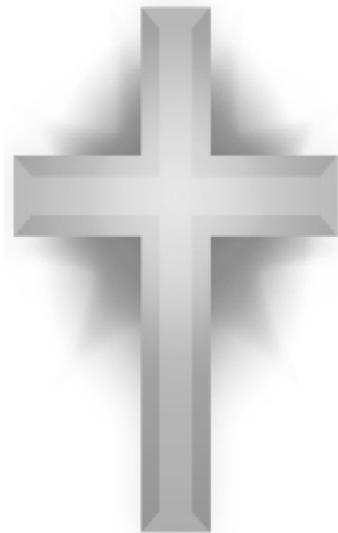
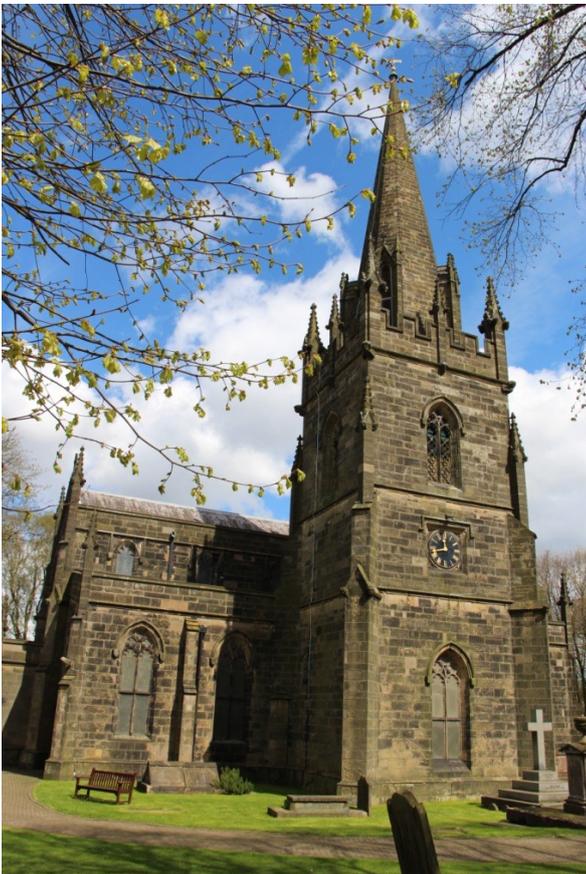
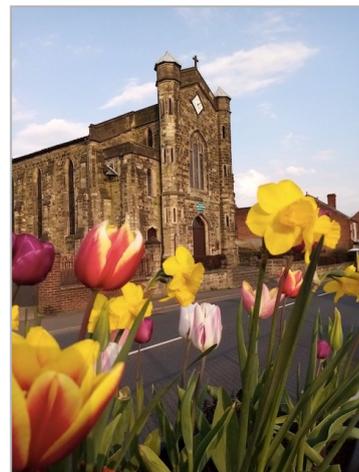


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May 2022

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Funerals

FUNERALS IN MAY

1 ST MURIEL RAYBOULD	GORNAL WOOD
20 TH GRAHAM TAYLOR	ALL SAINTS
22 ND LESLIE GUEST	GORNAL WOOD
25 TH JUNE RITA PEDLEY	GORNAL WOOD
29 TH HARRY SMITH	GORNAL WOOD

THE BEACON

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Karen Evans: 01902 678056

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admin@allsaintssedgley.co.uk

by

Friday 27th May

and needs to be in Arial typeface, size 18.

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St Peter's District Church magazine

St Peter's also publishes a magazine which is more particular to Upper Gornal. If you would like to receive that magazine (which is not available electronically), in the first instance please contact a St Peter's Church warden details on page 2 of this magazine.

If you wish to enquire about a wedding for 2022, please contact

Gail Griffiths

At the Parish Office - tel 01902 540289

Vicars Ponderings May 2022

Dear friends

The first weekend of June this year marks two significant events. The first of these is the Queen's platinum Jubilee, for which celebration events are being planned in communities across the country.

This is the first time that any British monarch has celebrated a Platinum Jubilee, and after 70 years on the throne very few of us will even be able to remember anything other than living in Elizabethan times.

The Queen's reign has been marked by almost unimaginable changes in society and in the world. Her coronation was credited with kickstarting the television age, now screens are just about everywhere. Her first Christmas broadcast in 1952 was only on the radio, her latest in 2021 could be watched on TikTok or heard on Amazon Alexa!

The Queen has been a constant presence in an ever changing world and it is testament to her humility and service that, though scandals may have rocked her family and a great number of her governments, the Queen herself remains an inspiration to many.

Though the majority of her coronation was shown on television, there was one moment that was deemed too sacred to broadcast. This was the moment when the symbols of her status – the crimson robe, the diamond diadem, the coronation necklace – were removed, and the Archbishop of Canterbury anointed the new Queen with holy oil. The Queen has spoken since of how this moment was the most significant one of her life, as in humility she was dedicated to a life of service and called to follow the example of Jesus who himself gave his life for others.

It is fitting then that the other significant celebration taking place on the first weekend in June is the feast of Pentecost.

This is when we remember the gift of God's Holy Spirit to the Church, that Spirit of love and service which binds all people together and fills each and every one of us with the guiding presence of God.

The early Christians, after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, dedicated their lives to one another. As the Acts of the Apostles puts it, "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them."

As we approach this weekend with its multitude of celebrations may we all be inspired – whether by the Holy Spirit, by the many years of humble service of her Majesty the Queen, or both – to dedicate our lives to the service of our fellow humans, in our own communities and around the world.

Blessings **Rev Catherine**

Make time for your older relatives

Many of our older people are lonely. They lost touch with their families during the pandemic, and it seems that they have still not caught up again.

A recent survey by Age UK found that as many as 27 percent of people aged 60 and over admit that they speak less to their families now, and 24 per cent of older people say they feel less close to their relatives than before the pandemic.

The survey also found that millions of older people have lost the confidence to go out, and suffer more from memory loss, disturbed sleep, and anxiety.

The charity is urging people to reach out to their older friends and relatives and encourage them. It warns: "The pandemic has had a big impact on everyone and very few of us are emerging from the last two years completely unscathed."

MOTHERS' UNION

We welcomed Margaret Penn to our meeting in April as we talked about 'Moving On'. It was an opportunity to chat about the Mothers' Union at our end of the diocese, about our membership and meetings, the projects we are passionate about and our support of each other. We also touched on how the last two years has impacted on our lives.

Lenten Collection

Thank you to all Mothers' Union and church members who have supported our collection. Your generosity has been amazing and I know the Women's Refuge will be delighted with the sets of towels and Welcome Packs they will receive.

Deanery Festival

Our Deanery Festival is on Tuesday 10th May, 2.00pm at St Mark's, Pensnett. Our Mothers' Union chaplain, Mother Victoria, will be giving the address.

Jubilee Cream Tea

We are holding a 'Jubilee Cream Tea' on Tuesday 7th June, at 2.00pm in All Saints' Church Hall. Tickets are £6.

Dates:

3 rd May	12noon	Communion and Lunch, in church
10 th May	2.00pm	Deanery Festival, St Mark's, Pensnett
17 th May	7.00pm	Cruising with Judy Clements

~~~~~

## Can you believe we are already in the month of May?

As I write this the sun is streaming in through the window, the birds are singing, and yes, the wren is back (not the same one that took shelter in 2020 but it could be a relative!). The snowdrops and daffodils have made way for the tulips and everything in the garden is coming alive.

May is the month which bridges from Winter to Summer.

Here are some notable dates in May.

### **1st May - May Day**

An ancient spring festival, traditionally celebrated with maypole dancing.

### **2nd May to 8th May - Screen-Free Week**

Annual event to encourage us to unplug from digital entertainment and spend our free time playing, reading, daydreaming, creating, exploring, and connecting with family and friends.

### **2nd May to 3rd May - Eid al-Fitr**

A religious holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide that marks the end of the month-long dawn-to-sunset fasting of Ramadan.

### **3rd May - International Gilbert & Sullivan Day**

Celebrating the comic operas of Gilbert & Sullivan, on the birthday of the man who brought them together, Richard D'Oyly Carte.

### **4th May - World Asthma Day**

An annual event organized by the Global Initiative for Asthma, with its goal to improve asthma awareness .

### **7th May to 15th May - National Doughnut Week**

Fundraising event in aid of The Children's Trust organised by the baking industry.

### **7th May - World FairTrade Day**

A worldwide festival of events celebrating FairTrade's contribution to sustainable development, and the economic empowerment of small producers, gender equality and responsible production.

## **12th May - International Nurses Day**

Held on the birthday of Florence Nightingale to mark the contributions that nurses make to society.

## **15th May - National Children's Day UK**

National Children's Day UK is all about the importance of a healthy childhood and protecting the rights and freedoms of children so that they can grow into happy, healthy adults.

## **16th May to 20th May - Walk To School Week**

Annual event to encourage children and their parents to walk to school, organised by Living Streets.

## **18th May - National Numeracy Day**

An annual celebration of the importance of numbers in everyday life, bringing together individuals, employers, educators and influencers to improve numeracy.

## **20th May - World Bee Day**

To raise awareness of the importance of pollinators, the threats they face and their contribution to sustainable development.

## **26<sup>th</sup> May – Ascension Day**

The ascension of Christ .....

## **29th May - Oakapple Day**

Also known as Restoration Day, it is a traditional English celebration of the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, following the death of Oliver Cromwell.

Take care

**Liz Williams**

## Shining as Lights - Our new fellowship course.

It was wonderful to see so many in church this Easter Sunday and to celebrate together the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Such a beautiful celebratory day after our journey together through Lent and Holy Week!

The fellowship group meeting on Thursday evenings on Zoom had completed a Lenten study, 'Following in the Footsteps of the Saints', focusing on the life of St Winnefride. Together we learnt much more than the course set out to do. We learnt that as prayerful members of our church congregations we have much to offer each other in our companionship, life experience and our own witness to faith. Some of us learnt new skills on the computer too! Above all we learnt that coming together just once a week to study the bible and share our understanding of it, we can meet Christ in one another.

Our new course, 'Shining as Lights' begins on Thursday April 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 on Zoom. The material comes from the Diocese of Sheffield and it explores what it means to be a Light for Christ and how we might develop a personal Rule of Life. Please do consider joining the group – the more the merrier!

Dates for the five part series are:

April 28<sup>th</sup>, May 5<sup>th</sup>, May 12<sup>th</sup>, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, June 9<sup>th</sup> (no meetings on May 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>)

Zoom link will be sent out on Newsgroups, but can also be obtained by contacting [pccseretary@allsaintssedgley.co.uk](mailto:pccseretary@allsaintssedgley.co.uk)

A prayer for you as we prepare for fellowship:

*Jesus, Light of the world,  
As I follow You today, would You  
Illuminate the darkness  
Within me and around me.  
Show me Your presence and Your path  
As I welcome the Light of Life.  
Amen*

# Ladies Society

At this month's meeting we were joined by Mary Zielonka who entertained us with tales of her cycling adventures.

Mary told us that she had always enjoyed cycling for pleasure with her sister and mother. They had cycled locally, doing 25-mile trips on 3 gear bikes, with no lycra or helmets! Once her sister left to get home so as not to miss Top of the Pops – those were the days.

Mary's mother then had the idea to cycle to East Anglia – as it was flat and roads were traffic-free. In 1980, with the help of East Anglia Holidays who organised the bikes and accommodation, they carried out a number of trips which enabled them to visit relatives and places of interest.

Over the next few years, they became slightly more adventurous, visiting Peebles and the Scottish Borders in 1982. North Devon was visited in 1983 – a much more challenging location with lots of hills, as her aunt had warned. As part of this holiday, they visited Lynton and Lynmouth – though they walked up the hills rather than cycled. Her mother sometimes walked down the hills although Mary freewheeled downhill from Lynton to Lynmouth!

In 1984 Mary was in Canada and she became serious about cycling. She would cycle with friends, carrying everything in panniers including camping equipment. Her friends from British Columbia then visited her in the UK and they cycled around Scotland. They visited Edinburgh and Inverness and, when Cathy (her friend) suffered a broken bike, a local blacksmith was called upon to repair it.

The friends then moved onto the Lake District which was very hilly and wet. By now her friends were in full cycling gear but Mary was still pedalling in sandals, although she had now acquired some gloves.

The next challenge was a ride from Sedgley to Norwich – her mother had the idea to visit relatives there.

They had a difficult start when Mary's cycle chain came adrift in Claremont Road and she became covered in oil whilst mending it. The holiday was a success though, with them travelling 240 miles to visit friends and family and staying in Youth Hostels of varying quality. Tired out, they returned home by train.

In 1988 Mary returned to Canada and she cycled around Nova Scotia with her friend Cathy. They took full camping gear with them but did use some hostels where the bikes had to be taken into the room to be kept safe. Mary started to keep a diary now and records poor campsites with only one tap for washing and where they had to wear bathing costumes in order to bathe under the tap. This was a difficult ride with a constant headwind, scenery which never changed, and the experience of a puncture and many mosquito bites which, according to friends, made her look diseased.

The Highway Route to Prince Edward Island meant that she encountered many logging trucks but she felt quite safe. She then visited the area related to Anne of Green Gables and really enjoyed the visit, sleeping in tents throughout the trip. At the end of their Canadian venture Cathy and Mary hired a huge truck to take their bikes and equipment to the airport. They had cycled 625 miles. Wow!

Since then, Mary has cycled in Ireland, Normandy and the South of France but she now limits her cycling to the areas of Church Stretton and Cannock Chase. Her friends are still cycling and she receives cards telling her about their adventures.

Mary had many laughing asides as she recalled always being slow and the last to finish, but being tired and sleepy and so avoiding the chores of laundry and cooking on the campsite. Well done Mary – this was a really enjoyable talk.

**Anne Wakefield and Karen Evans**

# The Ascension

This month at Ascension Day, we remember Jesus ascending to 'God's right hand' (1 Peter 3:22). It's a somewhat neglected Christian festival, taking place on a Thursday, 40 days after Easter. However, this phrase is used in three different contexts in the New Testament.

## *Sitting at God's right hand*

Jesus occupies a position of power and authority at the centre of the universe, 'exalted to the right hand of God' (Acts 2:33). This position was secured by His death and resurrection, enabling us to experience the life of heaven, including eternal life, forgiveness, healing and the power to transform lives and communities. Is this our expectation and experience?

## *Standing at God's right hand*

Our experience of heaven is only partial because of the presence of suffering and disappointment in our lives. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, saw Jesus 'standing at the right hand of God' (Acts 7:56), when being stoned to death. Do we see that Jesus is on the throne and has a purpose for our lives, even when we are going through setbacks and difficulties? As a result of Stephen's death, the church grew and the apostle Paul was impacted. Where do we see the fruit of the suffering in our lives?

## *Praying at God's right hand*

Finally, we are told that Jesus is 'interceding for us' at God's right hand (Romans 8:34 & Hebrews 7:25). Jesus is on our side at the heart of the universe and fully knows our needs when praying for us. He is for us, even when we feel defeated by the wrong things in our lives. How does this help us now?

So where has Jesus gone? Because He is in heaven, the Ascension opens up the possibility that we can experience the life of heaven, both now and in eternity.

## **Serving in the heat and squalor of a refugee camp**

*Interserve is a global Christian agency working among the peoples of Asia and the Arab World. Here is a story from their migrant ministry in the Middle East.* As the days shorten and the summer heat begins to lessen, Interserve Partner Tom arrives at his new clinic in the heart of the refugee camp where he serves. Tom is a family medicine doctor and has been working in the Middle East for five years alongside his wife Ruth, who is also a doctor.

The clinic consists of two container-rooms that have been fixed up with AC and a generator, to meet some of the needs of a camp population of around 30,000. The demand on the clinic is high and the needs are great and varied, but they do see some trends in patients. Many 'present' with diabetes and hypertension caused by obesity. This may seem strange given the extreme poverty, but sedentary lifestyles and high carbohydrate diets lead to these complications.

Chronic illnesses are escalated by stress and anxiety as well as inconsistent care. Challenging cases are often made worse by poor patient education and a lack of medical records from previous care – would you think to grab your medical records whilst fleeing for your life? Difficulty accessing specialist care, combined with poverty is a continual challenge.

Ruth provides care for women's health issues. One frequent problem is new mothers abandoning breastfeeding very early on, and supplementing with formula because they believe their own milk supply to be inadequate due to the stresses and hardships of camp life. Thus begins a downward spiral of declining milk supply, abandonment of breastfeeding, no money for formula and threatened infant health.

Tom and his wife are seeking partners to share the new facility and are in discussions with an expat dentist who may be interested in the space. They have recently been joined by a midwife who provides prenatal care and hopes to expand to birthing preparation classes. They would also love to provide more classes such as nutrition, exercise and back care.

There are ideas for many potential projects, but they have limited people resources. There are many obstacles to the work they can do – resources, finances, specialist care – but each day they do what they can, one case at a time, to make a difference to the people living on the camp.

Do you have medical experience? Would you consider having a story like Tom's in the future?

*For more about Interserve and the role you might play, go to [www.interserve.org.uk](http://www.interserve.org.uk)*

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## **The Conservation Foundation celebrates 40 years**

Remember the Millennium, and thousands of churches getting involved in planting 'Yews for the Millennium'? Then you will have encountered the Conservation Foundation.

It is turning 40 this year, and the 'Millennium Yews' project was only one of many for which the Church of England has worked with the Foundation, in an effort to preserve our natural environment. When David Shreeve and David Bellamy formed the Conservation Foundation back in 1982, they wanted to inspire and enable positive environmental action wherever they could.

Looking back, David Shreeve says: "40 years ago, it was acid rain and population concern, today it's climate change, net zero, health and wellbeing. 40 years ago, we were concerned about polluting our rivers and streams, we needed more trees, we wanted more people to get on their bikes.

"40 years ago, lots of people cared, but now you could argue that more people care more because some of the issues we face seem to be even more pressing. We like to think of the Foundation having been an environmental incubator, helping fledgling ideas, projects and organisations get off the ground.

To find out more, visit: <https://conservationfoundation.co.uk>

## Christ's Legacy

There was no mourning when Christ's resurrection appearances came to an end. After the final occasion we are told the disciples 'worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy'.

They had already experienced the onset of grief caused by His death, intensified because of the dreadful manner of it and the consequent crushing of their hopes. Then, with feelings combining bewilderment with elation, they were confronted by Christ alive and had to rethink everything they had understood until then about the certainty of death. They became convinced that the Crucifixion and Resurrection signposted a new beginning, not an ending, and that it gave fresh purpose to humanity, past, present and future.

Why was Christ's final departure met by joy rather than gloom? Here are some reasons, which we might think of as His legacies.

First, He had said that He was going to prepare a place for His followers. It's worth pondering John Chapter 14, to see why Jesus' disciples were so confident after His Ascension.

Second, He taught them His departure was, actually, for their *benefit*. Only in this way would the 'Advocate' come. 'Advocate' is one translation of a word meaning 'called alongside' and is a description of the Holy Spirit's work in and for humanity, then and now.

Third, Christ continues to campaign for the human cause, though now out of sight. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews puts it bluntly: "He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Paul writes something similar in his letter to the Romans. It means that Jesus prays for us nonstop, so when we pray it's like treading on a moving walkway taking us in the right direction.

Fourth, He came to show us what the unseen God is like. When one of His trainees asked, "Lord, show us the Father", the reply was, "Have I been with you all this time and you still do not know Me? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father". So, the more we contemplate Jesus, the closer we get to the unseen God.

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## **India passes another anti-conversion law**

Haryana has become the 10th state in India to pass an anti-conversion law limiting the freedom of Christians to share their faith and the right of Hindus to convert freely. A similar Bill is poised for final approval in another state, Karnataka.

As religious nationalism has taken hold across India, there has been a marked increase in attacks against the country's Christian minority. In 2021 there were 486 instances of violence and harassment against Christians – a rise of 74 per cent, according to a report by the United Christian Forum (UCF).

There are more than 200 million Dalits in India, and upwards of 40 per cent of India's Christians are said to come from a Dalit background. The name means literally 'broken' or 'scattered'. The movement of Dalits towards Christianity began in the 19th century, as many sought to escape caste persecution. It continues today.

One Release International partner 'Neeraj' describes why he changed his religion to become a Christian. "I constantly used to hear my mother saying we were untouchables – sub-human was the word she used – that we were not human beings.

"Hinduism says there are 330 million gods, but none of these died for a sinner like me. It was only Jesus. It is He who gives me hope. I was told I was created to be less than an animal, but it is Jesus who says, 'No, I created you in My image.' That's why I love Jesus."

---

### **Tribute**

The newly arrived minister was asked to take a funeral at short notice. At one point in the service, she said: "As I did not know the deceased, is there anyone here who would like to say a few words of tribute?" There was silence for several minutes and then a voice at the back was heard to say: "Well, his brother was even more like that."

## Reflected Faith Series: The Meaning of Colours

In March, April and May this year the coloured frontal of the altar will have been changed many times – as will the colour of the priest's vestments.

Each colour – and there can be as many as six in a church's store – has a different meaning. They reflect the significance of that day or the season. In March purple was used as a symbol of penitence, as we were in Lent and trying to prepare ourselves for Christ's final act of love for each of us.

Holy Week – the time of Christ's final journey – was denoted by the colour red. Red, the colour of blood, is used for feasts of martyrs as well as those for the Holy Spirit – when it more likely represents his flames of 'fire' which rested on those in the Upper Room.

Maundy Thursday, we switched to white for any Communion service, as this celebrates the remembrance of the first Communion with His apostles which He commanded us to continue.

Good Friday, and we were back to red.

Then on Easter Sunday, the day of the greatest Christian Celebration, we entered to an altar bedecked in gold or the 'whitest' with the most elaborate decoration the church possesses.

'Plain' White will be used for the Easter Season signifying purity and Christ's triumph over death until Ascension Day on 26<sup>th</sup> May. This, being a special and more significant day in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, goes to gold again: then immediately back to white for the next ten days.

On the day of Pentecost itself, Whit Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> June, the colour will be? Yes, you got it, red for flames of fire.

## Religious persecution on the rise

Muslims are having a hard time in India at the hands of the militantly Hindu Prime Minister Modi, described by India's Supreme Court as a modern-day Nero. In China, Muslims may be subjected to indoctrination classes by the government. And we remember with horror the genocide of Rohingya Muslims by the militantly Buddhist army of Myanmar (Burma). Most fled to Bangladesh, which now houses the world's largest refugee camp.

It is less well known that among the Rohingya people is another persecuted minority. Christian Rohingyas are not only ill-treated by the Burmese, but also by Muslims of their own ethnicity. Looking at religious persecution worldwide, far more Christians suffer than any others – mainly as a result of Muslim antagonism.

Although Coptic Christians lived in Egypt centuries before Islam arrived, they are subject to “growing religious intolerance” according to Human Rights Watch. Hundreds have been killed, churches sacked, businesses destroyed. A steady stream of Christian women and girls are abducted. The same happens in Nigeria, where girls are taken from school by Boko Haram, which means ‘Western education is forbidden’. There, and in neighbouring countries, the nomadic Fulani militia are targeting non-Muslim communities, particularly Christians. Al Shabbab is another terrorist group waging jihad against the supposed enemies of Islam in North and East Africa.

In Morocco, Christian men are arrested and fined for having a Bible or discussing Christianity with a Muslim. Women who become Christians may be expelled from their homes or forced to marry non-Christians. Even in a moderate country like Jordan, Muslims are not allowed to convert, and Christian men are prohibited from marrying Muslim women (but not the other way round). Tunisia also bans conversion, as does Libya. It is impossible to live openly as a Christian in Afghanistan: even before the Taliban took over, converts had to flee the country or be killed.

## **A meal to remember!**

When we gather with other Christians to celebrate the Eucharist and to make our communion, we are remembering that special meal Jesus shared with His disciples on the eve of His arrest and death. But do we always appreciate what we are doing? Sometimes the monotony of repetition and distractions will get in the way. We fail to recognise Christ's gift at communion for what it truly is.

In the 15th century the prosperous burghers of the Flemish town of Louvain commissioned the artist Dirk Bouts to paint a special altarpiece devoted to the Eucharist for the church of St Peter. Dirk Bouts, with his imagination, portrayed the Last Supper in a room looking out to his own town of Louvain. The faces of the servers in the room and the cooks looking through the hatch were modelled on the burghers who commissioned the work.

Other faces are modelled on theologians at the new university who visited the artist. They wanted to ensure he kept his theological feet on the ground while his imagination took flight. And so around the scene of the Last Supper, Bouts has painted Old Testament scenes foreshadowing that holy communion: Melchizedek offering bread and wine in return for Abraham's offering, the eating of the first Passover, the gathering of the manna in the wilderness, and Elijah wakened by the angel to eat and drink before setting out for Horeb. Signs of sacrifice, the Passover of the old covenant, daily food and food for the journey – all key aspects of the communion we celebrate and share in.

Just as the theological faculty reminded Dirk Bouts of all these facets, so the artist is reminding us of the richness of the distinctive meal we have as Christians. When we see the bread and wine taken up and offered, we remember not only the Last Supper, when Jesus fed His disciples with the sacrifice of His life, but those occasions when God reached out to feed His people of old. We rejoice that the food our Lord gives us in the Eucharist feeds us now and enables us to make our journey through life to the eternal banquet offered in the heavenly kingdom.

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\* Anything from recipes, walks you have done, programmes you have  
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\* Please email me : admin@allsaintssedgley.co.uk or if you do not  
\* have use of a computer please post it to me at:

\* Parish Office  
\* Ladies Walk  
\* Sedgley  
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\* Look forward to hearing from you.

\* **Gail**

\*\*\*\*\*

**SPRINGS FOOD BANK** - Food can be delivered to Springs Food Bank on **Mondays 10am to 12 noon** at: SPRINGS, Upper Gornal Methodist Church, Kent Street, Upper Gornal, DY3 1YB.

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you can **bring** donations of food to the **Parish Office** Monday to Friday between 10 and 12.30pm

If you would like to make a cash donation you can do so on the Black Country Food Bank web site at:

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*Romans 1:20*

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# Remembering Bertrand Russell

It was 150 years ago, on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1872, that Bertrand Russell, the Welsh philosopher, mathematician, historian, and writer, was born. He won the 1950 Nobel Prize in Literature for championing “humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought”.

A member of a prominent aristocratic family, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl Russell was a very public figure who lived to an advanced age. He was a social critic and freethinker who took what were at times extreme positions which he attempted to justify through his academic expertise in logic.

An enthusiast for world government, he was also a pacifist, up to a point. He went to prison for his devotion to pacifism during the First World War, but decided that the war against Nazi Germany was a necessary evil. He supported nuclear disarmament.

His grandmother, the Countess Russell, came from a conservative Scottish Presbyterian family but held progressive views in many areas, including Darwinism. She was big influence on the young Russell, who was brought up in an atmosphere of frequent prayer and religious formality.

This did have an effect, though probably not the one intended. In 1927 Russell gave a lecture in London entitled ‘Why I am not a Christian’, which has since been widely circulated throughout the world. It contained logical objections to Christianity which were less than convincing to Christians but enjoyed much support from atheists.

Russell’s conviction under the Defence of the Realm Act for his pacifist activities during the First World War cost him his position at Trinity College and a fine of £100 (equivalent to roughly £5,700 today). He refused to pay in the hope of being sent to prison, but his books were sold to friends at auction to raise the money. He was later proud of his copy of the King James Bible stamped ‘Confiscated by Cambridge Police’.



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## Time to welcome your slugs and snails

So says the Royal Horticultural Society, as it recently began a campaign to encourage us to see the gastropods in our gardens in a better light.

The RHS says that the species play a key role in garden ecosystems, and thus are in need of 'positive PR'. It seems that only nine of the 44 known species in the UK are likely to threaten our gardens, and that all of them play a vital role in recycling dead plant material and animal waste, and acting as a food source for hedgehogs, frogs, birds, beetles and flies.

In fact, the RHS's principal entomologist says that we should consider our slugs and snails not as marauding pests bent on eating our flowers and vegetables, but rather as 'garden visitors'. "Our gardens would be duller and messier without them."

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# Humility

*This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge.*

A few years ago I visited the Smithsonian Museum's Hall of Human Origins. Our guide, the curator of anthropology, was keen to help Christians understand his research. Whatever you make of the evidence for human evolution, the fact remains that other species a bit like us were around before we came on the scene – or in the case of Neanderthals, at the same time.

Part of the exhibit included lifelike reconstructions of the face and hair of several different hominins, displayed on pillars at the right height for each species. So I could crouch down to 'meet' *Homo floresiensis* or stand tall to look into the eyes of *Homo heidelbergensis*. Most of these – beings? creatures? – were on other branches of the evolutionary tree to us, and we share a common ancestor much further back. I did, however, feel as if I was meeting my forebears.

As I walked between the statues I asked myself, "Why us?" There's evidence that Neanderthals used symbolism as we do, and also buried their dead. Did they have the potential to evolve to a point where they could do similar things to us? The curator explained how, as the ice ages came and went, human beings moved around but other species appear to have stayed put and suffered the consequences – they just weren't ready yet for that big change. As I took in the displays about how we began to gather socially around a fire, make music or write, I felt humbled. We managed to adapt, but we could so easily have disappeared with the rest. In his book *The Message of Creation*, theologian David Wilkinson shares his view that being made in the image of God has nothing to do with our own cleverness or abilities, but is a gift. God created us on purpose (I believe through the long slow process of evolution) and chose to enter into a relationship with us, making us His representatives on earth.

Thankfully I don't have to figure out how to interact with other human-like hominins today. I do, however, have an equal share in humankind's God-given commission to tend and keep creation. Am I ready to go further than ensuring my own species' survival – not necessarily because we have evolved further than our ice-age ancestors, but because I have one of the 'new hearts' promised in Ezekiel 11:19? Can I work together, in a true spirit of humility, with people from all over the world to ensure the full diversity of life can flourish?

*\*For resources on this question, try the [Faraday Institute](#), [BioLogos](#), and [Christians in Science](#).*

---

## **Prayer for May**

Dear Father in Heaven,

As we thank you for May, this most beautiful of months, we are aware that not everything in your world is beautiful; not every attitude or action is beautiful, or kind, or just.

There is so much pain and suffering in the world that we can sometimes feel overwhelmed. Help us, Lord to remember that Jesus came to bring all this brokenness together, to bring reconciliation and wholeness. Thank you that by His life, death and resurrection Jesus overcame death for ever. Thank you that He ascended into heaven so that the Holy Spirit could come to live in believers, to give strength and power and resilience, so that Your work goes on.

Thank you that nothing in all creation – no evil attacks, no illness, no human powers, no circumstances at all – can ever separate us from Your love.

We will not be overwhelmed as we keep our eyes on You.

We may not always understand, but we acknowledge You to be the Lord, who reigns over all – and we are thankful.

In Jesus name. Amen.

*By Daphne Kitching*

# **Stephen L Rees**

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Application for grants are invited from individuals or organisations resident in the area of benefit. Application forms are available from the incumbent of any of the parishes mentioned above, or alternatively from:

**The Secretary to the Trustees: 12 Larkswood Drive,  
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The Rectory  
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

A Spring parish picnic is always a good idea – although you must bear some details in mind. First, whatever date you choose will turn out be the wettest of the year. English picnics are invariably eaten under umbrellas while wearing Wellingtons and the sort of determinedly cheerful look that defies anyone to admit they would rather be home in front of the fire.

Second, no matter how early in the year, wasps will emerge from hibernation in huge numbers, and terrorise Mrs Hornby with the picnic baskets. And thirdly, someone will bring along their (hungry) dog. Last time Colonel Psmith's spaniel outdid herself: she leapt up, head butted a piece of Madeira cake out of Mrs Horngirdle's hand – and ate the lot – before even a crumb could touch the ground. A good piece of field work, that.

Half-way through the afternoon, some over-excited member of the party will decide to arrange a game of rounders. (Mr Poppinjay tried this one year, as in his youth he had been athletic. Fortunately, the ambulance got there quickly, and the ankle healed well.) Then the mothers who join in will completely ignore the ball sailing past them, while they discuss some burning topic of Mother's Union gossip.

In the meantime, the young choir members, who were the reason for arranging the game in the first place, will have drifted off to the lake to throw stones at the ducks while no one is looking.

For our annual picnic, I use my own car, making sure it is so full of clerical robes and church magazines that no one else can fit in. Throughout the day, I keep returning to it to make sure no one has broken in to steal the Communion wine – and taking the opportunity to catch up on the

cricket scores. By the middle of the afternoon, I usually remember that some urgent duty, such as blessing a traction engine, demands my departure.

The rest of the party, by now soaked, cold and knowing the coach to take them home is still several hours off, only wish they had such demanding work to tear them away.

Your loving uncle,

**Eustace**

---

## **Packed lunches are back in style**

With food prices soaring, who needs a bought sandwich or salad? They can cost nearly £8 a day from LEON or Pret or other food outlets. Instead, it seems we are investing in plastic food containers (John Lewis reports sales are up 64 per cent on last year) and taking our own lunches to work.

As one cookery blogger explains, “You can’t reduce your council tax, but you can make little savings on everyday meals, which add up to a significant difference.”

“It’s ‘cool’ these days to take a packed lunch to the office,” says Suzanne Mulholland, author of *The Batch Lady: Shop Once. Cook Once. Eat Well All Week*. “Being organised and prepared is seen as a good thing.”

As for coffee, consider this: buying a £3 cappuccino every day adds up to £1,095 a year. Far cheaper to fill a flask at home.

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# SERVICES FOR THE MONTH - MAY

SUNDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> MAY

8AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

9.30AM WORSHIP TOGETHER ST ANDREWS

10.30AM HOLY COMMUNION ST PETERS

10.30AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

6.30PM COMPLINE ON ZOOM

WEDNESDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> MAY HOLY COMMUNION ST PETERS 10AM

SUNDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> MAY

8AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

9.30AM HOLY COMMUNION ST ANDREWS

10.30AM WORSHIP TOGETHER ST PETERS

10.30AM WORSHIP TOGETHER ALL SAINTS

6.30PM COMPLINE ON ZOOM

WEDNESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> MAY HOLY COMMUNION ST PETERS 10AM

SUNDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> MAY

8AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

10.30AM TEAM SERVICE FOLLOWED BY APCM AND PCC

6.30PM COMPLINE ON ZOOM

WEDNESDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> MAY HOLY COMMUNION ST PETERS 10AM

SUNDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> MAY

8AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

9.30AM WORSHIP TOGETHER ST ANDREWS

10.30AM HOLY COMMUNION ST PETERS

10.30AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

6.30PM COMPLINE ON ZOOM

TUESDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> MAY HOLY COMMUNION ST ANDREWS 9.30AM

WEDNESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> MAY HOLY COMMUNION ST PETERS 10.30AM

THURSDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> MAY ASCENSION DAY 7.30AM ALL SAINTS CHURCH TOWER, 8AM SERVICE

SUNDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY

8AM HOLY COMMUNION ALL SAINTS

9.30AM TEAM SERVICE ST ANDREWS

6.30PM COMPLINE ON ZOOM