

† STOMP

ISSUE 56

MAGAZINE

AUTUMN 2022



THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

STOMP MAGAZINE
ISSUE 56 AUTUMN 2022

Cover picture attributed to Dorothee Quenesson via Pixabay photolibrary: Stained glass window, (location unknown) 'The Annunciation'.

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What a year it has been, when world events continue to impact heavily on our personal lives and our churches. Recovering from the impact of Covid-19 was hard enough, but with the arrival of the Russian war on Ukraine, our finances have received another heavy blow. Many now are facing a hard winter, with seemingly little to be cheerful about.

In our national life, we have seen political upheaval, sadness at the deaths of an extraordinary Queen and in our parish we have mourned the passing of beloved and respected friends.

And yet, and yet as Christians, we have somewhere to turn, Someone to turn to, for comfort and for reassurance that we are not forsaken, and that we need not be overwhelmed by whatever 2023 may bring to us. God can be our strength, a trusted refuge in times of trouble.

The message of Christmas is just as real for us today as it was 2000 years ago, and it can still bring us hope and joy for our long-term future.

Emmanuel has come, the Prince of Peace, the Son of Righteousness. God IS with us. And HIS kingdom will have no end.



St Mary

Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, is revered throughout Christendom. From the annunciation, to the birth of Jesus, on through the years, many as a widow, on to the three year ministry of her son, and to his death and his resurrection Mary constantly was there for him.

She is with us as the epitome of loving and suffering motherhood and womanhood throughout time, a thought captured in the poem below.



The Methodist Modern Art Collection:
from 'Natus Est (He is Born)' - Philip Hagreen

*Mother love
love of Mother,
love by Mother, love for Mother
bring to humankind*

*the circle of love
loyalty and forgiveness
permanence and generosity
purity and holiness*

*transcendence of spirit,
all the eternal gifts of
giving, suffering
weeping motherhood*

GG

THE TOMB OF SANTA CLAUS

The tomb of Saint Nicholas, the inspiration behind Santa Claus, has been discovered after archaeologists uncovered the remains of an ancient church in Turkey that was submerged by rising sea levels in the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages.

Excavations at the church have been ongoing since 2017, when experts identified the seventh- or eighth-century church as St. Nicholas' final resting place. While electronically surveying the space, experts discovered empty spaces between the floor and the foundations

The holy figure, who lived between 270 and 343 AD, is most famous for inheriting money that he gave away to the poor and specifically the story about how he tossed gold coins down the chimney of a poor family that was considering selling its daughters into prostitution.

Another church was built on top of the ancient basilica's foundation to protect the saint's tomb, but it was not until recently did archaeologists uncover mosaic and stone flooring from the previous sanctuary under the one that stands today that led them to St Nicholas' final resting place.



Wall decoration in the church of St Nicholas, in Demre, Turkey and the mosaic floor below which the tomb was discovered.



Text Based on report in Mail Online. Photo credit: "St Nicholas of Myra" by Thomas Cizauskas is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd-nc/2.0/jp/?ref=openverse>.

File: Mosaic in the church of St. Nicholas (Myra, Turkey) 05.jpg" by Eleroja is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

GOD IN THE ARTS

The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a look at the cartoon for 'The Mackintosh Madonna', which normally hangs in the British Museum.

This drawing is 'The Virgin and Child' by Raphael (1483-1520). Raphael was a talented artist from a very early age, but this drawing belongs to a time when he was in Rome from 1510-12. The finished painting is known as the Mackintosh Madonna, after its last owner.

This drawing, or cartoon, was the first stage in creating that work: it is in black chalk with heightening marks of white. When an artist made an initial drawing like this, he would then prick the cartoon with holes and then sprinkle charcoal powder over the drawing to reproduce the design on the canvas below. The pinholes on this drawing are still clearly visible. Sadly the final painting has been damaged through time but here in the cartoon we see that first stage, a sensitive and balanced picture of mother and child: Mary warm and caring, Jesus laughing and alive.

During Advent we think of the preparations God made for the birth of the Saviour. We celebrate God's work of creation and how He chose a people for His own. Within that people He looked for a holy remnant and then finally a loving heart in the assent of Mary to be the mother of our Lord.



These preparatory steps were as vital for our salvation as the artist moving from idea to sketch to the finished work.

Each stage is important; each stage a revelation of life and love. Vasari wrote of Raphael that in his paintings 'the flesh palpitates, the breath comes and goes, every organ lives, and life pulsates everywhere.' Even this preliminary drawing displays that life and vitality. It is a life we celebrate at Christmas in the birth of a child who turns to us, as he does in this work, as a sign of joy and love.

seasonal smiles

Santa

I am terrified of the Santa at the shopping centre where I work. Our HR lady talked it over with me and has discovered I am Claustrophobic.

The Holy Family

A Sunday school teacher asked her class, "What was Jesus' mother's name?" One child answered, "Mary." The teacher then asked, "Who knows what Jesus' father's name was?" Another child ventured: "Verge?" Confused, the teacher asked, "Where did you get that?"

He replied hesitantly: "Well, you know they are always talking about Verge n' Mary."

Visiting Father Christmas

A mother took her young daughter to visit Father Christmas in his grotto at the garden centre. He greeted the youngster merrily and asked: "And what would you like for Christmas?" The little girl stared at him, open-mouthed with horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

New Year Sales

The science of arresting the human intelligence long enough to get money from it. – *Stephen Leacock*

New Year's Eve is coming soon...

The bagpipes are the missing link between music and noise. – *E K Kruger*
The inventor of the bagpipes was inspired when he saw a man carrying an indignant asthmatic piglet under his arm. Unfortunately, the man-made sound never equalled the purity of the sound achieved by the pig. – *Alfred Hitchcock*.

Bring not a bagpipe to a man in trouble. – *Jonathan Swift*.



The vicar's still miffed that one of the parents got £250 from You've Been Framed for their video of last year's nativity play

EDITOR'S INTERVIEW - JANE LYNISKY

Aged 57, Jane is Highfield born and bred living for all those years within a quarter mile radius of St Paul's Church, firstly in her family's home in Jupiter Drive, and now in Mendip Way with her husband of 36 years, Kevin of an Irish background whom she met over 40 years ago when she was out for a drink in a local pub with her friend. She and Kevin have two children, Craig and Emily, and this stable and very happy family is the joy of their life together.



Their wedding on a gloriously sunny day in June 1986 was at St Mary's in the Old Town. Odd at first sight because Jane had been brought up by her mother, Shelagh Greenwood, as a Roman Catholic, her father John who



was born in Paddington of Norfolk heritage having converted to marry Shelagh. Jane, growing up as a Christian, has journeyed from aged six being introduced to a St Paul's Toddlers Group by our Warden Maureen Tibbles to a Salvation Army Sunday School based at the Heights. St Paul's and the vicars were always there for her and her family especially at times of great grief through bereavement. She remembers the care shown by Revd Peggy Jackson on the death of her brother aged 34 and that of Rev Gareth Jones when her father died. It was a transformational time for her and she became very involved at St Paul's with the Junior ▷

Church, fifteen years as an officer in The Boys' Brigade, and over time serving as communion assistant and intercessor, as a member of the St Paul's District Council and each year with her Mum and daughter running a table at the St Paul's Bazaar. Jane was confirmed in 1991 and the eucharist is very special to her, the taking of bread and wine, the mystery of the connection with God and the importance of her faith to her being. Maybe this is why her husband, Keith, over a drink with me has been able to recount, 'I love to hear Jane singing as she comes home from church'. Asked about this Jane replied, 'yes, I like to sing the hymns again'.

All of Jane's schooling was in Highfield, first at the nursery class at Bellgate Primary School, where Jo Whittington and Hazel Blanchard from our church were nursery assistants, then after primary school a move down Fletcher Way to Highfield School until the age of 16. There in her final year she got the best results at GCE O Level. Her Head Teacher, John Cotton, wanted her to stay on, but her mother encouraged her to seek employment. It is therefore with great pride that Jane was able to see both her children graduate from university, the first in her family.

Jane joined the Solicitors, Smeathmans, for a year before moving on to the Post Office, where she worked over the next 35 years in Hemel Hempstead and St Albans, ending up at the head office in London in the External Relations directorate working



finally as the Senior Engagement Manager with a staff of 35. Looking for a new challenge Jane joined Transport for London four years ago working as Communications Manager in their Public Affairs team. As somebody who has always liked working it was special for me to meet a fellow traveller able to say about her whole work experience, 'I enjoyed work, great times, fantastic managers' and I sensed that she is very well satisfied working in a public service environment.

However, what about leisure time? Interestingly, Jane aged between 6 and 17 took to ballroom dancing, winning competitions and going on to gain certificates enabling her to teach part time at weekends and also compete in the televised series of Come Dancing, representing Home Counties North, dancing the Jive. Regrettably her efforts to teach Kevin 'did not pan out'

and with time through family and work pressures active ballroom dancing dropped away but is still renewed weekly through 'Strictly Come Dancing'! Over the years she has greatly enjoyed family holidays, and in more recent years with Kevin she has had the opportunity to explore more of the world travelling to Ireland, Spain, Costa Rica, Bali, Hong Kong and Thailand for example. Jane loves to travel, to see new places, to experience the conviviality of meeting new people. She particularly loves to go to the Far East, to experience such different cultures.



Open minded and inquisitive, wherever she goes she likes to visit a place of faith, be it Christian or otherwise.

During her time at the Post Office Jane also had the opportunity to get involved in voluntary work for the charity Barnardo's. This was an enjoyable and fulfilling pastime enabling her to be part of a variety of events including fundraising, a "challenge" to decorate one of Barnardo's family centres and also to be a mentor for young people with learning difficulties at their six-form school in Kent. Jane was delighted to be invited to the official opening event of the family centre where she met Barnardo's patron, now Camilla, Queen Consort.

I reflect on Jane leaving school at 16 and her whimsical remark that early on she had wanted to be a teacher. Now she has no regrets having had and continuing to have such a successful and interesting career. Her talent and personality came through at our last PCC meeting when, as the Parish Safeguarding Officer, she was giving the annual report. Absolutely on top of the job, speaking clearly and firmly and with a well - prepared paper she quickly took us through the current situation and looked forward. Moreover, as somebody who she has chased to complete the recommended safeguarding courses, I can vouch for both her firmness and her diplomacy.

Gordon Gaddes

HAPPENINGS AT ST MARY'S AND IN THE OLD TOWN

How might an ancient church in the centre of 'old Hemel' express itself in present times? It might keep its doors locked, its core congregation meeting just for services.



From the outside even with its beautiful spire and in its lovely setting, for some it is a 'fortress-like structure', which belies the solemnity and beauty of the sacred space lying within, the product of centuries of craftsmanship and loving care.

In recent years St Mary's has increasingly reached out to bring people in. The church is open to the public during weekdays. Along with its adjacent hall it is integral to the monthly High Street Market, providing refreshments and the opportunity for guided tours for anybody who wants to know more about the church.

There have been many events over the decades, but 2022 has turned out to be very special, with very, many hundreds coming into St Mary's.

As reported in previous issues of SToMP during May there was the 'Extravaganza', at the end of August there was 'Art in the Nave' and now over the first weekend in November we experienced Halloween, the Borough Council assessing that around 8,000 people came into the High Street.

The church had been due to open to visitors at 3.00pm but people started drifting in about 15 minutes earlier and by the official opening time the trickle had increased to a constant stream. This continued until past 7pm when people started to take up their positions in the park to watch the firework display.

The estimate for the number of visitors was over 2,000 – this is based on our initial printing of a handout flyer of 200.



A craft table ready for the children ...

These ran out fairly quickly and during the afternoon John disappeared over to the hall a couple of times to print some more – another 300 in total. The flyers were handed out one for each family group – working on an average of 4 people per group gives us our 2,000 estimate. As well as information about the event the flyers had on the back the details of the Christmas services for the Family at both St Mary's and St Paul's.

Many visitors wore costumes – ranging from the grotesque to the eccentric and Star Wars light sabers seemed to be the 'must have' accessory for children. The craft tables were constantly full-up and Sheila and her team served hot chocolate to exhaustion – both theirs and the supply of chocolate powder!

Many favourable and familiar comments were heard –



...and ready for clearing up at the end

'What a beautiful church.' 'My parents were married here but I've never been inside before.' 'How old is this building? It's amazing?'

Many people might not understand the reasons for welcoming people into church at Halloween, isn't that a pagan, even occult, celebration they might say. Our reasoning is simple; the High Street is full of thousands of people and in the past the church stayed shut and dark. Yet we have a message of light and love in Jesus Christ and this can be communicated by opening up and welcoming everyone (including the many little witches and devils!) into a warm light filled environment with positive pumpkins, cheery children's activities and warming hot chocolate!

It might just give some a more positive view of church and it certainly skews the diocesan statistics!

Gordon, Jeff & Canon John



LATEST LTPT NEWS

THE ONE WORLD CHARITY CHALLENGE

The One World Centre is an Isle of Man based registered charity linked with the USA Clueit Foundation. Mr and Mrs Clueit live in the Isle of Man. For the past ten years the Centre has organised the above challenge, an opportunity for Year 12 students from the six secondary schools in the island to compete.

Between 20 and 28 teams compete each year, several from each school. The first stage is a competition within each school to choose the representative for the school at the final held in March. The would - be competitor group studies information provided by the listed charities and choose whether there is one that it would like to represent and support.

LTPT was invited to be listed this year. Agreeing to this, material and references were provided, following which the Trust was selected by the 12D tutorial group of the St Ninian's High School, shown in photo. With both an Upper and a Lower School, St Ninian's has 1,250 students.



The aim of the competition is for the students, 'to create public awareness of their chosen charity and to develop an engaging and original presentation about the work of the charity overseas which has international development as its main aim'. A key theme is to be sustainability. The focus of the challenge is charities working in Africa.

My contact with 12D is Amy McAlinden. Action to date has included: reference to our website, the despatch of my book 'Cape Town Stories' and carefully selected newsletters, and 300 of our 2022 Christmas cards and envelopes.



REPORT ON THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH
COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER 2022

A short summary of the main items reviewed by the Council:-

- **Safeguarding**

Our new Safeguarding Action Plan is being drawn up and will be ready soon.

- **Finance**

Our reserves currently stand at £25,000 but could reduce to £21,000 by the end of the year.

- **Removal of pews at St Mary's**

The Diocesan Advisory Committee visited St Mary's on 29th November to review our pew removal plan; we are waiting for their decision so we can progress to a faculty.

- **Friends of St Mary's**

New members will be welcomed; all money donated will go to the maintenance and repair of the church.

Jenny Bowes

PCC Secretary



One of the challenges 12D face, as do we, is the question of sustainability. I have sent them a definition and some ideas as to how our work fits into the notion of sustainability. For example, 'build a child, build a nation', early child development; developing and sustaining infrastructure; sandy waste to micro-farms and the Nomonde garden; repairing guttering, putting in down pipes, and two water tanks, this an enormous boon to the pre-school and neighbours in an area which is seasonally drought stricken. Then we have our current SHOP project – Succour – Hope – Optimism - Progress. They will have plenty of ideas and material to draw on.

Gordon Gaddes



FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S – UPDATE



First, please remember from our previous article in the last issue of STOMP that we would welcome any new members. Just speak to Lynne Sygrave and we will happily take your £20 and make you a member. Your money will go towards our funds for the maintenance and repair of the church, and as the latest Quinquennial report by inspectors shows, repairs to the nave roof are becoming steadily more necessary – and expensive!

In future, we hope to be able to offer you a regular newsletter and some entertaining fundraising opportunities, such as quizzes and wine tastings, but in the meantime we are gradually building our marketing and publicity. The noticeboards advertising the church, the High Street and the Friends are being designed and we hope soon to have a semi-permanent pull-up display for the Friends in the church, where visitors can read about us and – with a bit of luck – feel motivated to join or to contribute towards our funds.

Approaches have started to be made to Art departments in secondary schools, in the hope that GCSE or A level projects could be linked to the church, with the best resulting artworks perhaps being exhibited, or even offered for sale at the next Art in the Nave. This is in the belief that if we can get youngsters (and their parents) involved in the beauty and uniqueness of this building, they will start to feel some responsibility for its survival and maintenance into the next generation.

In only 18 years' time, St Mary's will be 900 years old. (Perhaps we should start the party planning already?). If we want her to make her 1000th birthday in good shape, we need to make the whole of the community of Hemel Hempstead feel invested in her life and her future. All ideas, suggestions – and financial contributions – towards achieving this aim will be gratefully accepted!

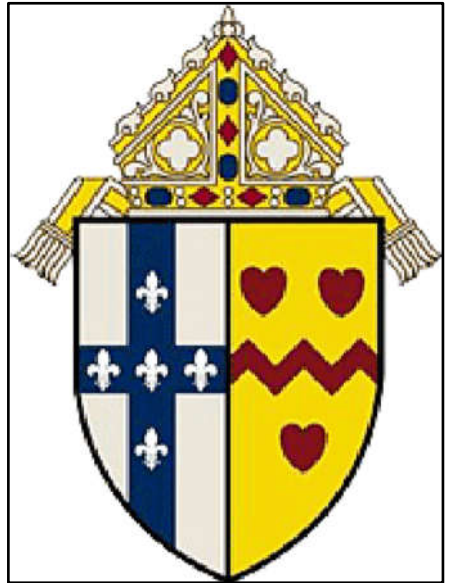
Norma Podmore

AN ECUMENICAL JOURNEY

When I came to Hemel Hempstead as Team Rector about five and half years ago I hoped that many opportunities would open up to work with the other churches in the town. With that in mind I was saddened that Churches Together in Hemel Hempstead didn't operate in the ways that other church groupings do elsewhere and indeed the key ecumenical opportunity to share, the Walk of Witness on Good Friday, clashed with our own three-hour meditation and services at St Mary's. Jesus' prayer that we might all be one, as he and the Father are one (John 17) is an important foundation of the Christian journey and the Church of England also encourages us to work with other denominations and to offer them hospitality.

A glimmer of light came in a chance for me to regularly meet with some local ministers over a beer. This ecumenical endeavour brought a few Roman Catholics and Anglicans together to discuss the fine points of brewing rather than church doctrine, meaning convivial debate and fellowship rather than controversy!

At these meetings I got to know Fr Simon Chinery from the Ordinariate's Hemel Hempstead Mission. Simon's son was our Diocesan Registrar for a time and so – as they say – it is a small world.



I should at this stage explain what the Ordinariate is and how it came about but it might be better for me to quote their own explanation rather than trying to paraphrase something myself.

‘In November 2009, Pope Benedict XVI issued the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus*, stating: "In recent times the Holy Spirit has moved groups of Anglicans to petition repeatedly and insistently to be received into full Catholic communion individually as well as corporately. The Apostolic See has responded favourably to such petitions."

On 15 January 2011 the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham was erected by decree of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the then Fr Keith Newton was appointed by the Holy Father as its first Ordinary.

During Holy Week 2011, almost 1,000 men, women and young people were received into the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham.

The Hemel Hempstead Ordinariate Group was founded by members of the Ordinariate mostly originating from St Francis of Assisi Hemel Hempstead, Holy Cross Luton & Stevenage Churches.’

(Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham:<https://ordinariate.org.uk/>)

The shock waves caused by the setting up of the Ordinariate should not be underestimated and many in the Church of England felt hurt and disappointed by the fissure that was caused when so many left, however 10 years on a healing and an understanding was developing that meant that these former Anglicans who had taken a distinctive Anglican patrimony into the Roman Catholic Church should now no longer be ostracised but respected as fellow pilgrims upon the journey of faith.

In October 2021 I spent a few days at the Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk. I have had a connection with the shrine and been a Priest Associate of the Holy House for many years. It was pure God-incidence (Christians do not believe in co-incidences but see the hand of God in all good things) that priests from the Ordinariate were having their own retreat in the village at

the same time and so it was that their Ordinary (An Ordinary is an officer of the Church who by reason of their office has ordinary power to execute laws), Monsignor Keith Newton (a former Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of St Albans when he was Bishop of Richborough) recognised me across the other side of a crowded pub in the village.

Mgr Keith is a wonderfully charismatic and likeable Liverpoolian and we soon rekindled memories of his visit to my old parish of Holy Trinity, Bishop’s Stortford, in years gone by. In conversation he mentioned that his group in Hemel Hempstead were looking for a new home and also introduced me to Fr Neil Scott, who was soon to replace Fr Simon in Hemel.

The story of connections and old friends went deeper when I realised that local funeral director John Worley, who I had known since my days as a lay altar server in Barnet, was one of the Ordinariate’s local leaders.

When I knew that there was a possibility of the Ordinariate congregation using one of the Team Churches – and they wanted to be at St Paul’s for the historic reasons of the former 40 year long association it had with the Roman Catholic Church as well as its ideal location – I quickly spoke to Gordon Gaddes, as Churchwarden. Gordon, as most will know, has been instrumental in encouraging the use of the halls at St Paul’s for wider community use and he was also keen to look at how we might find other use for the underutilised church worship space.



Gordon and I were pleased to meet with Mgr Keith, Fr David Waller (his Vicar General), John Worley and the other very amiable lay representative, Brian Cox, to discuss possibilities. In the time that followed much work has had to be done to bring our project to pass. We have had to consult the Bishop of St Albans, the Archdeacon and various other diocesan representatives to see how we might move forward in points of hospitality and law.

Mr James Seddon, a lawyer from St Mary's congregation, has helped us and Rosina, Malcolm, members of the PCC and the congregation at St Paul's have also been most helpful in making this happen.

It has been quite a journey which has culminated in the use of St Paul's by the Hemel Hempstead Mission commencing most fittingly,

at the start of the new church year, Advent Sunday 2022. The old sharing arrangement with the Roman Catholics had ended on the feast of Christ the King (the Sunday which ends the liturgical year) after 40 years of partnership. It is of course early days and any co-operation between church congregations will be a road of both opportunity and challenge but we are now on that road following the prayer of Jesus for unity.

The feast of the Conversion of St Paul traditionally ends the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity each January. Pope Benedict, who established the Ordinariate, once said; **'Prayer is at the very heart of the ecumenical journey'**. Let us then join in prayer as we continue this journey together.

Canon John

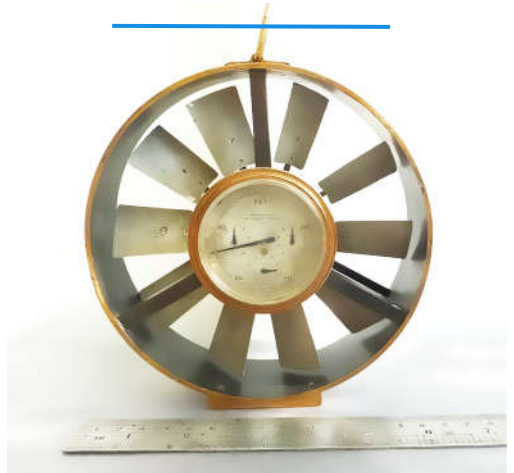
December 2022

ALL GOD'S FAMILY

The Revd Michael Clasby way back was an executive within the Dacorum Borough Council and a non-stipendiary priest, in the St Mary's team as I remember it. He was one of the moving forces in the Dacorum Emergency Night Shelter initiative. Interested in how Borough Council employees viewed churches and church people he conducted a survey of attitudes. Condensing his report, a few words convey what he concluded: 'well-meaning', 'they look after each other', 'a bit exclusive', 'like a family'.

I thought about this after the funeral service of Michael Robinson. In a congregation of 54, four families were represented, Ann Robinson's family, Michael's family from a former marriage, and the families of St Paul's and St Mary's. During this beautiful Christian service, charismatically led by Canon John with a special tribute by Revd Chandy Perera, we were united in our grief and in our celebration of Michael and his life, who he was, what he has done and how he will be remembered. The committal was at the outer door of St Paul's to the bell tolled by Nick Taylor, with his Dad,

Malcolm the crucifer, standing by. Canon John, as agreed with Ann, went alone with Michael and the hearse to the Garston Crematorium. Most of the congregation went into the Hall, four families to be together, to merge as one family to share food and drinks and to be with Ann at this very moving and special time. We were like one family, looking after each other, some strangers to each other, actually not exclusive but inclusive, brothers and sisters together as God's children. GG



In her tribute to Michael during his funeral Chandy recalled his engineering apprenticeship and his construction as a test piece of a vane type anemometer (pictured above).

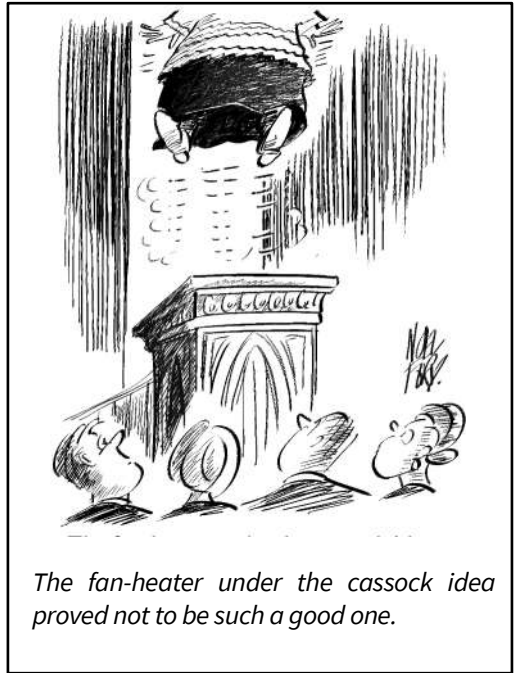
Michael eventually donated it to the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers for its museum and is also included in the archive of the London Science Museum as this email from them explains:

The Clockmakers' Charity was pleased to accept Michael's donation which they felt would stand as a good record for anyone researching London instrument making and technical education from that period.

In case of interest to you or any of his family, I will soon upload the object record to the Science Museum's collection online, so that the information about it will be available to the general public. If you are interested in viewing it, the records are located here: <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/search/collection/the-worshipful-company-of-clockmakers>

Anna Rolls

Curator of The Clockmakers' Museum



Grant, O Lord, to all students, to know what is worth knowing, to love what is worth loving, to praise what delights You most, to value what is precious in Your sight and to reject what is evil in Your eyes.

Grant them true discernment to distinguish between different things. Above all, may they search out and do what is most pleasing to You; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thomas à Kempis



GOD IN THE SCIENCES

SCIENCE AND MIRACLES

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

We live in a world where we can expect the sun to rise tomorrow and the milk to pour out of the bottle when we tilt it over our cereal. But for God, the properties of matter and the biological processes that we know and read about in textbooks are simply the usual ways He works.

If He chooses to do something unexpected to demonstrate something about His character, His relationship with us, and His purposes, then He will.

A group of 14 UK-based science Professors wrote to the Times in 1984, saying that, “We gladly accept the Virgin Birth, the gospel miracles, and the Resurrection of Christ as historical events.

“We know that we are representative of many other scientists who are also Christians standing in the historical tradition of the churches.”

For the non-believer, I would suggest a thought experiment: if God exists, why should He be bound by the same laws of physics as us?

Professor Christine Done is an Astrophysicist at the University of Durham. In the book *True Scientists, True Faith* (Monarch, 2014) she writes: “Even when I was an atheist I used to get cross at discussions...on how all Jesus’s miracles could be physically explained. To me, once you have believed in a God, a supernatural being, then it’s obvious that supernatural stuff could happen, since any God who can make the physical universe and its laws can presumably suspend those laws in any time and way He chooses.”

There are also miracles which appear to be a case of wonderful timing. The wind blew all night, and the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry land, for example. The biblical writers don’t seem especially interested in distinguishing between wonders that seem to break the usual rules of how things happen and those that don’t.

Many in Jesus’ audiences were not won over by His wonders. Most of the people in the crowds who ate the food He produced out of nowhere were quite happy to turn on Him when the religious authorities decided He was dangerous. We can only make sense of something unexpected, such as an answer to prayer for healing, in the context of a growing relationship with God.

The exciting task for a Christian is to explain what this interaction looks like, and to demonstrate what ‘your kingdom come’ looks like in our communities. God works through us in words, works and wonders.

QUOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

- Sin has turned the world from a paradise into a thicket; there is no getting through without being scratched. – *T Boston*
- The fruit of the Spirit is not push, drive, climb, grasp and trample... Life is more than a climb to the top of the heap. – *Richard J Foster*
- We know not what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future. – *Willis J Ray*
- God loves us; not because we are loveable but because He is love; not because he needs to receive but because He delights to give. – *C S Lewis*
- The search for happiness is one of the chief sources of unhappiness. – *Eric Hoffer*
- Many who are climbing the ladder of success have their ladders leaning against the wrong walls. – *Erwin Lutzer*
- The hinge of history is on the door of a Bethlehem stable. – *R Sockman*
- Christ has outlasted the empire that crucified Him 19 centuries ago. He will outlast the nations who deny Him now. – *Anon*

HERTFORDSHIRE WELCOMES REFUGEES



‘Hertfordshire Welcomes Refugees’ (HRW) was started in 2015 as ‘Hertfordshire Welcomes Syrian Families’ at a time when the conflict in Syria was at its sad, sad height – a previous limited military operation undertaken by Putin to bolster a losing President Assad and, just as in Ukraine, careless of how many people suffered.

HWR is a voluntary organisation and its aims are to welcome and support refugees and asylum seekers living in Hertfordshire: to help them integrate and achieve independence; and alongside that to raise public understanding and engage with decision makers on issues related to refugees and asylum seekers – quite a mouthful but also quite a challenge. So HWR is reactive because when refugees arrive, the numbers in which they come and how long it takes for them to get a decision and then settle is out of their control.

It might be helpful here to summarise the rules that govern asylum seekers (AS) while their status is being assessed and decided.

An AS is entitled to free accommodation and, either 3 meals per day plus £8 per week for everything else, or £40.85 per week for everything. Children are supposed to attend school, but this will clearly depend on whether a place is available. An AS is also entitled to NHS Healthcare but again this requires finding and registering with a GP.

An AS is not allowed to work and they only become eligible for English lessons after 6 months – being eligible does not always mean that lessons/courses are available. After a year waiting for a decision, an AS is able to ask for permission to work; but if permission is given it will only cover jobs that are on the Government’s ‘Shortage Occupation List’ which sets out required skills.

An AS is allowed to volunteer for a Charity but it must be genuine volunteering, ie only genuine expenses and appropriate meals, no pay!

Given these rules I imagine that boredom, frustration and depression are the enemies, and these will probably be increased if an AS also has very little English to help them to interface with the community, schools and NHS.

So far 8 Syrian families have been settled in Dacorum. Currently 100 AS’s are in a Hotel in Dacorum awaiting decisions, a further 55 in a Guest House in the Old Town and some fairly recent arrivals in Private Contractor accommodation. They are of around 18 different nationalities, families with children, couples and single women and men. And of course there are in addition the Ukrainian refugees with some 1800+ in Hertfordshire under the Homes for Ukrainians scheme and a further unknown number under the Ukrainian Family Scheme.

Robin Woodd

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Quoting from my article on UK Churches in the Winter 2022 issue of SToMP (pages16-17), 'The social capital school of thought in Economics stresses that quantitative money calculations do not capture adequately the real value of a society partly because they do not include the contribution made by voluntary work'. This very much was brought home to me last week during recent visits to the Highfield Community Centre.



THE COMMUNITY FRIDGE

This 'Love Food Hate Waste' is a notice of intent on the Highfield Community Centre noticeboard. Important, related action is advertised on the board displayed each Wednesday and Saturday morning about a special local initiative.

The Hemel Hempstead Community Fridge, based at the Highfield Community Centre, is a community interest project run by Viking Community Fitness in conjunction with the Hubbub Foundation, sponsored by the Co-op and supported by the Highfield Community Centre. Their aim is to redistribute surplus food that would otherwise go to waste in the landfills and thereby to help people who are facing difficult times. The initiative started 18 months ago and happens on Wednesday and Saturday mornings for one hour starting around 11am, with many hours spent in preparation for each opening.



It is run by up to 12 volunteers. 60 percent of the food and other items comes from super markets including Aldi, Tesco and Waitrose.



Sasha at Highfield Community Centre

The store of food is in the Community Centre. It is supplemented for each session by the latest supplies available from the super markets and for example the local Co-op stores, which the day before have notified what needs to be collected by helpers and from where on the following day.

Turning up on a Saturday this is what I saw. A long queue in the carpark alongside the building all heading for an L-shaped, two limited table lay out. There is no referral system, no names are taken, but each person at the head of the queue is listed with the number in the family – on that day scanning the list I saw a range from single people to a family of eight.

There are other donors, including St Paul's through the weekly collection organised by Malcolm Taylor. Also, there is some fund-raising, which enables supplies to be purchased at a low price through the charity SOFEA, which bulk buys to sell on to food banks and charities.

In August 525 bags of food were handed out and an estimated 1503 fed. 2,476 kilograms of produce were accepted. In the first session of November 78 bags were distributed helping 248 people.



Each person then gets a very full bag of food before moving to the other limb of the lay -out on which there are a range of items to choose from. On this morning there were plenty of baguettes, croissants and rolls, in addition to a miscellany of goods. This part of the distribution can run out, so it is very much a first come first served effort along this limb.

This is a wonderful initiative, meeting needs at a minimal cost, using resources wisely and stopping waste. It would cost a lot of money to provide if there being the need there were neither volunteers nor donors. Indeed could this even be afforded if fully costed in cash terms – hence the point of acknowledging the importance of social capital to a society. Volunteers giving to others.



PARISH WARM HUBS

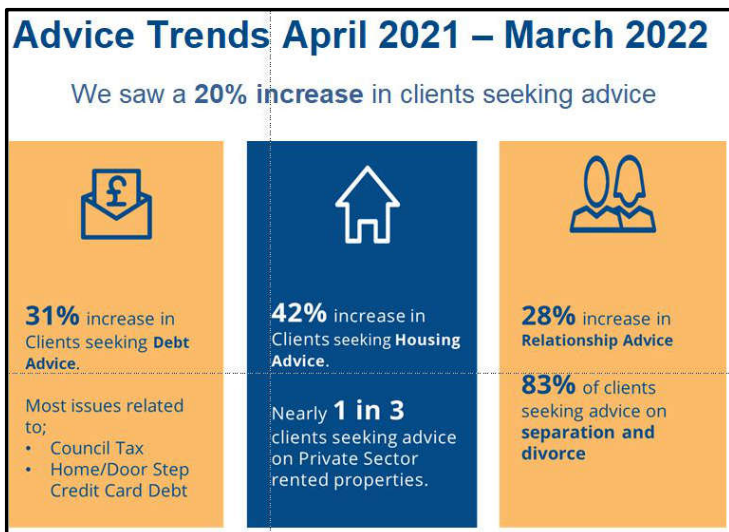
St Mary's – Following PCC approval, the Warm Hub in St Mary's Hall will start on Wednesday 7th December and be each Wednesday from 10.00am. Before Christmas we will end at 1.00pm and after Christmas we will go on to 4.00pm.

Do come along and enjoy both warmth and fellowship if only for a mid morning cup of coffee. Also spread the word where appropriate.

St Paul's – Liaison with the Community Centre at Bellgate has led to agreement in principle to establish a warm hub on Mondays for a two or three month period. This is unlikely to start until the New Year. For more information contact: Gordon on 07561450633.

GATHERING LOCAL CRISIS

Canon John, Robin Woodd and Emmeline Lambert in recent weeks have been reporting on growing local needs. Angela Cox, the CEO of Dacorum Citizens Advice, recently made a presentation and some selected slides below show the scale and growth of the crisis.



The Trends continue in Q2 (1st Jul 22 – 30th Sept 22)

41% of Clients felt their problem was **URGENT**
(compared to 29% last quarter)



Debt Advice Issues
continue to rise, top advice
issues are;

Council Tax
Local Authority – rent
arrears
and
Fuel Debts



Housing Advice Issues
continue to rise, top issues
are;

Private rented properties
Homeowners properties
and also;
Threatened homelessness



Relationship Advice issues
continue to rise, top issues
are;

Divorce and Separation
Housing
and
Child contact arrangement



Food Support - Q2 1st Jul – 30th Sept 22)

- **103** food vouchers were issued at the Centre and a further
 - **132** food vouchers were issued through **Help Through Hardship helpline**
- A **63% increase** compared to the same quarter last year

We have distributed a further **£10,000** worth of **HCC Household Support Fund Supermarket vouchers** between June -September 2022

- **103** Households were assisted
 - Including **102** children



HAPPY CHRISTMAS!



Greetings from some happy children of Nomonde Pre-School, Langa, supported by Langa Township Pre-School Trust

The Parish of St Mary & St Paul

The Clergy

The Revd Canon John Williams 01442 265272:

The Revd Luke Geoghegan

The Revd Richard Leslie

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