Holy Communion Wilstone
No service in Puttenham

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 10 September 11.20am St P&P
Emmie Hobbs Room

Churches Together in Tring
Saturday 2 September 8.30-9.30am
Prayer Breakfast St Martha’s

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
Saturday 2 September
From 1.00pm for those who have been bereaved to meet and eat with others.
Contact Margaret Oram for information on 01442 824575.

Afternoon Tea
Tuesday 26 September 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 7 September 1.30pm Tring Parish Hall

Book Group
Last Sunday in the month 6.45pm St P&P

Fairtrade Fridays
Second and fourth Fridays 9.00-12.30 St P&P

Piano and More Concert
Sunday 17 September 3.00pm St P&P

Harvest Lunch
Sunday 3 September 1.00pm Wilstone Village Hall

Megastick Sunday
Sunday 17 September 11.00am St P&P
Half marathon sponsored walk for Christian Aid
Followed by service and barbecue

Jumble Sale
Saturday 30 September 2.00pm Cecilia Hall, Puttenham



Useful contacts

TRING TEAM PARISH

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

Team Vicar
(Aldbury)
Rev Michelle Grace
Aldbury Vicarage
01442 851200
michelle@tringteamparish.org.uk
(Day off Friday)

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

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

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Mike Watkin
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01442 822915

Ian Matthews (Tring)
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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
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Mothers' Union Branch Leader
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rachel.hawkins@methodist.org.uk

Senior Steward
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**AKEMAN STREET
BAPTIST CHURCH**
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Rev David Williams
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**CORPUS CHRISTI
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CHURCH**
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tring@rcdow.org.uk

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**NEW MILL
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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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next edition should arrive with
the Editor by the 6th of the
previous month.

Crossword puzzle answers

From page 8

ANSWERS ACROSS

- 1. CACHED
- 4. SPIRIT
- 9. PENANCE
- 10. OMEGA
- 11. SHEEP
- 13. EPHRAIM
- 14. BUT
- 15. TAROT
- 16. WAS
- 17. CHARIOT
- 19. CUSHY
- 21. PETER
- 22. OBSERVE
- 24. WORTHY
- 25. CALLED

ANSWERS DOWN

- 1. COPE
- 2. CONVENT
- 3. EON
- 5. PROPHETIC
- 6. RHESA
- 7. TRAUMAS
- 8. CELEBRATION
- 12. PATRIARCH
- 14. BACK PEW
- 16. WASTREL
- 18. ALTAR
- 20. YIELD
- 23. SEA




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