

† STAMP

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AGAZINE

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THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

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Cover picture:

Deepak Kumar Dalai from Pixabay

I came across this picture when I was looking for an image to use on the AV screens on Mothering Sunday, the special day in Lent when we remember and give thanks for our Mothers and all they mean to us.

I chose the picture for that occasion because I thought it was a clever allegory. The little toddler, facing the seemingly impossible and daunting flight of steep steps; the mother, holding the child's hand helping and encouraging them to climb and overcome the difficulty, all seemed to encapsulate the role of a mother and a child's trusting dependence on her.

In the event we didn't actually need the picture for that but I thought it could also be taken to illustrate the part that the risen Lord can play in our lives when we have to face difficult times in uncharted waters.

We do not face them alone

'Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Matthew 11:29-30

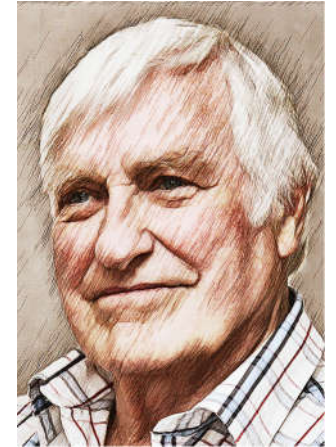
Jeff W

FROM THE EDITOR

I recently spent four hours in London on Langa Trust business with a new friend from Norfolk, Chris a Yorkshireman of dual nationality. He relocated from Cape Town two years ago where he had been the Managing Director of a building and construction company. In retirement, as a Rotarian, he was pivotal recently over five years in support for pre-schools and creches in Langa. Now he is relocating back to Cape Town because he misses his daily view of the ethereal Table Mountain, his circle of friends, his mission for early child development and also the sun!

He also said that he wants to help our Trust with our mission in Langa. Thank God I thought. At one point, in a philosophical mood, I asked Chris what he thought of Plato's recounting that Sophocles when asked by a student, 'did God create the Good or did the Good create God?'

Chris, a firm Anglican, replied quietly, 'God created Good, God created everything', a fine way to end further discussion.



A Film for Lent and the Patron Saint of Brewers!

The CHOSEN



Lent Course - The Chosen

At the instigation of Revd Austin, this year, in Lent, we have been looking at an interesting series of films called 'The Chosen'. This crowd funded media project, which claims to be the biggest ever of its kind, consists of a series of films about those connected with Jesus and Jesus himself.

They say, 'For the first time ever, the greatest story ever told is being presented as a multi-season show. Digging deeper into the backstories and context of the people and events of the gospels.'

I must say that for me, these films made a very slow start. Although we had been warned that the first couple of episodes - building the back stories of people like Simon Peter, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene and Matthew would be a little dark and somewhat challenging.

It is the same with most things that we have read and conjured up in our minds when we suddenly see them on the big screen.

It's very hard for us to adjust to a new depiction of something very familiar, but of course that is part of our Lenten journey and the journey of Holy Week and Easter; and how many times have most of us been on this journey over the years peppered as it is with familiarity?

We once again come to the feet washing, the institution of Holy Communion, the stripping of the altar, the betrayal of Jesus and the watch until midnight. Jesus on the cross, his death and three days later the power of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday morning.

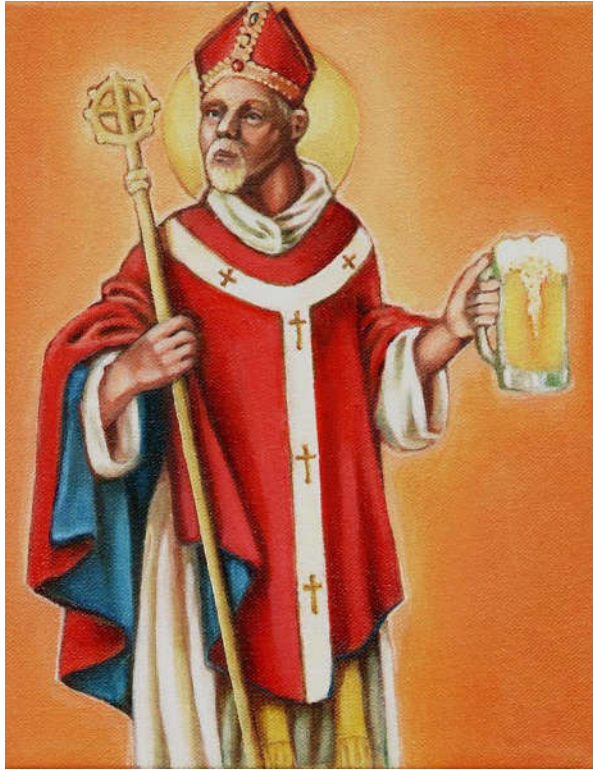
It is so important that these events of the Paschal Triduum are familiar, and yet new, each year. That we feel supported with the things that are known to us, and yet challenged to look at them in a new way and make progress ourselves.

In 'The Chosen' we are encouraged to do just that and although I'm always worried about back stories that are the fruit of someone's (however inspired) imagination rather than scriptural reality, nevertheless this film does provoke us to think familiar things through in a new way.

The quality of our AV offering at both churches now means that we can view films like this and encourage debate on important topics. I can see us using film on these screens to great effect in the coming years and so if you didn't get to see 'The Chosen' this Lent don't think you have escaped it for ever!



St Arnold of Soissons, helping to slake our thirst!



My research into St Arnold (or Arnulf) of Soissons who was born around 1040 in Flanders (and is totally to be confused with St Arnold of Metz d645) owes a debt of gratitude not only to Wikipedia but also to Catholic Online.

As abbot in Oudenburg, Arnold was a brewer, as many monks were back then as beer – in northern grain-centric Europe – was as essential in medieval life as water. He encouraged local people to drink beer, instead of water, due to its "gift of health". There was no magic to this as we now know that in the brewing process when the water is boiled it

becomes safe to drink. Back then they normally consumed beer at breakfast, during the day at in the evening. This wasn't what we know now as beer (between 3-10% abv and laced with hops) but a lower alcohol 'small' beer.

It is likely that people in the local area normally consumed small beer from the monastery, or made their own at the instructions of Arnold and his fellow monks. During one outbreak of the plague, Arnold advised the local people to avoid consuming water, in favour of beer, this advice effectively saved lives and made him a hero to the people and a patron to brewers everywhere. He died in the year 1087 and in iconography he is depicted with the brewer's mash rake used to turn the germinating grain and empty the spent grain from the brew kettle.

Why are we interceding to St Arnold at the moment? Well we are asking his protection and prayers for the St Mary's/ Campaign for Real Ale – Old Town Beer Festival which takes place from Friday 21st until Sunday 23rd July 2023. We are working with CAMRA to bring beer serving back into the nave of St Mary's in line with the medieval small beer that we served there up until 1500 when drinking moved to The Lamb Pub in the High Street.

We will be serving about £5,000 worth of beer and cider from local and regional brewers and hope you can come along and try some in the specially commissioned glass, shown here, and designed by Jeff Wallis. Bishop Jane of Hertford will lead the Sunday service – in the midst of the casks – and then open the Sunday session. I do hope to see you there.

Bless, O Lord, this creature beer, that Thou hast been pleased to bring forth from the sweetness of the grain: that it might be a salutary remedy for the human race: and grant by the invocation of Thy holy name, that, whosoever drinks of it may obtain health of body and a sure safeguard for the soul. Amen

Canon John



GOD IN THE SCIENCES

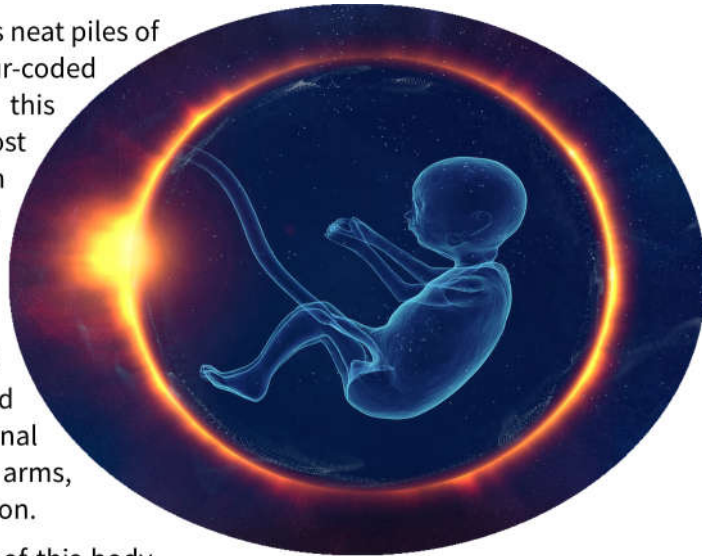
Every person who ever lived was once a sperm and an egg. Those two cells fused together, and in nine months they turned into a living, breathing, human being. Each of us emerged from this same embryonic development process, which is highly complex and organised, but variable enough to turn out a unique individual every time.

If you like order – such as neat piles of stationery, or tidy colour-coded files – you will enjoy this story. One of the most important stages of an embryo's development is when each section of the body, from head to rump, takes on its identity. Each part is told what shape to take, and which limbs or internal organs to grow: legs or arms, lungs or kidneys, and so on.

The most beautiful part of this body-patterning process is that it brings the dimensions of time and space together in such a neat way. The DNA instructions for the procedure, known as genes, are organised in the order in which they are needed during development which is also the order in which they appear on the body.

No other sets of genes are known to be arranged in such a tidy pattern.

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.



So, as the embryo develops, the tissues near the head end activate the first sets of genes. Those active genes then make all the proteins needed for that part of the body to grow and develop in the right way. The tissues just below the head then switch on the second set of genes, and so on.

A wave of activation passes down the embryo, specifying each section of the trunk in turn.

The Wisconsin-based developmental biologist Jeff Hardin often quotes Psalm 139 to express the wonder of embryonic development. The Psalmist did not understand how this process happened, but he knew that it was a marvellous thing. “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb...your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.”

The story of the tidy genes brings out the hidden beauty in the very early stages of embryonic development. The more biologists get to find out about how we came to be born, the more we can say, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made”!

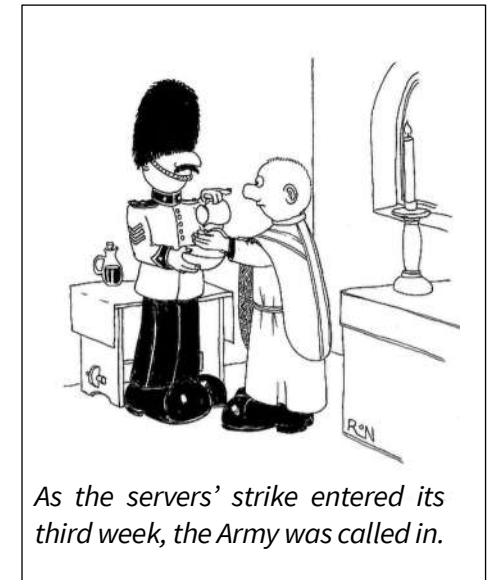


SEA OF GALILEE

A vicar planning an Easter pilgrimage to the Holy Land was shaken when he found it would cost him £50 an hour to rent a boat on the Sea of Galilee.

He protested to the travel agent that the cost was ridiculous. “That might be true,” replied the travel agent, “but you have to take into account that the Sea of Galilee is water on which our Lord Himself walked.”

“Well,” said the vicar, “at £50 an hour for a boat, I am not surprised!”



As the servers' strike entered its third week, the Army was called in.

FROM THE VISITORS BOOK

Next time you go into St Mary's, do look at what visitors have written in the Visitors Book. People really show their appreciation and it makes interesting reading so why not enjoy it too. It often helps us to appreciate what we have and take for granted when others praise it .

Here are some examples of recent entries :-

Thank you for staying open. This church brings such solace and peace. An oasis in this troubled world.

I'm amazed with your openness and modern approach. I wish the Polish Catholic Church was the same.

Dropping in to light a candle in memory of my late son.

Thank you God for such a lovely place to come & have a quiet time with the Spirit.

I've been coming to Hemel all my life but this is the first time I enter this church.

Lovely to have choral music playing when visiting - really atmospheric.

This church is amazing!

A thankful tranquil place to visit and rest one's mind.

Thank you for being open, offering somewhere to sit and pray.

Beautiful church, full of history and reflection.

...and of course a lot more.



EDITOR'S INTERVIEW

Norma Podmore

Norma was born in Durban in October 1953, the daughter of her English parents and the sister of Robin, her 5 years older brother. Her father, a mine disposal expert severely injured in London while defusing a mine, had been sent to South Africa to help his recuperation. He and his wife Gay emigrated there in 1946, Durban becoming their family home.

Those early years for Norma and the family were tough. Part of the privileged white minority, yet the family of five shared a one bedroomed flat for several years. Her Dad's health was 'shot to pieces' by the War. Her brother, a tick bite having caused a form of meningitis, spent 7 years wearing calipers and either in a wheel chair or on crutches. He endured a number of operations, which ultimately were successful.

Two of Norma's memories of those early days stood out for me. Bound to his chair, Robin taught Norma how to read fluently by the time she was four. Later, when he was 12, she remembers the joy when he stood up from his chair and threw his calipers, high and glinting in the sun, far into the sea. He, like his Dad, was fighting his way determinedly through in difficult times and within a resilient, caring and loving family.



Against this background Norma was a girl who might be going places, her abilities and knowledge developing through kindergarten and two all-girls schools. Aged 17 she matriculated from Durban High School and going to the University of Natal in Durban she gained a first-class honours degree in English and Drama. This was followed, at the age of 21, by a job as stage manager for a touring drama company in South Africa. She hated this job and joined the marketing department of Unilever where she was for 18 months.

At university Norma had met Mervyn, the man she was to marry in St Mary's Hemel Hempstead in 1979.

Their friendship developed to the extent that they decided to leave South Africa together in 1976, to study for Masters degrees and to leave behind the apartheid system which they found to be abhorrent. Norma attended the University of Leeds and Mervyn the University of Essex, but once they got their degrees it was a hard struggle to find jobs that would allow them to stay in the UK during the winter of discontent.

Mervyn started working as a clerk in the South African embassy and eventually in 1978 Norma joined around 150 applicants for a post in English and Drama at Longdean School in Hemel Hempstead. Valentine Wrigley, a wonderful headmaster to my knowledge, was incisive in reducing the number, by getting his secretary to sift through and delete all without a degree, and then all without an Honours degree.

Norma sailed through, was given a probationary post of two years, this being followed by a further nine years as Head of Drama and then Head of Year. Mr Wrigley is the one who had spotted her and given her the great break in her life.

In 1989 she transferred to Hemel Hempstead School staying there for 25 years first as Head of English and later as Assistant Head Teacher.



Graduation day at the University of Natal in Durban, Norma gained a first-class honours degree in English and Drama

There had been hard early days for them in our country, Norma remembering living on pasteurised milk and offcuts of cheese, and potato and onion pie. She remembers a highlight anniversary at the end of 1978 when with 9 pence for the bus fare they visited the National Gallery and then walked back home. However, by the time Hugh their first son was born in 1985 things had moved on, now they had a roof over their heads in Rowcroft, where they still live, and Toby was born in 1990.



Norma, Mervyn, with their sons Hugh and Toby at their 25th wedding anniversary party. Photo: Brian Doran

Norma, from a faithful Christian family, had been brought up in the Congregational Church, with family prayers each evening and school religious assemblies playing their part. She drifted away from belief in her late teens, questioning the existence of any supernatural deity at University. However, her marriage to Mervyn in St Mary's in 1979 showed they both still acknowledged the existence of the spiritual element of love and later she found her faith through the miracle of birth and the love she felt for her children.

The Revd Ian Cooper was a force in her life; remembering his phrase, 'No need to leave your brain at the church door', she welcomed his encouragement of questioning, education and exploration, and became comfortable with all forms of worship, be it high, low, Taizé or whatever. She sees Jesus to be the embodiment of God's love. She sees the human to be different from the animal, capable of self-sacrificing love, creative and with the ability to know what is good and what is evil.

Love of people, of family and of friends going all the way back to her childhood, love of teaching and of books and the arts, all such love permeates the being of Norma. Inevitably the concomitant of love is grief, of which she has had her fair share over the years through bereavement and illness in the family, including her own serious operation for cancer in 2008.

Fifteen years on from that she has a continuing routine of daily exercise and weekly she reads three books (it used to be eight!) Crime novels, historical novels and biographies are clues to her literary fancies.

Norma is a doer and a stayer as shown by her 36 years in teaching, her 43 years at St Mary's, active in so many ways, including Church Warden until recently and now chair of the Friends of St Mary's.

If anybody wants something doing, Norma will be there and we are very thankful for her life and for all that she is and does.

Gordon Gaddes

Highfield Community Fridge - An Update

In the last issue of SToMP, under the heading Social Capital, I drew attention to the magnificent work of the Community Fridge based at Highfield's Bellgate Community Centre. Visiting again recently I was given some statistics, month by month with an annual accumulation, which exemplified this work and its development over two years. The table below gives the facts for each year and also for the busiest month in each year.

YEAR	No. of bags supplied	No. of people served	New families supported
2021 whole	4,045	6,924	607
2021 March	463	1,325	190
2022 whole	5,641	16,465	450
2022 November	650	1,879	81

You will note the significant increase in the needs serviced by the Community Fridge from 2021 to 2022, a 138% increase in the number of families served and a 39% increase in the number of bags handed out. The number of new families serviced each year further confirms the problem of the growing number of people in our town needing help, as do particularly the figures for November last year.

Gordon

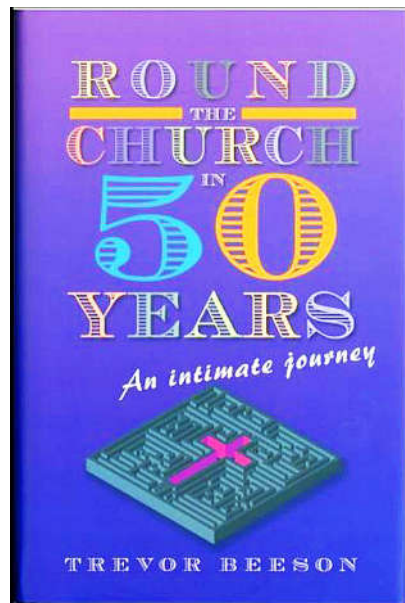


BOOK REVIEW

'Round the Church in 50 years - an intimate journey' is an account by Trevor Beeson of various changes which took place in the Church of England during the second half of the twentieth century. The book was published in 2007 and has a chapter on each decade: The Confident Fifties, The Rebellious Sixties, the Reactionary Seventies, the Confrontational Eighties and the Dispiriting Nineties. Each chapter has fifty or so sections about a page long which take the narrative forward in a mix of 'history, theology, biography, quirkiness and sheer fun' (to quote the book jacket).

The author was ordained in 1952 in Durham cathedral and served variously in a coal mining parish in the North East of England, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Ware in Hertfordshire, Westminster Abbey, Winchester Cathedral and, in retirement, in a group of small rural parishes in Hampshire.

In reading the book one is reminded how far the Church of England has come in 50 years and yet, tantalisingly many good ideas and reforms - some discussed in detail - remain unfulfilled or abandoned.



In the early 1950s the local vicar often lived in a large vicarage which he had to maintain from his stipend of around £400 a year (plus the Easter offertory); his afternoons were spent visiting parishioners in their homes.

The Sunday morning service was invariably Mattins, taken from the BCP. The ASB was published in 1980 and intended for use for the following ten years but eventually lasted for twenty years. 'Common Worship', published in 2000, was intended to be used as a single book but as this would have run to about 1300 pages was deemed too bulky and was abandoned in favour of the 'library of books' in use today, with booklets printed for use for particular services.

One thing I found especially interesting was reference to people whose names were, in the day, well-known, but have since slipped from memory; also the different initiatives that were set up over the decades, such as 'Faith in the City' (I would have found an index helpful here.)

The journey towards the ordination of women is well chronicled and mention is made of the inevitable shortage of priests with the excess of retirements over new ordinations.

This book is of particular interest to those who have lived through these times but would make a fascinating read for someone who likes history in anecdotal form.

Catherine Lindsay

Publisher: SCM Press; First Edition (30 Nov. 2007)

ISBN-10:0334041481

Available online from a variety of sellers.



He moved here after the PCC voted to lower the heating bill. He says it's warmer out here

PREPARING FOR SUMMER

March is a month for pruning! This is when the worst of the weather has hopefully passed and it is safe to expose those cut stems to the elements. The reason for pruning now is to invigorate growth and encourage flowering. Top of the list is Buddleja, prune back all last year's growth to within two buds of a main stem. Likewise Cornus and Salix should be pruned the same as they are grown for their beautiful coloured stems. The strong growth required is only achieved by hard pruning.

Hardy Fuchsias are another plant to be pruned now, again to achieve strong growth.

Looking forward to a colourful summer the choice of plant material at the Garden Centres is amazing now. Hanging baskets can be planted up now, choose a good material like coconut fibre to line the basket and fill with a good fibrous compost which is not too dense. My suggestions for plants to try are Diascia's which come in a range of colours, pink through to orange. Bidens, red with a yellow centre, this was in flower in my garden until early November last year.



Calibrachoa (reclassified from Petunia), a small flowered Petunia that also comes in a range of colours and produces masses of flowers. All of these should be available in plugs from garden centres or online.

The corms I grow each summer which are great value for money are Gladioli. I grow them in tubs. Put a good layer of crocks - broken pots, or small stones at the base of the tub, back fill with compost by one third then add a 1 inch layer of sharp sand or fine gravel. Further back fill by 3 - 4 inches and place your Gladioli on top of this layer making sure they are not touching. Finally back fill to within 1 inch of the top. Firm the compost as you fill so that good contact is made between the corms and compost.

When buying Gladioli I would recommend buying them loose so you can be selective on choosing them, you want firm ones.

Lilies are another good buy, again grown in tubs using the same process as Gladioli.

Some little suggestions that will make your garden full of colour this summer.

NEW AUDIO VISUAL INSTALLATION AT ST MARY'S



Photo: Canon John

The new Audio Visual system at St Mary's is now 'up and running' and has joined St Paul's providing a live internet streaming facility for those unable to attend the Sunday morning services. Already it has been used for weddings and a funeral and the projector and screen were used to watch a film as part of this year's Lent Course, providing excellent, almost cinema quality and will be used again for the Monday and Wednesday Holy Week services.


Now we need some more people to volunteer to learn to operate the system. Speak to Canon John, Brian Crawley or Jeff Wallis if you might be interested.

The photo shows the spectacular scaffolding tower erected to gain access to the roof beam where the projector is mounted. And if the projector lamp blows? Unlikely, the stable solid-state laser light source is capable of producing over 20,000 hours of use, long enough to outlast the rest of the projector.

I started this report last time by commenting on the amount of changes that we were experiencing, and the surprises and both good and bad news keep coming. This makes me realise that trying to predict the future is a mugs game. But of course not budgeting or planning can have its own pitfalls.

I wrote in the Autumn SToMP that we looked like facing an additional cost of around £3,600 for our electricity in 2023. This is still probably correct, but in late 2022 the Diocese very generously gave us a grant of around £2,600 to help offset this. The bad news is that the grant was paid to us in 2022 so appears in the 2022 Accounts. The costs of course will mostly be in our 2023 Accounts. The result is that last year's Accounts look better than they were, and this year's Accounts will look worse than they should, but our Bank balance is just grateful.

I also mentioned that the money that we have invested in the Church of England Investment Fund, and which produces around £750 - 3% - interest every year, was losing ground in the year. At the end of 2022, the Fund was worth around £3,400 less than it was at the beginning of 2022. In fact it had returned to about the same value as it held at the beginning of 2021. The



MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Feb 23

good news is that this slide seems to have been reversed and the Fund is again increasing in value, something I hope will continue.

In broad brush terms - and ignoring the movement in value of our Investment Fund - the 2022 Accounts show that there was a shortfall of around £1,700 over the year which was offset by the £2,600 grant mentioned above, so a somewhat anomalous surplus of around £850.

Apart from Brian Doran's fantastic effort raising over £3,000 by putting on Art in the Nave, the star performer was the giving through the Church Boxes and Card reader machine in St Mary's.

This raised £2,500 more than we had expected, and more than offset the lower than expected loose collection plate amount.

Utility bills for gas, electricity and water were about £900 more than the Budget and general maintenance costs for the 3 buildings was £1,500 more than budget.

So, despite my opening paragraph, the ups and downs of our actual income and expenditure compared to our Budget were within reason and largely cancelled each other out, which is comforting.

The Budget for 2023 originally showed a shortfall of around £7,700 of which £3,600 is caused by the electricity price increase. Late in 2022 agreement was reached with the Catholic Ordinariate for them to use St Paul's.

This is good news both Ecumenically and Financially and reduces the projected Budget deficit to £4,700. The Diocesan Grant of £2,600 will help further but was taken in last year's Accounts so it won't appear to do so! That is one of the mysteries of Accounting systems!

2024 is likely to see a significant increase in our gas heating costs at St Mary's - something we have been shielded from so far - so, as for all of us, the future cost of energy has to be an going concern.

Apart from that, my overall message is that things are generally OK, but your generosity of time and money and prayer continue to be needed. Thank you for all you do and give and, if you can, please keep increasing this each year.

Robin Woodd

SIGNS FOUND OUTSIDE CHURCHES...

- * Free Trip to heaven. Details Inside.
- * Searching for a new look? Have your faith lifted here!
- * Come and work for the Lord. The work is hard, the hours are long and the pay is low. But the retirement benefits are out of this world.

FIVE EXERCISES TO AVOID THIS SPRING

- Jumping on the bandwagon
- Wading through paperwork
- Running around in circles
- Pushing your luck
- Adding fuel to the fire

NEWS FROM ST PAUL'S

Ordinariate sharing agreement

This commenced with the first Ordinariate service in St Paul's at 9.15am on 27 November.

Between services on Sunday 12 December, Canon John officially welcomed Monsignor Keith and the Ordinariate to St Paul's and the two congregations shared some fizz together. The joint 'Nine Lessons and Carols Service' at 3pm on 18 December followed by mulled wine and mince pies was a great success and we hope that it will be repeated next Christmas.

Our Patronal Service 29 January

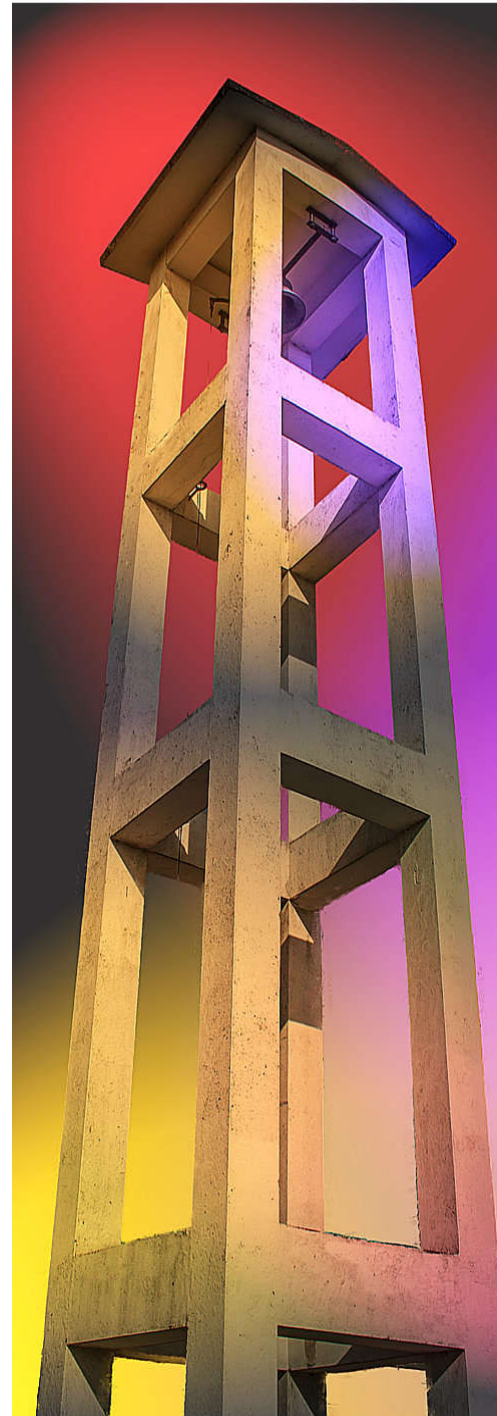
Attendance included people from St Paul's, St Mary's, the Hemel Team and the Ordinariate, whose Jannette gave to St Paul's organ, a treat.

Bookings

Hirings of St Paul's premises by external groups are much in demand:

- Forget Me Not Memory Boxes, and their Soft Play Café, are aiming at having 2/4 sessions in term time, on Mondays (morning and late afternoon) and on Fridays.
- Slimming World commands the space throughout Wednesday.

- U3A usage continues to increase, Genealogy and Lace making (Parish Room), and U3A Trains (Hall).
- The new hirer who joined us in September, Crystal Singing Bowl Sound healing, is well pleased and is considering increasing its use.
- Hemel Campaign continues once monthly in the Parish Room.
- The Family Needs Fathers group, meeting once monthly, and is receiving financial support to enable payment of its room rate.
- A new counselling group (CA) has settled in well, meeting weekly on Wednesday evenings.
- An AA group has returned to us, meeting at lunchtime on Mondays and Tuesdays.
- Finally, Saturday 27 February saw the first meeting of a fortnightly group in the Parish Room, 'The Writers' Group', around 10 people.



Highfield Community Centre

Malcolm Taylor continues to take to the Community Centre a miscellany of goods donated by the congregation to support the Hemel Hempstead Fridge based at the Centre.

Our Warm Hubs group project at the Bellgate Community Centre did not get off the ground, the evaporation of early enthusiasm there compounded by my own shortage of time to organise.



St Paul's has started the 25th year of its Nicaragua Collection.

A cheque for £280 has been sent off to Christian Aid following our donations in 2022.

Looking back we have raised £13,700 and the range over the 24 years has been from £236 (2020) to £847 (2010). For statisticians the mean has been £521 and the median £558!

Our best year was when Wynne was collecting from old folks in Queensway House. Now we are recovering after the pandemic.

Let's celebrate this quarter of a century of endeavour by beating last year's £280.'

Gordon Gaddes

GOD IN THE ARTS

The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a look at 'Christ in the Wilderness – Scorpions' by Stanley Spencer. It now hangs in a private collection.



Copyright details: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/christ-in-the-wilderness-the-scorpion>

Each year, just before Easter we observe the season of Lent: those 40 days when we follow Jesus into the wilderness and prepare ourselves to celebrate His Easter victory

In the last century an artist called Stanley Spencer planned to create a series of 40 paintings, each depicting a day in the wilderness. In the end he completed nine, one of which from 1939, is this month's painting: 'Christ in the Wilderness – Scorpions.' It is held in a private collection.

Stanley Spencer lived and worked in the village of Cookham in Berkshire. The village and the local countryside were the setting for many of his paintings, and the village's inhabitants his models. Through their everyday life he was trying to glimpse and convey the transcendent. 'Angels and dirt' he called it: the divine seen in the ordinary. So, in a painting of Christ carrying His cross, Jesus has the face of the local grocer.

Another villager modelled for this Jesus in the wilderness: a strong, hefty, broad figure. This is a great contrast to the Christ of stained-glass windows who often seems too good to be part of our world. Here is real life: a large man filling the canvas with His head, His hands and His feet. This figure of Jesus comes as a shock:

a very human model, ordinary with nothing handsome or special about Him, apart from His tunic which seems to sprawl and undulate like the hills around. Here is a Jesus born into this world and one with this world.

There are two focal points in the painting – the neat, little scorpion and the massive, unkempt head contemplating each other. One is life in all its hefty reality; the other a tiny creature able to squeeze that life out by one swift flick of its tail.

Jesus is shown in the wilderness pondering the life and ministry called of Him by God – a life and ministry that will take Him from the countryside into the towns and villages and take Him also to the death on Good Friday. Will He find the strength and renewal to embrace that ministry during His time in the desert?

During Lent as we follow Jesus, we seek to live for God. That may mean dying to all that separates us from God. He has a ministry, a calling for each of us.

As we contemplate that calling in this season of Lent, we may find it is a calling that leads us through these 40 days to life and Easter life – we may find it a journey that calls us to die to self to find our God.

LTPT TRUSTEES VISIT LANGA TOWNSHIP

16 -20 January 2023

16th January

Following their morning meeting with representatives of the Newlands Rotary Club, Gordon and Rosina Gaddes were greeted by representatives of Nomonde Pre-School and the other five pre-schools in Langa's Ward 52, which look after 500 children. Nomonde is the model pre-school following significant LTPT support, and the other five pre-schools also benefit from our monthly supply of food. The head of each pre-school gave a short welcome and there was dancing and singing and presentations. The photo captures this very happy occasion

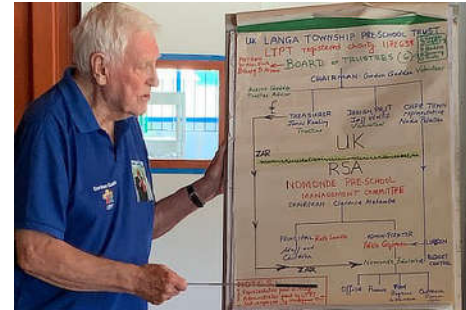


Later in the afternoon they met representatives of the Langa Early Child Development Forum in the Langa Public Library. The Forum has a membership of 38 pre-schools and creches covering 5,000 children. LTPT plans, with others, to provide the homeless Forum with a permanent base to work from. Once again they were welcomed with speeches, singing and dancing and each was given an item of tribal costume.



17th January

LTPT greeted 18 community educational representatives at the Restaurant of the Eziko Catering Training College. A presentation by Gordon was followed by extensive discussion and questioning, which carried on over lunch. The aim was to explain the aims, the work and organisation and future plans of LTPT. Several attendees took photos of the two organograms, one of which showed details of the LTPT organisation in the UK and the Republic of South Africa and the other the five phases of LTPT support from 2011 to 2023 with the sixth phase projected to 2026.



There was animated discussion over a delicious lunch cooked by the students. The event concluded with a warm and courteous thank you from Clarence Mahamba, the well-known and respected founder of the pre-school movement in Langa 30 years ago.



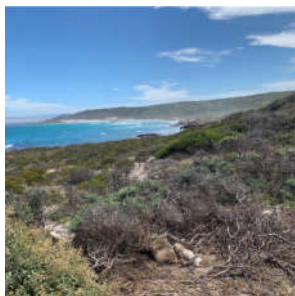
Gordon chatting with Clarence Mahamba



Rosina in earnest conversation with Lucy of Illitha Pre-School

18th January

Trustees took a day off to tour the Peninsula and after Simons Town ended up at Cape Point.



19th January

This day was devoted to Langa Pre-School – a detailed discussion followed by a maintenance audit, very important as the last LTPT visit had been four years earlier, long delayed because of COVID. Gordon easily survived an accident, three child’s bikes falling on his head from a high unstable shelf when he opened one of the toilet doors!

20 January

This day was devoted to visiting the five other pre-schools in Ward 52, and then to a final briefing with Nomonde and the Langa ECD Forum.



Books and visual aids in Xhosa and English at Eluxoweni

Important changes not funded by LTPT: Evidence of local commitment and support to improve pre-schools



New classroom at Nomonde Pre-School



Eluxoweni Pre-School, good decoration but needs flood protection



Illitha Pre-School external improvement



Lathitha Pre-School new fencing



Improved play area at Little Angels



New Office at Illitha Pre-School



Happy scene at Illitha Pre-School



Line up of the loos at Illitha Pre-School



The book area at Eluxoweni Pre-School

Times	Activities
07:00-08:00	Arrival / Screening
08:00-08:45	Morning ring & Topic
08:45-09:30	Breakfast -
09:30-09:45	Toilet routine
09:45-10:30	Educational Time
10:30-11:00	Snack Time
11:00-11:20	Free Play
11:20-11:45	Toilet routine
11:45-12:30	Lunch Break
12:30-13:00	Free Indoor Choice Play
13:00-14:30	Nap / Rest Time
14:30-14:45	Tidy Up Time
14:45-15:10	Toilet routine
15:10-15:30	Music/dance Session
15:30-15:45	Toddlers Exercise Session
15:45-16:00	Rap Up Time
16:00-16:20	Educational Games
16:20-16:45	Feedback Time
16:45-17:00	Departure

Typical programme for a ten-hour daily routine for Langa children and staff



A visit from the local mobile library at Nomonde Pre-School

The Empowerment of Women

British Council: 'Empowering women and girls and achieving gender equality are crucial to creating inclusive, open and prosperous societies'.

Our work in Langa and particularly our recent visit has brought home the role of the Langa Pre-School movement in the drive to empower women. Better and more continuously fed young children aged 2 to 6 learn in a caring and secure environment, girls and boys being treated equally. The system is run mainly by women, in continuous training or fully trained, who gain much respect and gratitude for their work. The work supports single mums, mums who need to work and train and girls and boys looking after parentless families. This form of social enterprise is largely driven and served by women who are determined to provide a proper and sustainable learning situation for both girls and boys.



End of the last day - Gordon in the office at Nomonde Pre-School - 'Knackered'

LOVE IS ...

A group of 4-to-8-year-olds was once asked: 'What does love mean?' The answers they gave were surprising for their depth of insight....

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love." Rebecca - aged 8

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth." Billy - aged 4

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other." Karl - aged 5

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your chips, without making them give you any of theirs." Chrissy - aged 6

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired." Terri - age 4

"Love is when mum makes coffee for my dad and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK." Danny - age 7

"Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My Mum and Dad are like that. They look gross when they kiss." Emily - aged 8

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate." Nikka - age 6 (We need a few million more Nikka's on this planet)

"My mummy loves me more than anybody. You don't see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night." Clare, aged 6

"Love is when mummy gives daddy the best piece of chicken." - Elaine - aged 5

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