

STAMP

SUMMER 2021 MAGAZINE

ISSUE 51

ART IN THE NAVE
ART EXHIBITION
AND SALE

Sat 28th – Mon 30th AUG

Open 11 am to 5pm

St Mary's Church High Street Hemel Hempstead HP1 3AF

**THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD**

STOMP MAGAZINE

ISSUE 51 SUMMER 2021

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Cover photo:

The preview evening of our highly successful ‘Art in the Nave’ event was well attended and, although it was by invitation only, the evening walkers in the park would perhaps have noticed what was on and maybe were encouraged by this inviting and welcoming scene to return later in the weekend.

More pictures and the full story of Art in the Nave appear on page 17

Jeff W

FROM THE EDITOR

‘Love worketh no ill to his neighbour therefore love is the fulfilling of the law’, Romans 13:10

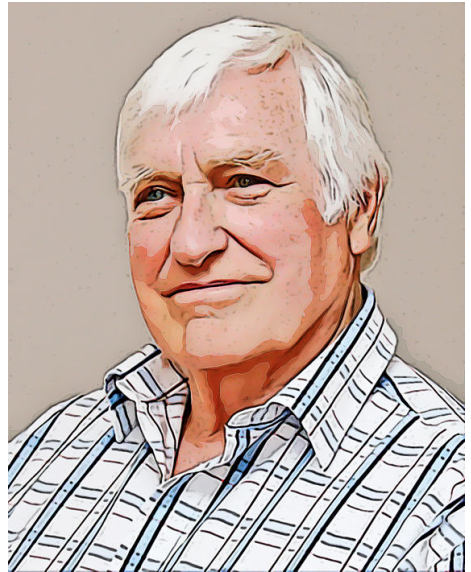
Christians facing Taliban terror in Afghanistan *1 and in Iraq and in Syria and in Egypt; Muslims facing exclusion and imprisonment and worse in Burma and China; Muslim sects, especially the Shia and the Sunni at each others throats throughout the Middle East; Buddhists under threat in Indonesia and Muslims on the warpath in the Philippines. This is before we look at the clash of cultures and religions in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa or the struggles involving Jews, Muslims and Christians in Israel and Palestine. ▷

How can religions rooted in the sense of goodness, love and neighbourliness arising from godliness, illustrated by Professor John Hick's evidence on the ethical convergence of faiths*², be associated with hatred, wickedness and destruction?

I think an answer is in religion captured as a force to protect the status quo, to achieve personal ends and to support the practices and economic benefits of ruling elites or aspirants to that status. Two examples come to mind, that of the genocide of the Cathars in Languedoc in the early Middle Ages and that of the Nazi drive for land and against Jews and Slavs in our own time.

The Cathars were at odds with the Roman Catholic Church, which saw as a serious threat their Christian interpretations and practices. They were declared to be heretics, their lands were confiscated and their culture and people destroyed during the Albigensian Crusade blessed by the Pope and led by French nobility.

The Nazis wanted total power, lebensraum for a unified German - speaking people and a purge especially of Jews and Slavs. On assuming power they captured the German Church, the judiciary, the armed forces and the police.



From 1938 they swept through much of Europe, their Wehrmacht troops wearing the traditional belt buckle emblazoned, 'Gott Mit Uns' - 'God With Us' *³.

It all goes wrong when wickedness and inflexible doctrine, replacing goodness and love, combine to bring 'ill on the neighbour', and power uses religion and law as its cover.

*1 Persecution of Christians set to rise in Afghanistan - See article on page 8

*2 SToMP Editorial Summer Issue 2020

*3 Changed in 1962 to, 'Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit' - Unity, and Justice and Freedom'

CAFÉ CHURCH

SAINTS, SINNERS AND ANGELS WELCOME!

Let the little children come to me and do not stop them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

It's great that once again we are preparing to re-launch our family service offering at both St Mary's and St Paul's.

Covid put paid to Sunday School style activities at both churches and also our 'Sausage Sunday' services had to end. When we came back from lockdown children were encouraged to stay with their parents in the pews, which was not an ideal scenario for the average active toddler.

What to do? The 'Sausage Sunday' services, particularly the freestanding non-Eucharistic one at St Paul's, had been growing before lockdown and it was felt it was important to try and replicate this and get back to that style of service as soon as possible. Nevertheless, with the departure of Revd Caroline and other clergy changes, the impossibility of holding special services soon after the traditional 9.30 became obvious.

The solution has revealed itself as completely standalone services that will not be traditional but will take some of the things that other churches have found successful and



replicate them in our own new format. An example of these being Messy Church (a title I don't personally like) and Café Church (one that suits me better).

Bringing these together we are looking to use our worship spaces in a more imaginative way without the constraints that a traditional service which a usually more mature congregation would expect. ▷

This already works well in the space of St Paul's and plans for an opened up north aisle at St Mary's will also help this plan to work.

This doesn't mean that children and families won't be welcome at our 9.30 services, they are welcome at every service that the church offers, so there will be colouring and activity sheets available for use at other services until a possible Sunday School ministry can redevelop in time, but the main thrust of ministry to families and younger people will be through the new standalone services.

What to call them? After all Sausage Sunday seemed to sum up the appeal of the after service snack to those who attended. The plan this time is not to limit ourselves to sausage related edibles but to offer a wider variety of simple refreshments. So cake, sausage rolls and pizza will be amongst the things provided to draw us all together. This won't limit the catering to the good offices of Penny baking 100 sausages on a Sunday morning and filling the Rectory with a sausagey smoke. So a snack related name gives way to a greater welcome with 'Café Church – Saints, Sinners and Angels Welcome'.

So the new format of services will look at having refreshments integrated into the services along with an opportunity to have a Bible reading, themed talk and activity. These shorter standalone service

offerings will encourage fellowship and discussion between families and church members to help develop spiritual understanding and regular attendance.

In November and December these services will be of a chance to explore the new format which can then be tweaked and rolled out as a fuller program in 2022. It is at that point that we will be looking to bring in help from other members of the congregations in order to provide help with catering and activity work for the children and families.

Do support these new services in any way that you can but don't expect immediate miracles, working with families and young people takes time to bring its own reward.

Canon John

What you need

A Sunday School teacher had just concluded her lesson and wanted to make sure she had made her point. She said, "Can anyone tell me what you must do before you can obtain forgiveness of sin?"

There was a short pause and then, from the back of the room, a small boy spoke up. "Sin?"

NEW NEW NEW NEW NEW

CAFE CHURCH

SAINTS
SINNERS
& ANGELS
WELCOME

Our new family friendly interactive services are starting!

11.30am on 7th November at St Paul's.

2pm on Sunday 14th November at St Mary's.

Refreshments, children's activities, reading and talk = café church & messy church combined!

Theme for November.

'Saints and Sinners'
30 minutes max
+ refreshment time.

All welcome.



THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
WWW.STMARYANDSTPAULHEMEL.ORG.UK



NEW LOOK FOR THE HIGH STREET



Parishoners of a certain generation entering the High Street on Sunday 5 Sep on their way to church could be forgiven for feeling they had entered a time-warp bubble taking them back to their early years and the days of WW2 on the 'home front'. A large stretch of the road had been converted by a film company for Stephen Spielberg's and Tom Hank's latest film, 'Masters of the Air' set in that era.



A gentlemen's outfitters looking remarkably like Fifty Shilling Tailors together with several others shops had been given the forties look; vehicles of the time and many other props had been employed to give an authentic feel to the scene. The series is due for streaming on Apple TV next year.

Woolton pie (look it up) for Sunday lunch? And don't forget your gas mask!

Jeff Wallis

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS SET TO RISE IN AFGHANISTAN

As the Taliban tighten their grip on Afghanistan, Release International has warned that attacks on Christians are likely to rise across the region.

One church leader in Afghanistan said Christians were living in great fear. Some who worked for the government now face reprisals, and any identified as Christians could be killed. Christians risk betrayal, even from their own family members.

A Christian contact of one Release International partner describes the situation as ‘dire.’ Says ‘Micah’: “Our brothers and sisters in Christ are telling us how afraid they are. In the areas that the Taliban now control girls are not allowed to go to school and women are not allowed to leave their homes without a male companion.”

The church in Afghanistan already faced sharp persecution, even before the Taliban advance. That church is invisible and must operate underground in this land where Muslims who change their faith are breaking the law and considered to have betrayed their communities.

To be exposed as a Christian is to risk being charged with apostasy, which is punishable by death or imprisonment. There have also been honour killings of Christians by their families.

One of the communities worst affected by the Taliban is the Shia Hazara minority, which has been especially responsive to the Christian message.

In May 2021, the Taliban bombed the Sayed Ul-Shuhada High School in Kabul, killing at least 85, mainly schoolgirls. The previous year the Taliban staged a shooting at a maternity clinic, killing women, children, and babies.

It was the Pakistan Taliban who shot 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai for going to school and telling the world about it in a blog.

Through its international network of missions, Release International is active in some 25 countries around the world, supporting pastors, Christian prisoners and their families.

EDITOR'S INTERVIEW

JANET THORNTON

Janet McLoughlin was born in 1949 in Middleton, a town on the River Irk 5 miles to the North East of the centre of Manchester. Her sister, Margaret, was two years older and she is remembered as being 'very clever'. Her parents had low expectations of Janet in her early years, she 'was always out playing'. The change came when she went to Bury Grammar School for Girls. This school was in the same building as the Grammar School for Boys, from whom they were kept well apart. It was a fruitful time for Janet's development, becoming Head Girl and gaining excellent 'A' levels in Mathematics, Physics and Geography. The choice of the latter subject, and her interest in it, rather than the traditional chemistry of the usual Sixth Form Science trio, is early evidence of divergent thinking. Indeed, gaining a place at Nottingham University she was disappointed that she was unable to study for a degree in geophysics, being confined to pure physics. At Nottingham she met Alan and they married at the end of their degree courses.

They have been married for 51 years, 'chalk and cheese' happily together. Their son, Alexander, was born in 1975 and their daughter, Hazel, in 1973.



Janet presented with her DBE at Windsor Castle in 2012

Both participated in church life, first going to Sunday School and then joining the choir, led by Ken Martlew. They made Hemel Hempstead their base in 1974. Janet, like many Northerners in Hemel Hempstead, still finds the North the homeland, yet for we northerners this town is home. ▷

Early Days

What followed is fascinating – how did a physicist become a leading biologist specialising in the biological sciences? Janet was clear that she did not want to follow a route leading to mending and fixing heavy machines, so she went on to take a Master's degree in Biophysics at Kings in London, 'to see where it goes'. Then she took her PhD at the National Institute for Medical Research at Mill Hill. She nearly became a hospital physicist, part way through her PhD, when she couldn't really see the value of what she was doing. She was interviewed for a job at the Royal Marsden Hospital, but initially was rejected as being too highly qualified. This made her think hard and during this period had become increasingly captured by the joys of research. In 1978 she went to Oxford to work on molecular biophysics.

A Distinguished Career

There followed a series of appointments at London University, at Birkbeck and at University College (UCL), the latter as Professor of Biomolecular Structures and Modelling jointly at Birkbeck and UCL. From 2001 to 2015 Janet was Director of the European Bioinformatics Institute in

Cambridge. A key founder of ELIXIR, the European Life Sciences Data Infrastructure, Janet still works part time. Cited as a world leader in bioinformatics, Janet was awarded the CBE in 2000 and appointed to DBE in 2012.

Each interview ends up with a story including personal insights recorded by the Editor and reflected on. Janet, worshipping regularly at St Mary's, has always attended church from being a child and she feels part of the St Mary's church family; 'this is how things are' and concerning 'the tree of life, biology is a voyage of exploration'. Her research has aimed to increase our fundamental understanding of the structure of proteins and how they contribute to disease and ageing. It seemed a paradox to me that, involved with such wonderful work, Janet felt that 'my generation have got it wrong'. Exploring this thought together I reflected on her sense that in the UK people are not looked after as well as people are in a number of other countries. Is this to do with the withdrawal of the State and the rise of the current highly commercialised and market driven environment? Janet's firm view is that we need a system for more co-operation across the medical and social services fields. ▷

Yet her experience in the field of international research is of the inevitability of both co-operation and competition, and I suppose the related competition for grant funding. How to balance competition and collaboration is the conundrum, as each force may need the other. Janet's frustration is along the lines that 'we need to get it together' and she finds it difficult to reconcile this thought with the current unequal system of pay and rewards.

She experienced inequality in the patriarchal approach to pay as a student, when in the early days she was paid less as a student than other students because she was a married woman, competition now happily on the wain!

In an interview, and against some background research, full of highlights

I asked Janet about any reverses. This brought us to bereavement and the devastating effects this has on the bereaved. She instanced the death from cancer of her daughter in law and commented that death can come with unexpected and long-term consequences.

As a Cumbrian aged 85, I enjoyed interviewing this modest and self-effacing woman aged 72, a real Lancashire girl. From that girl 'out playing all the time', and from a happy but not well off family, to her leaving grammar school in 1967 with little formal training in biology (just an 'O' Level), now in 2021 'our Janet Thornton' is out in the wider, academic and medical world, and known as 'Professor Dame Thornton DBE, FRS, FMed Sc, FRSC', a world leader in bioinformatics.

Gordon Gaddes



Janet with her family...



...and serving coffee at St Mary's 9.30 service

RECENT PCC MEETINGS



The Parochial Church Council (PCC), which is the governing body of the parish of St Mary and St Paul, comprising elected lay members together with the clergy, makes regular reports to the congregation about business conducted at meetings. Reports are circulated to the members of the Electoral Roll for whom we have an email address, displayed on the notice board in both church buildings and printed in STOMP, our parish magazine.

Summary of business of the PCC, meeting held on Monday 19th July 2021.

Audio Visual Facilities

The PCC agreed to accept DM Music Ltd's quote for audio visual installation at both St Mary's and St Paul's, funded by the Salisbury Legacy Fund.

Re-roofing at St Paul's

The roofs are in poor condition. The PCC agreed that two of the roofs should be replaced as soon as possible, also funded by the Salisbury Legacy Fund.

Review of Covid Protocols

Now that covid restrictions have been eased by the Government, parishes must make their own decisions on

protocols. The PCC decided to carry on with the protocols currently in place, and review the situation in September.

Art in the Nave

The protection of everyone involved, and/or attending the event, was a priority. The PCC agreed that a final decision on whether the event should take place would be made at an extra PCC meeting early in August.

Summary of business at the PCC meeting held on Monday 20th September 2021.

PCC resolution

The PCC passed a resolution in support of the drawdown of funds from the Salisbury Fund to finance the work to install new audio visual equipment at both churches and to repair two of the roofs at St Paul's.

PCC Mission Action Planning Day

The PCC arranged a day to meet in November to look at revision of the parish MAP and consider the Team Council discussion paper.

Child Friendly Services

The Team Rector presented proposals for new child friendly services to commence soon. There will be a service at each of the churches every month at new times that will not encroach on the existing pattern of Sunday services.

Policy Updates

The PCC approved revised policies for Safeguarding, Health & Safety, Equal Opportunities and Domestic Abuse as well as discussing policies around financial reserves, bequests and spending the residue of the Legacy Fund.



Yet another of the vicar's money-raising wheezes, I see



... just humour him - he's hoping it'll help him reach the younger people in the diocese.

GOVERNMENT FUNDED SUMMER SCHOOL HOLIDAY SCHEME AT ST PAUL'S CHURCH HALL



As part of a £220 million national Holiday Activities and Food Programme, an event took place in St Paul's Church Hall for five weeks during the Summer school holiday.

It was funded by HMG and organised by Herts County Activity Programme through Herts Sports Partnership and run by Highfield's Warriors Boxing Club organised by Laura Ball. 500 children were provided with 900 meals and a range of activities. ▷

This was a two centre event, focussed on the Church Hall and on the Warriors' Gymnasium at the Heights in Highfield. In the context of a survey showing that 30% of parents were worried about finding enough food for their children in the school holidays, this was a happy and constructive local initiative. Free places were available for children on free school meals. In describing the programme the Watford Observer commented that it is targeted at children most affected by the pandemic, offering a safe and supportive environment where they can learn, be active, eat well and make friends.



This Summer programme, coupled with the Soft Play Cafe, Slimming World, AA, Hemel Campaign for disabled adults, Electric Dancing, Talking Elephants for the bereaved, U3A (genealogy) and the anticipated return of Herts NHS Step2 (CAMHS), Families Need Fathers, together with the increasing use of our facilities for parties and family events, confirms the increasing involvement of St Paul's with the local community.

ST MARY'S CHURCH HALL

OPEN FOR WEDDING RECEPTIONS



With the easing of Covid restrictions there have been an increase in the number of weddings at St Mary's.

On 25 September, James and April were married in St Mary's and had booked the Church Hall for their reception.

St Mary's Church hall has been recently refurbished and fitted with a modern, well-equipped kitchen.

It can seat a top table of 8 with 24 guests. Up to 70 people can be accommodated for buffet style events and there is sufficient crockery and cutlery for this number.

The hall also has an attractive garden which can be used in suitable weather.



*For further details and hall bookings contact Norma Howie 01442 253977
admin@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk*

ART IN THE NAVE FESTIVAL 2021



Our advertising and publicity material tells us that “Art in the Nave focuses a bright spotlight on the visual arts in the beautiful setting of St Mary’s church” and that “the three-day festival represents a major event in the arts calendar with an exhibition and sale of works by many artists drawn from the three counties of Herts Beds and Bucks and beyond”. I believe it to be more than those things; It is a way to support local artists, bring arts and crafts to local people and in turn bring more life to the Old Town High Street and the church. Moreover, It is a project organised entirely by volunteers enabling much needed funding to be raised to support our parish finances while supporting local charities.

Faced with the reality and the circumstances in which we found ourselves, I considered that planning needed to be paused for a while, to allow time to consult with our artists and members of our own congregations who would serve as volunteers at the event.

A comprehensive consultation produced almost unanimous support for going ahead with the project, provided that measures were put in place to ensure people’s safety as far as was reasonably practical.

A risk assessment over and above our usual measures, such as identifying potential electrical, fire and other general safety hazards was taken. As a result new measures were introduced, to include; placing an upper limit of thirty exhibition spaces, signposting a one way system around the exhibition, keeping the large west door, south transept and clerestory windows open to improve air circulation. Separating the admissions procedure and sales desk to reduce queuing. Protecting those working on the sales desk with a protective screen. Providing an optional outdoor space for refreshments and requesting visitors to wear face coverings and supplying face masks free of charge where needed. ▷

At the same time I was aware that other local annual exhibitions such as Mentmore Arts Festival and the Aldenham Arts Festival had been cancelled. However with those measures in place and with reassurance from our volunteers and artists I felt that it was appropriate to proceed with the final stages of planning.

It could be said that we were cutting things a bit fine when we were finally ready with two weeks to go with the PCC's blessing.

The exhibition opened with a preview event held on the evening of the 27th August. This was the first real opportunity for a very long time, to host a large gathering of people in the church, since before the beginning of lockdown back in March 2020. The preview evening was attended by the Mayor of Dacorum, Councillor Stewart Riddick and his wife together with our own Clergy, Artists and their guests, members of our congregations and other invited guests. There was a licensed bar and live music played by a band of local musicians who entertained guests as they arrived. Art lovers attending the preview were able to view and purchase a wide selection of excellent paintings, sculpture, textiles, glass, and ceramics. The evening passed all too soon however sales of paintings and other works had begun!.



Canon John welcomes visitors to the Preview Event on the Friday evening

In Revd Canon John Williams' welcome to the exhibition, he highlighted the joy of being involved in the life of St Mary's Church, in welcoming people from the local community and further afield who visit and use our historic space and how the Art in the Nave Festival demonstrates the desire of the worshipping community here to see this church returned to the centre of the community, a place for people of faith and of none, a building that is as alive, vibrant and relevant today as it has been for the last 880 years since the church was built.

Support for local Charities

For the first time since the reintroduction of Art in the Nave in 2018 I felt that we might be in a position to support local charities ▷

from the proceeds of the exhibition while still retaining an amount budgeted for in the parish accounts.

In previous years we had used some of the money raised by the festival to reinvest in new display stands and other materials designed to make setting up and dismantling the exhibition safer and more efficient



to assemble.

The Charities that we worked with this year were approved by the PCC and they were:

- **The Hospice of St Francis**
- **Dacorum Emergency Night Shelter**
- **Langa Township Preschool Trust**

Working with charities is a great way to enable us to donate to their respective causes and with that incentive they are more than willing to publicise the event themselves and encourage visitors to the exhibition thereby potentially increasing the potential for sales of the artwork on show.

Entrance to the exhibition was by way of a suggested £1 donation for adults including a list of exhibiting artists and a plan of the exhibition showing the recommended one way route around the church. As always there was free entry available to people who wanted the opportunity to visit the church for a moment of contemplation and prayer.

The Festival opened to the general public on Saturday 28th August and to my pleasant surprise and relief a small queue of people waiting to visit the exhibition had formed just before opening time at 11am. This was the first time that Art in the Nave had been planned to coincide with the August Bank Holiday weekend so nobody really knew what to expect. However the three days including Bank holiday Monday 30th August were well attended and generated more revenue overall than previous exhibitions, This was helped when we received a welcome £500 grant from Dacorum Borough Council to help defray advertising and publicity costs.

In the circumstances the fact that we were able to make a financial success of the event was quite an achievement with all credit due to those who volunteered their time and talents over the three days, but I think it was so much more than that though. Whether it was because it was such ▷

a long time since we were able to gather socially in large numbers or as I prefer to believe that we can muster a tremendous spirit of camaraderie in our parish when we get the opportunity to display it. There seemed however to me, to be a great sense of teamwork with everyone playing their part and above all there were sunny smiles and some fun too. Our artists were full of praise for the helpfulness and friendliness of all who gave their time in whatever capacity to Art in the Nave and because of that we might see them return next year.

Refreshments were provided from our new kitchen facilities in St Mary's with seemingly an endless supply of wonderful cakes and scones, served from the kitchen and adjacent servery during all exhibition opening hours together with a licensed bar serving beer, wine and soft drinks, available over lunchtimes.

A good number of wonderfully helpful and committed people from St Mary's and St Paul's came together to make the event a great success including the considerable effort required in setting up the display boards and lighting and the people who gave their time to stewarding and processing payments during the exhibition and of course catering where facilities included light lunches, teas, coffees and a licensed bar. ▷



Financial Outcome

At the time of writing the final accounts are still being finalised however the estimated overall picture is as follows:

Total Income: £9,300

(including DBC Grant, Artists booking fees and art sales, grand draw, entry and other donations, catering sales etc).

Total Expenditure: £4,200

(Including Artist payments (75% of art sales), publicity, packaging materials and facemasks, catering expenses. website domain and hosting , for the last time as AiN will now move to the new parish website in time for Art in the Nave 2022).

Nett Profit: £5,100

Charitable giving from the proceeds of Art in the Nave

A recommendation will go to the PCC for approval that will enable us to donate:

£500 to DENS (*Mayor of Dacorum's nominated charity for 2021*).

£750 to The Hospice of St Francis *We had already given a display board free of charge to the hospice to sell paintings that had been donated to them and these raised £175 as we waived our commission on art sales.*

£750 LTPT *With many thanks to the Chair of the Trust Gordon Gaddes together with Rosina Gaddes who contributed greatly to the financial outcome of the event in organising the Grand Draw and the Bar*

Art in the Nave 2022

Next year's event is scheduled for August Bank Holiday Weekend. I hope that you might feel encouraged to work with the project again so please save the dates:

Setting up and preparation: Monday 22nd to Thursday 25th August

Preview evening :(Tentative): Thursday 25th 7-9pm

Preview evening: Friday 26th 7 - 9pm

Exhibition days: Saturday 27th - Monday 29th 11am - 5pm

Dismantling and clear up day: Tuesday 30st

With grateful thanks to all who helped make Art in the Nave a successful and happy event this year.

Brian Doran



MONEY, MONEY, MONEY 5



I wrote about our financial situation in the January edition and I ended by saying

‘We had such high hopes of 2021 and still do, but Covid has shown that it is not going to disappear quietly and the January lockdown has already closed our halls with consequent lost revenue. So please don’t stop being generous, this could be another difficult year.

But some of us have had our first injections and more will be getting theirs soon; so hope is high, God is Good and maybe 2021 will be one where we can learn to enjoy socialising again.’

Well, in a way, the situation is evolving as suggested in both paragraphs. After Service socialising over a cup of tea or coffee has started again in a careful way, and we are beginning to see each other’s faces without a masks and even to sing hymns. But the reduction in hall income is continuing and, despite help from the Furlough and other schemes (and the film industry!) a shortfall on the anticipated amount of income for the year has already built up.

It is still not clear when many of the groups who used to hire our halls will feel positive enough to start booking again and as we all know in ourselves there is a lingering reluctance to discard all the cautious behaviour that has become part of our lives.

Art in the Nave went ahead, with masks and some anxiety, but was a great success and very profitable both for us and the three charities it supported. Its success will re-establish it on our annual calendar and help the finances going forward but our finances are still precarious.

Discussion on how to cover next year’s likely deficit has still to happen, but it is inevitable that you, our loyal parish givers, will be asked to help if you can.

So please be aware, and if you can, be ready to help.

Robin Woodd

MORE HIGH STREET MEMORIES



Following on from David Gambling's article the other month I would like to infill some of the shops that I remember up and down the street.

Starting at the Queensway end on the right side was Lloyds bank then Robinsons the Chemist, Mr Robinson was a tenor in the St.Mary's church choir. Then followed 'Keens' the Butchers. Bill Keen was a boyhood friend of my father's and they were both in the Scout group that was attached to the old St.Paul's church up Queensway. Following on there may have been another shop before Woolworth's, a large shop in comparison with others in the street. There were a few other shops before the Rose and Crown pub. A large shop followed which in later years was 'Brocketts' hardware shop selling everything you could possibly

want in the hardware line. Beyond this was the Home and Colonial grocers store and then the Swan public house. A few other shops followed on until the last two before George Street which were White's the shoe shop, selling Clarks shoes (Mr White was a PCC member) and Boots the Chemist. Crossing George Street which was a traffic way, unlike now, was The Kings Arms then Bathes the Drapers and F S Bean the men's outfitters.

Next came The Bell public house probably being the most high class in the High Street and serving excellent meals cooked by their French Chef and run then by Elizabeth and John Buteaux who was the Mayor for a time. His wife Elizabeth was of course a local historian writing several books

on the history of Hemel Hempstead. Crossing Chapel Street, Edwards the heating engineer and Calor gas supplier ran a shop. John Edwards was once a Churchwarden at St.Mary's. Chennells the grocer was next followed by Keen's the butcher, no relation to the other Keen's further down the High Street. Margaret Frazier(Keen)was a member of the congregation and I think when she married she ran the shop with her husband. Marriotts the Chemist was next, he was a Bass in the church choir. After this there is a blank in my memory until the older fronted shop of Gowers, the ironmongers and a larger fronted shop with smaller side shops all taken up by Rolphs the men's and women's outfitters.

I remember being taken there by my mother to be fitted with my school uniform! There was yet another pub at the corner of Cherry Bounce, the Royal Oak. Crossing the road the last shop was Salters the cane and basket shop.

Returning to the bottom of the High Street now on the left side was Shaw Brothers grocers followed by Lovells sweet shop, Barclays Bank and then Burtons the Tailors where you could get a good made to measure suit. Above Burtons was the ballroom dancing classroom where you could learn every dance that is now on Strictly Come Dancing! Lynne and I tried! Next came Westminster Bank and then the White Hart Public house run by the Vesey family, a very good high class establishment. A little shoe

repairers was next and the shop next to the Vicarage entrance was W H Smiths. After the entrance came Fullers wine merchants and then Harringtons hairdressers. I can't remember the shops up to the Old Town Hall but then of course is the Market square where a very good market was held on a Thursday and Saturday. Public conveniences were to the left of the Market Square, open and some little shops to the right one of which was the offices of Brentnall and Cleland the coal merchant. More council offices came next followed by Dells, the wool and toy shop. My favourite memory is looking in the window of this shop at the Hornby trains and Dinky toys. Next was a fish and chip shop but I cannot remember the other shops leading up to the large timber framed building which was Easts the Tailors.

Down in the dip Long's Flower shop was first followed by a number of private dwellings then came the Spinning Wheel restaurant which before it became a restaurant was a Pub called ?? . Right at the end of the High Street was a newish building which was a butchers but the name escapes me.

I can't say I knew as many of the daughters of these shops as David Gambling appears to have done but hopefully I have filled in some of the gaps!

If anyone knows the shops I don't remember it would be good to hear about them.

Roger Sygrave

OPEN CHURCH AT ST MARY'S



But stop it did, and once stopped there has been great reluctance to open it again.

Through the 1980's efforts were made to open for a part of each day with a rota of volunteers on duty. When this petered out it was agreed around 1993 that we would pay someone - Leslie Crossley - to be in the church through the weekday lunch hours of 12 to 2.00pm though in fact he mostly had the church open and welcoming for a lot more of the day..

As so often happens, because Leslie was there and also a Churchwarden, the then Rector Peter Cotton started to ask him to do other things and in the end the Church opening suffered and ended completely when Leslie's health prevented him from carrying on.

After a Parish Away day in 2015 it was agreed to open every Saturday morning with a rota of volunteers and when John arrived as Rector the first Sunday of the month afternoons were added until Covid closed the church completely, possible for the first time in its 880 year life.

Thankfully the PCC had agreed, before Covid struck, that once the church was covered by CCTV and had a toilet they would support it being kept open. ▷

When Gill and I arrived in Hemel Hempstead in 1977 St Mary's church was open, through the day, every day of the year. I cannot remember why this came to an end but it might be because Frank Scott - who did the opening and closing died or it might have been one of the consequences of the vestry fire in 1981.

During Covid the CCTV was installed, at around £300, which meant that once the new church toilet was handed over, opening could re-start – though perversely we have kept the toilet locked for Covid reasons!

The original pre 1980 notice was recovered from the church loft, portable items were moved out of temptations way and a new rota for opening and closing the church started near the end of September 21.

Those who have looked into the church over the last year will tell you how much visitors of all sorts have appreciated having it open and available for prayer, to light a candle or just to look round. The prayer board messages tell their own stories, but they are an indication of a need being helped and there have been many people visiting regularly to pray for loved ones suffering seriously from Covid.

To me the open doors of the church seem to turn it away from a solid closed off monolith into an active welcoming part of the community. More often than not when I look into the church I find that one or two people are there, and it gives me a lift each time: while John says that he has had many worthwhile conversations with strangers met only because they came into the open church, which must be good.

Once the church was open ideas for doing things better came along. The first was LED bulbs to allow basic lighting all through the day, then came background seasonal music followed by the Card reader enabling a Credit Card donation of £3 and more recently securing less portable candlesticks in place so that they don't need to be hidden away.

Other ideas are in planning. But if you have any ideas to help improve the experience of visitors do please tell John or a Warden or me.

Most of all please visit so that the building feels even more used and welcoming and loved. Who knows, you too may find the visit brings you peace and the chance to pause and reflect must be worthwhile.

Robin Woodd



... if you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this sermon

ST JAMES THE LEAST OF ALL

The Revd Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from Uncle Eustace, an elderly Anglo-Catholic vicar to Darren his nephew, a low-church curate, recently ordained.



When the film makers come to church

The Rectory

St. James the Least of All

My Dear Nephew Darren

It has all been excitement and activity here this last week, with a period drama being filmed using our church. It was remarkable how many people felt the need to drop in to church to collect magazines, check the reading rota or arrange flowers, just happening to stumble over the film stars en route. If only they were filming every week, then our brasses would be permanently gleaming, woodwork smothered in beeswax and the notice board kept in a state of perpetual tidiness.

Our Ladies Guild was thrilled to be asked to take part in a crowd scene. I saw little point in the wardrobe department taking hours fitting them out with Victorian dresses, as the result was little different from normal. The only awkward moment came after filming, when Mrs Simms was told she could now remove her bustle. She told the girl she already had.

The producer thanked me for taking the trouble of going round church before they arrived, removing all those modern conveniences that would not have been there in the nineteenth century. I hadn't the heart to tell him that nothing was any different from normal.

Lord Marchmount was thoroughly miffed that they were not also using his castle for filming, even though the producer explained with exemplary patience that they needed a nineteenth century setting, not one which looked as if the cast had just returned from the Crusades. His revenge, getting the farm staff to spread slurry in all the surrounding fields throughout filming, has apparently meant that film stars now have a clause in their contracts protecting them from rural life.

The issue of whether the outbreak of salmonella poisoning in the cast had anything to do with the catering caravan being liberally coated is to be settled in the courts.

When all was finished, I thought it only right to invite the film crew and actors to the rectory for sherry. When the producer left, I was delighted to be told he had just discovered the perfect home for filming his next project – which is about Elizabethan poverty.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

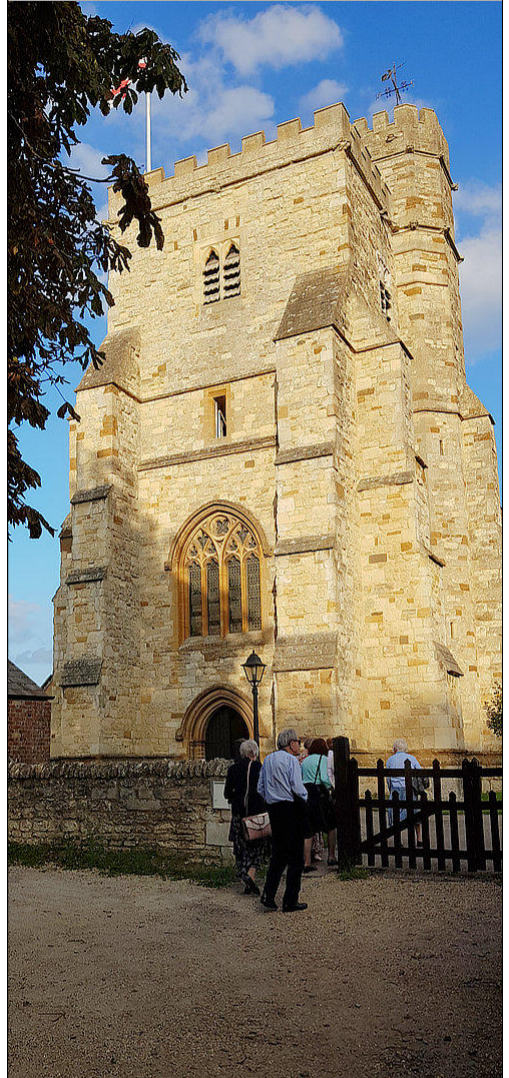
THE REVD CAROLINE'S ANNIVERSARY SERVICE

It is a year now since the Revd Catherine completed her curacy at St Mary's and took up her ministry at the beautiful rural church of St Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon whose feast day is celebrated on 29th Sept.

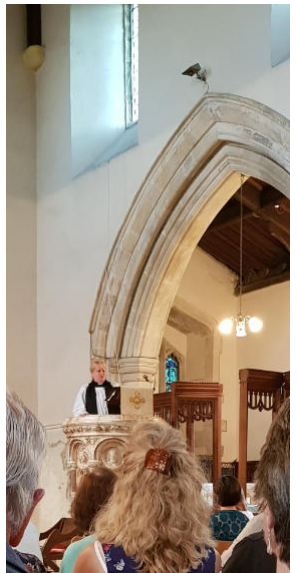
In pre-covid days we would have visited to celebrate the occasion of her licensing as vicar in the local Team but that event was limited to a Zoom presentation.

On 26th Sept a party of us from St Mary and St Paul visited St Michael's and joined the service of worship and praise to celebrate her first anniversary.

St Mary's band of bellringers also attended and rang for the service. Afterwards there were some delicious refreshments and some fizz.



St Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon



GOD IN THE ARTS

The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with El Greco's 'The Saviour'.

'All you who pass this way, look and see'

The philosopher Wittgenstein gave the following advice to people visiting an art gallery or exhibition: never try to rush through all the paintings on show, but instead choose just one painting. Sit in front of it for twenty minutes. Then get up and leave the art gallery. It is difficult advice to take to heart because we feel we want to get our money's worth from an exhibition, especially if we have paid an entrance charge. Once in the gallery we then feel so overawed by the number of paintings on show and the pressure of the crowd that we go quickly from one canvas to the next.

The rushing around at a gallery is part and parcel of the way we meet each day. We rush out of habit, and we rush because everyone else is rushing. Our world seems set in the fast lane.



El Greco, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Carl Honoré in his book 'In Praise of Slow' tells how, as a busy journalist, he experienced a flashback to a time in his youth when life was unhurried. He reflects, with regret, that it was a better life then.

If we do want to take Wittgenstein's advice seriously and find ourselves in the National Gallery in Edinburgh, we could do no better than choose to sit in front of this painting: El Greco's 'The Saviour.'

El Greco was born in 1541 in Crete. From Greece he travelled to Venice and Rome and finally to Toledo in Spain where he died in 1614.

His art is a fusion of eastern and western traditions, given extra fervour by the Counter-Reformation and resulting in a unique style of painting. His canvases are peopled by elongated figures who seem always to be straining upwards, just as the Counter-Reformation was exhorting the faithful to set their sights on heaven as they made their journey through life.

In his early years in Crete El Greco trained as an icon painter, and that is much in evidence in 'The Saviour.' It shows a half-length figure of Christ – he was to paint a fuller figure later. This Christ like an icon is looking out at us, with his right hand raised to bless us and this world, while the left hand holds that same world in His care. We can see in the eyes an inner strength, but also the poignant sadness of longing for this is a Saviour who has come through suffering and death to bring us new life.

As we look and see, we find here in El Greco's work a Christ-calmed steadiness amid the spinning world of rush and busyness. The nearer we draw to this Jesus, the slower we will find ourselves spinning. The duties and responsibilities that demand so much from us take their place in the

wider perspective of the Saviour's grace and love. Then we can begin to experience that peace which the world cannot offer, but which Christ can bring.

The first step in that process is to stop and look. The Curé d'Ars, a parish priest in France in the early 19th century, told how he noticed an old man sitting at the back of his church every day. He didn't seem to be doing anything, just sitting there in the same place at the same time, looking towards the Blessed Sacrament on the High Altar. Eventually the young priest became suspicious. He asked the man what he was doing. 'I'm praying,' came the reply. 'Yes, but what exactly is it you do?' enquired the priest. 'Well, I look at Him and He looks at me.'

How different churches cope with adversity

When a Methodist minister falls down the stairs, he picks himself up and says, "That was an experience, how do I learn from it?"

When a Catholic priest falls down the stairs, he picks himself up and says, "I must have done something really bad to deserve that."

When a Presbyterian minister falls down the stairs, he picks himself up and says, "That was inevitable, I'm glad it's over."

When a Baptist minister falls down the stairs, he picks himself up and says, "Which one of my deacons pushed me?"

When a vicar falls down the stairs, he picks himself up and says, "Will I need a faculty to get the staircase repaired?"

THE WEST DOOR CHORALE



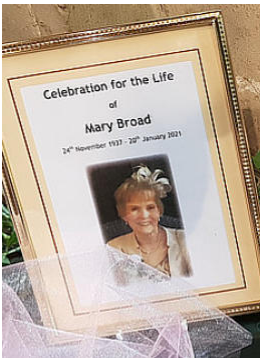
For several Sunday's in July and August, dog-walkers and other users of the the park were treated to a short performance by St Mary's pop-up choir. Singing inside the church having been cancelled during the pandemic, members of the congregation were invited to gather in the churchyard at the end the service, remove their masks and under Andrew's direction, make a joyful noise unto the Lord.



MEMORIAL FOR A FLOWER ARRANGER



Mary Broad



Mary was a much loved and respected member of Hemel Hempstead Flower Club and of our arrangers. This beautiful tribute, funded by the club, was created by Sylvia Newton, a friend of Mary's, a member of the club and of our flower arrangers. Mary joined St.Mary's flower arrangers in the time of Freda Wilmore as did Sylvia. Freda spoke to the vicar at the time who welcomed the club members into the church and the rest, as they say, is history! We have been so grateful to have had the support of many club members over the years.

Lynne Sygrave



LTPT CHRISTMAS CARD

The card features children from the Nomonde Educare Pre-School in their new garden. Greetings are in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. It is A6 size (15 by 11 cm). Including an envelope, each card is priced at 50p. Orders which include postal delivery should be a minimum of 15 cards. They can be placed through e-mail to:

gordon.gaddes@btinternet.com
or by post to LTPT at 91 Highfield Lane, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 5JE or handed to Gordon or Rosina Gaddes.

Payment by cheque to LTPT or into the LTPT bank account at the Co-op Bank, Sort Code 089299, Account 65471852 (if the latter, indicate name and no. of cards, please).



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