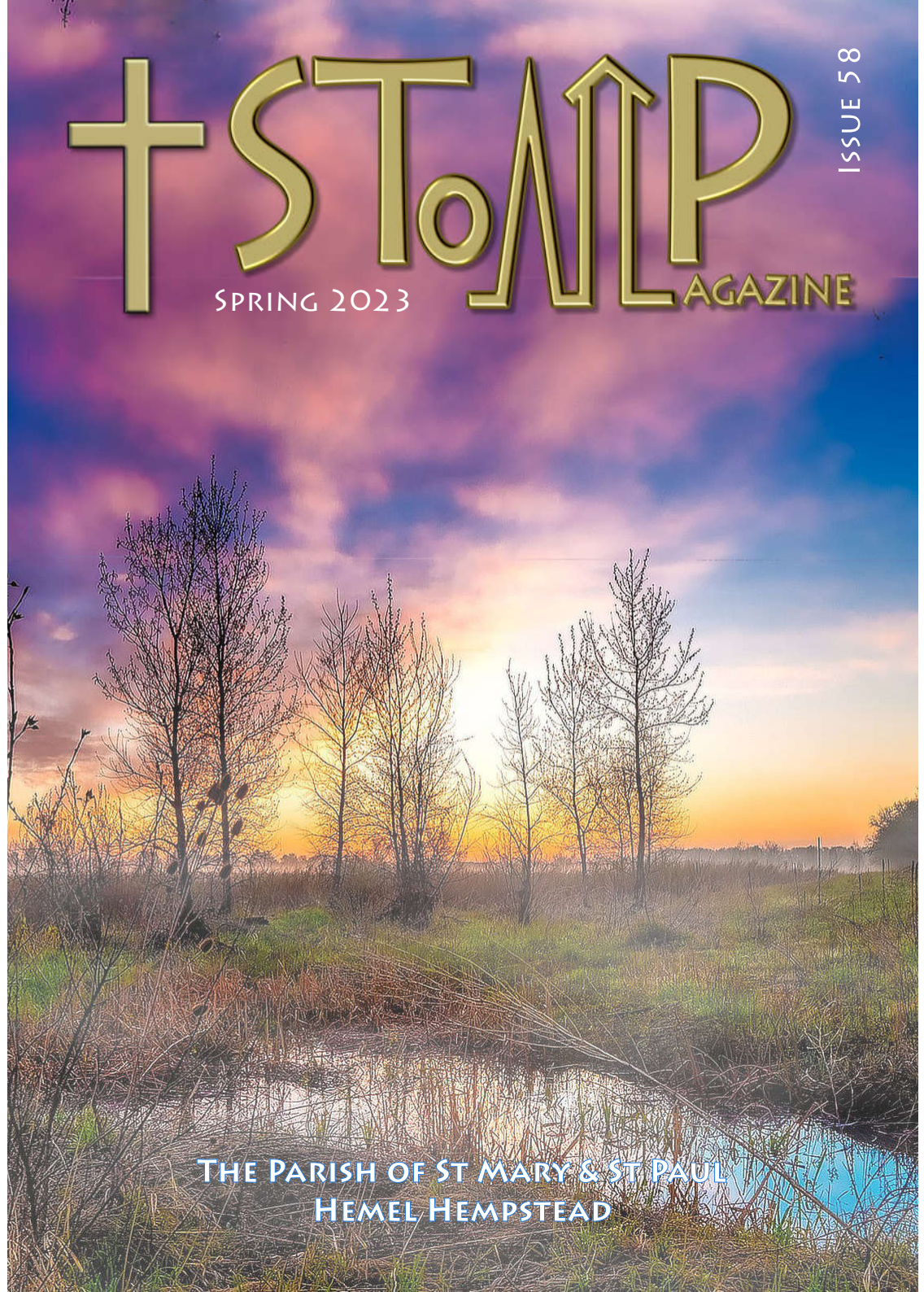


# + STAMP

MAGAZINE

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SPRING 2023



THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL  
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

CONTENTS

|                      |    |                                           |    |
|----------------------|----|-------------------------------------------|----|
| From the Editor      | 3  | Letters and Comments                      | 15 |
| The Coronation       | 4  | Nigeria, the slaughter of Christians      | 15 |
| St Paul's Rose Bed   | 7  | News of the Pews                          | 16 |
| Art in the Nave 2023 | 8  | From 'Nicker' to Vicar                    | 22 |
| God and the Arts     | 10 | Solway Refreshments                       | 25 |
| Highfield Fridge     | 12 | The Bishop's Garden                       | 26 |
| St Barnabas          | 13 | Spot The Difference                       | 27 |
| St James the Least   | 14 | Pentecost - A Joyous Service at St Mary's | 28 |

*Cover Picture - Early Morning Sky - Pixabay picture Library*

**The Wonder of Creation**

The rising sun that streaks the sky with colour,  
Each day we see more marvels that unfold,  
Nature has a palette like no other  
Creation is a wonder to behold.

And can it be this happened all by chance,  
Or did some cosmic force become involved?  
A Power operating out of time  
That has a greater story to be told.

Our Universe defies all understanding,  
Its vastness reaching endlessly in space,  
Eternity – we find it hard to fathom  
Or of One perhaps who set it all in place.

A Deity beyond the realms of time?  
We do our best to try and understand  
Of a mighty hand that flung the stars to flight  
Could be the hand still beckoning to man.

*Megan Carter*

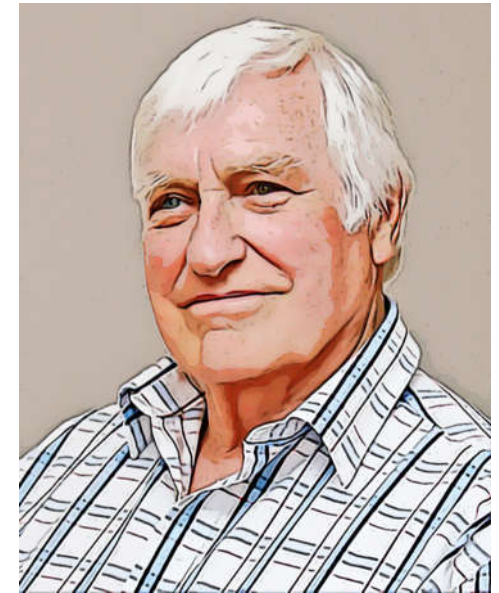
## FROM THE EDITOR

### LOVE IS...

Readers have been delighted to read the heart-warming and amusing answers of 4 to 8-year olds to the question, 'What does love mean?' (SToMP Winter 2023, page 32). My favourite is from a four-year old, 'When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth.'

Jean Mpati from Cape Town expresses her appreciation on page 15. Thank you very much Jeff for searching out 'Love Is ...' for SToMP Winter 2023.

It leads me to reflect on love and grief. An Oxford Dictionary definition of love is, an 'intense feeling of great affection'. It could be said that those who really know love will have experienced and are likely to experience grief, a feeling of 'intense sorrow'. Grief is a direct corollary of love, perhaps an uncomfortable thought if you love, but yet have never grieved. Jean Anouilh (1949) in his novel, *Ardele*, writes, 'You know very well that love is, above all the gift of oneself'.



What a very special thought this is. If you love someone who passes away, or who is very ill, or is otherwise deep trouble you will grieve. And in bereavement that grief is for ever, as Swinburn (1865) puts it in *Atlanta in Calyden*, 'And time remembered is grief forgotten'. Yet though you have lost the person you have given love to, the memory and the love will always be there.

*Gordon G*



# THE CORONATION



I'm sure if you watched the coronation on television, the symbolism of the service won't have been lost on you, even if commentators on the BBC coverage that I was watching seemed somewhat confused themselves that the ceremony was so religious.

Many people seem to have forgotten the ancient Christian and indeed pre-Christian Jewish rights that have been part of the service for over 1000 years.

So here's my quick guide to the regalia and symbolism.

## The Cross of Wales.

The Cross of Wales is made of Welsh slate, wood, and silver and on it are inscribed the Welsh words of St. David, patron of Wales: "Be joyful. Keep the faith. Do the little things." At the centre, arranged into a tiny cross are the precious shards of the wood of the cross on which Christ died. It might seem amazing to us that this new cross that preceded the processions into Westminster Abbey contained relics presented to the King by Pope Francis only

the month before the ceremony. These were two fragments of the true cross, which were set into the newly made cross ready for it to head up the whole ceremony. It is, of course, a very ancient tradition to embed relics into sacred objects, notably altars, and whilst this might be confusing for many Anglicans and Post Conciliar Roman Catholics it would have been seen as a very profound and generous gift by the Pope.

## The Crown

The crown for the coronation was the modern, 1661, version which replaced St Edward the Confessor's crown, which was melted down during the years of the Commonwealth. The crown has an orb and cross on the top of it and these, of course, are symbolic of the supremacy of Christ over the whole world.

## Swords

The king was given several swords during the ceremony, notably The Sword of Spiritual Justice as the monarch is Defender of the Faith.

This title was given by the Pope to Henry the Eighth, just prior to the Reformation, and was much cherished by him. Many years ago the then Prince Charles declared an interest in being the defender of faith in a rather naïve nod at multiculturalism which ignored the legal and spiritual role of the monarch in England. This did however play out well at the service where many other denominations and faiths were thoughtfully integrated into the ceremony for the first time.

## Orbes

The ball with cross representing the whole world - a temporal sphere surmounted by the cross - shows Christ as ruler of all and the King as his servant, and is presented along with the sceptre to the new monarch as part of the much misunderstood symbolism of the divine right of kings.

## Ring

A sapphire with a ruby cross set in diamonds is presented to the King. The King's covenant with the people is similar to that of holy matrimony and in likewise symbolism the monarch receives the ring in token of the covenant that he makes.

## Armillars

These are the golden bracelets, tokens of God's protection and relating to ancient symbols of chivalry and knighthood.

## Ampulla

The vessel holding the oil for the anointing was that of King Charles the Second from 1661 and was based on the 14th century golden eagle shaped vessel presented, according to tradition, to St Thomas a Becket by the Blessed Virgin Mary herself, for anointing all future kings of England.

## Sceptres

The first sceptre is topped with the cross, symbolising good Christian government, and the second is topped with the dove of the Holy Spirit, symbolising the king's spiritual role.

## The Anointing with Chrism

Chrism, the oil of Joy, is used after baptism, at confirmation and to bless and consecrate Bishops, icons and new church buildings. This allows the King to contemplate his call by God as anointing is an ancient tradition setting apart those for service; in this case the king in the service of his people and of God.



12th century Bible d'Étienne Harding, detail (anointing of Solomon)

This takes the ceremony back 3,000 years to ancient Israel and the time of the prophets and King David. The oil was consecrated by the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem. The King is anointed on the head, hands and breast with this oil. Oils for anointing are blessed by Bishops in their cathedrals at the Easter Chrism Service, oils that then go out to all the parishes of the diocese.



## Robes

It was noticeable that the King was vested in priestly robes, including the supertunica, reminiscent of the stole and cope. The King is consecrated like a priest in the service of God. It reminds us very much of the spiritual calling, setting the King, like the priest aside to serve God and people.

## Oath

The King upheld the Protestant faith by taking the oath to defend **THE** faith, despite the ceremony being steeped in Jewish, Orthodox and Roman Catholic symbolism.

## Westminster Abbey

The Abbey itself was, of course, founded by St Edward the Confessor and his shrine is there, and so the ceremony, taking part within such a sacred and historic building was also important to the symbolism of the ceremony.

Once again the Church of England put on a wonderful show of liturgy and pageantry and we even saw our own Bishop Michael, late of Hertford, play a leading role.

## Canon John

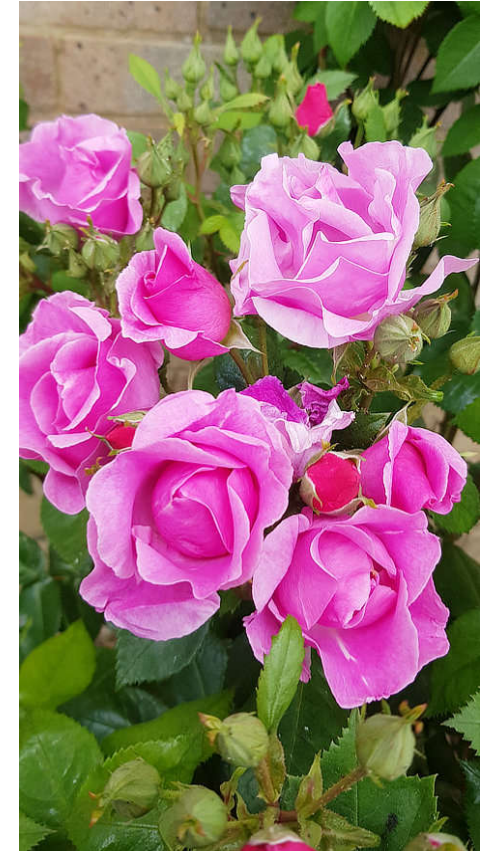
*From a sermon preached the day after the Coronation.*



*Cross of Wales, showing fragments of the 'True Cross'.*

# ST PAUL'S 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ROSEBED

In its early Summer glory, the St Paul's 60th Anniversary Rose Bed, established by Solway neighbours Alan and Jerry, and just weeded by Alan's grandson Liam, thrills us all on 1st June.





# ART IN THE NAVE FESTIVAL 2023



Art in the Nave 26th- 28th August 2023  
A Vibrant Festival of Visual Arts Returns to St Mary's

Art in the Nave 2023 will once again focus a bright spotlight on the visual arts when it opens at St Mary's Saturday 26th August. The three-day festival, from 26h to 28th August (Bank Holiday), now represents a major event in the Hertfordshire arts calendar with an exhibition and sale of high quality art works.

Art lovers attending the exhibition will be able to view and purchase a wide selection of excellent paintings, sculpture, textiles, glass, ceramics, silverware and hand-made jewellery. Art in the Nave offers something for everyone and is a great opportunity for a family outing. Entrance will be £1 (donation) for adults but free for anyone under sixteen. Light refreshments will be available too. Money from the proceeds raised at the event will support The UK Langa Township Pre-School Trust, the mental health charity MIND ( Hertfordshire Network) and will also contribute to St Mary and St Paul Parish funds

We are currently recruiting Artists who will exhibit at Art in the Nave. For further details on any aspect of Art in the Nave 2023 including artist bookings or to find out how you can volunteer to help during the festival please Email:

artinthenave@gmail.com or phone Brian Doran on 07926 027855



## GOD AND THE ARTS

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Michael Burgess continues his look at great works of Christian art with 'Christ at the Sea of Galilee' by Tintoretto. It hangs in the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, and this graphic is in the public domain. You can view it online at: <https://images.nga.gov/>



'He gave us eyes to see them':  
Tintoretto's 'Christ at the Sea of Galilee'

In 1833 Mendelssohn composed two overtures inspired by the sea. 'Fingal's Cave' portrays the gentle roll of the waves and the call of the wind on the waters around Staffa. 'Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage' paints a sea journey when the fog lifts, the sky clears, the safety of land beckons and the boat arrives in the harbour.

This painting shows us a very different picture of the sea. It is 'Christ at the Sea of Galilee' by Tintoretto. He was an Italian painter of the Renaissance period who worked in Venice until his death in 1594.

All his paintings are marked by intensity and drama, whether it is the Last Supper, the Conversion of St Paul, or this canvas. Tintoretto worked so quickly and so single-mindedly that he was nicknamed 'Il Furioso.' And it is the fury of the sea that is captured here. Not the lazy waters of Venice or the calm seas of Mendelssohn's music. Now the sea and the sky above are in torment and revolt, and the world is dominated by the violence of this storm.

The Sea of Galilee is like that. One moment, the sky is clear and windless, the next, a gust can whip up the waters into anger.

In Scripture the sea is always an element to fear. For the psalmist the sea contains creeping things innumerable and even monsters. For John in the book of Revelation, the sea ceases to exist when the new heaven and the new earth appear. The threat of that element is pervasive in this painting. The sail of the boat bends with the raging of the wind, and the vessel is tossed up and down – so near the shore, and yet so far. Above, the clouds frown.

But enfolding the scene are two signs of hope and life. To one side we see a tall tree in leaf and growing. At the other side is the tall figure of Jesus: a sign of safety and hope to the disciples, floundering in the boat. His feet are just vague outlines in the water, but His hand is firm as He beckons to His followers. Peter, brave and headstrong as ever, begins to climb out of the boat with no immediate sense of danger.

This month of June ends with his feast day when we celebrate a saint who was so much like us. Wanting to follow Jesus, but finding himself weak; eager to serve, but unable to back words up with deeds. And yet, through all that, God's grace triumphed in Peter's life. We know that he will be saved here as he steps onto the wild water to reach Jesus.

This raging element is a parable of life with its storms and challenges for Peter and for all of us. Just as the sea threatens to swallow the boat and the disciples in it, so we know how the world threatens to swallow us up. Each of us, in our discipleship, faces concerns and challenges, anxieties about the present, even despair about the future.

Tintoretto is saying to us from this canvas, Reach out and take hold of the sure hand of our Lord. That will be an anchor for you when the sea of life is calm and when the storm rages. 'Will your anchor hold?' asks the hymn, and we can reply

*'We have an anchor that keeps  
the soul,  
Steadfast and sure while  
the billows roll;  
Fastened to the rock  
which cannot move,  
Grounded firm and deep in the  
Saviour's love.'*

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## HIGHFIELD FRIDGE

The work of this wonderful local voluntary initiative Based at The Highfield Community Centre has featured in the last two issues of STOMP. In the last issue we indicated that between 2021 and 2022 there had been an increase of 138% in the number of people served.

It is interesting look at these numbers in the context of a recent report by the UK's largest food provider, the Trussell Trust, which indicated region by region, nationwide the increase in food parcels it distributed, 2022-2023. In England the South East region's increase was the second highest at 45%, the highest being the North East at 54%. The cost of some foods has risen appreciably, year on year, as illustrated by the table below:

| Item                 | Quantity | Mar 2023 | Increase since Mar 2022 |
|----------------------|----------|----------|-------------------------|
| C h e d d a r Cheese | 400g     | £3.71    | 49%                     |
| Milk                 | 2 pints  | £1.40    | 40%                     |
| Broccoli             | 300g     | £0.75    | 32%                     |
| Granulated Sugar     | 1kg      | £1.03    | 32%                     |
| Eggs (Average)       | 12       | £3.17    | 28%                     |
| Chicken              | Whole    | £1.40    | 28%                     |
| Sliced White Bread   | 800g     | £1.38    | 5%                      |

Nationally, such higher prices are affecting donations in several ways.

Some people now can no longer afford to donate at all. Others, spending less will buy fewer items. Others, spending the same amount of money as before, will buy cheaper items for example replacing a tin of corned beef with a tin of beef soup, or a tin of salmon with a tin of tuna. The overall effect, in the context of increasing food needs, is that less food is being donated, and there is a reduction in variety and quality in terms of a balanced diet. It has been reported that overall food banks are having to raise money to both maintain their stocks and meet increasing demand. This means paying shop prices, of course. It is clear that there has been an increase in absolute poverty, that is 'the condition where people's income is too low to enable them to meet their basic needs'.

The Fridge in Highfield, however, isn't a food bank sending out food parcels. Nor does it buy food for distribution. Donations of goods come to the Community Centre mainly from stores and shops, and also some from churches and clubs and from individuals. People in need come along on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, distribution starting around 11am, a long queue forming beforehand. What has been given is handed out. The current situation is that, 'there are plentiful vegetables and fruit but there is a shortage of hard goods'.

This is a real labour of love by the several dozen people who organise this, link everything up and keep the initiative going.

*Gordon Gaddes*

## BARNABAS, PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY COMPANION

*This month, the church celebrates the life of St Barnabas, St Paul's first missionary companion. St Barnabas Church in Adeyfield, part of our team benefice will be celebrating their Patronal Festival*

Would you have liked to go to Cyprus on holiday this year? If so, spare a thought for the Cypriot who played such a key role in the New Testament.

He was Joseph, a Jewish Cypriot and a Levite, who is first mentioned in Acts 4:36, when the Early Church was sharing a communal lifestyle. Joseph sold a field and gave the money to the apostles. His support so touched them that they gave him the nickname of Barnabas, 'Son of Encouragement'.

Barnabas has two great claims to fame. Firstly, it was Barnabas who made the journey to go and fetch the converted Paul out of Tarsus, and persuade him to go with him to Antioch, where there were many new believers with no one to help them. For a year the two men ministered there, establishing a church. It was here that the believers were first called Christians.

It was also in Antioch (Acts 13) that the Holy Spirit led the church to 'set aside' Barnabas and Paul, and to send them out on the church's first ever 'missionary journey'. The Bible tells us that they went to Cyprus, and then travelled throughout the island. It was at Lystra that the locals mistook Barnabas for Zeus and Paul for Hermes, much to their dismay.

Much later, back in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul decided to part company. While Paul travelled on to Syria, Barnabas did what he could do best: return to Cyprus and continue to evangelise it.



So, if you go to Cyprus and see churches, remember that Christianity on that beautiful island goes right back to Acts 13, when Barnabas and Paul first arrived.

In England there are 13 ancient church dedications and not a few modern ones. Barnabas the generous, the encourager, the apostle who loved his own people – no wonder he should be remembered with love.

## ST JAMES THE LEAST

### On why we don't bother to lock the church

*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.*



The Rectory  
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Since I happened to be in your area last week, I tried to call in at your church, and was sorry to find it was locked and bolted, with surveillance cameras watching me.

We tend to be a little more relaxed about matters of security. The key to the medieval lock was lost some time during Queen Victoria's reign and never replaced. How someone managed to misplace a foot long piece of cast iron, weighing about 10 pounds is a mystery. If it had fallen out of someone's pocket, it would certainly have broken their foot. Ever since, no one has bothered with locking the door – which makes me wish our burglars last year had thought of trying it, before wasting so much energy smashing a stained-glass window when they visited in the early hours one morning. On the other hand, were the key still in use, I should probably be arrested these days for carrying an offensive weapon.


As with most rural churches, keys which open just about everything are hidden in various parts of the church. The vestry key is under my seat cushion, the organ key under a vase on the altar, the church hall key on top of the hymn book cupboard. I am sure someone could usefully produce a book suggesting the many places that keys are likely to be found secreted in churches for the use of vergers, flower arrangers, cleaners – and thieves wanting to save themselves time and effort.

I suspect that the burdened look that many urban clergy wear is not because they are weighed down with parish troubles, but because they are obliged to carry with them a superfluity of keys needed to negotiate every door in church, hall and vicarage. And why is there always at least one for which no one has any idea what it opens?


The only occasion I have ever thought it would be useful to be able to lock a church is when you have a party of visitors inside. So often, on hearing the words “let us pray” or the start of an appeal for funds, they bolt for the door.

Your loving uncle,  
Eustace




 Thank you so much for the magazine and the beautiful contents. I enjoyed reading with a smile on my face. I loved how the children explained what love is, beautifully said.


*Jean Mpati - past chair Langa ECD Forum*

 Thank you for a wonderful read.  
Kind regards

*Brendan Fogarty  
Bishop's College, Cape Town*

 Thank you for STOMP. Excellent as always. I don't know how you maintain your high standard.

*Nigel Abbott - former Team Rector of Hemel Hempstead*

 Thank you Jeff – lovely to read Norma's story.  
Kind regards,

*Revd Pete. St Alban's Warners End*

## NIGERIA: THE SLAUGHTER OF CHRISTIANS CONTINUES

The growing death toll among Christians in Nigeria is now in the tens of thousands.

Recent reports have put the number of Christians killed in attacks by terrorists and militants at between 30,000 and 50,000. And the violence continues unabated.

The Stefanos Foundation, which has been working in Nigeria for 20 years to help victims of violence, calculates that from 2001, when the current violence erupted, to 2021, there were more than 30,000 killings at the hands of Boko Haram terrorists and Fulani militants.

The report goes on to say that the violence 'escalated out of control from 2012. Fulani militancy leads with the highest frequency of violence in Nigeria... Terrorism, banditry, militant herdsman attacks, and kidnapping have become rife.'

The Nigerian NGO Intersociety has also published a report into the escalating violence. Intersociety calculates that 1,041 Christians were killed in the first 100 days of 2023 alone.

It finds that since 2009, 52,250 Christians have been killed by jihadists, including Boko Haram and Fulani militants. According to Intersociety, militants have attacked 18,000 churches, 2,200 Christian schools and 800 Christian communities.



## NEWS OF THE PEWS

In the autumn of last year the PCC requested permission to remove the pews in the North Aisle and the first three rows of pews at the front of the Nave to allow people to 'escape' sideways from the top of the nave.

In response the Diocesan Advisory Council (DAC) asked that we researched the story of the pews so that we could put this information into the required Statement of Significance.

Their reason for this request is that the PCC should not do anything in their church without first discovering whether the area or item they are planning to change has any historical or aesthetic significance.

Robin and Gill offered to visit the County Archives in Hertford to see if we could find out when the pews were installed and why and by whom - in case they were by someone famous!

Here are their findings:



We had a fascinating time in the Archive, but first can I give you a little context by describing the changes that happened in Hemel through the 1800's, and why the Parish Church felt a need to respond to them.

In 1797 Hemel Hempstead had 11 watermills and was described as having '...one of the largest grain markets in the country'. It was clearly a prosperous place and quite a number of big houses were established. The population of Hemel Hempstead seems to have grown, only slowly in the early 1800's being 2,722 in 1801 and 2,974 in 1861, before expanding suddenly to 9,064 in 1881. During this period the railway joined the canal and John Dickinson was expanding the paper making business.

So why did these changes affect St Mary's? Well under Elizabeth 1's Act of Uniformity of 1558 there was a fine of 12 pence if you didn't attend your Parish church on a Sunday (A labourer's day's wage was around 4 pence), as a result a presumption was established that the Parish church needed to provide seating for the whole community.



*1823 engraving by Edward Blore, drawn by J.L. Bond and shows the box pews which were replaced around 1860 by the existing ones. Note also the gallery which carried more pews and was removed around 1865.*



Although the Act was repealed under Cromwell in 1650 it was resurrected under Charles II and not finally repealed until 1888. So although levying the fines dropped out of practice around 1700, the assumption that everyone went to church continued and of course they needed their allocated seats.

Archbishop Laud required in 1620 that all churches should be 'pewed out' so we can assume that St Mary's was pewed out by this date and had provision then for enough 'sittings' to accommodate the full population of Hemel Hempstead. Accommodating the full population would have ended by the 1800's, but accommodating everyone who came to church was important; and it is awe inspiring to think of St Mary's being packed every Sunday including two levels of seating in both the Transepts. Hymn singing must have been awesome and inspiring.

Getting back to our researches:- All the Faculties applied for by St Mary's, and the other churches in the area, starting in the early 1700's are to be found in a vellum bound book held in the County Archives. Between 1730 and 1802, 6 Faculties were granted each for the construction of two pews for named families. I imagine that these would have been paid for by the families and would have been indications of wealth and status and so probably in the front of the nave.

Sadly there are no records of any Faculties being granted to St Mary's between 1802 and 1880 when permission was granted to remove the galleries in the two Transepts and also the pews in the crossing under the tower. So Gill and I moved on to the Vestry Minutes in the hope that they would be more informative.

A feature of both the Faculty records and the Vestry Minutes is that they use a lot of words to record the date and the names of people in authority but they are very limited in the description of any work actually decided on. Everything is of course handwritten in a book, which means that plans are referred to but not included.

The Vestry Minutes record in 1819 that there had been an influx of people into the area and so 200 extra 'sittings' were needed in the church and £288 was spent on providing these to an agreed plan.

No details of the Plan are given but from looking through the Faculty Applications for other churches during this period it seems to have been fashionable to introduce galleries to increase the 'sittings' (e.g St Peter's Berkhamsted).



1890 engraving of St Mary's Church interior.



So we guess that the two Transept galleries may have been built at this time. We know it wasn't spent on our pews because there is an old print in the church dated 1823 – 4 years later - which still shows the old pews through the open half-height west doors ( half-height because they have to open under the west end gallery that housed the organ).

Then, a few years later in 1830 a Chapel of Ease was built in Boxmoor which would also have helped to reduce pressure on seating.

The population expansion that followed in the mid 1800's meant that the Church authorities gave up trying to increase the sittings in St Mary's and instead built new churches at Flaundon, Bovingdon, Boxmoor, Apsley, Piccotts End, Leverstock Green and of course the old St Paul's in Queensway. This relieved the pressure on seating so that by the end of the century instead of adding galleries they were removing them and also reducing the amount of pews.

However, to get back to our search for when our present pews were installed; we persisted with reading through the Vestry Minutes and they were fascinating . The Vestry also looked after the Highways ( including any requests from landowners for road closures), the Poor, the appointment of Constables (2 in the early 1800's rising to 12 and more later) purchase of a Fire Engine, discussions with the

Railway and Canal Companies, receiving reports from the Boxmoor Trust etc.

Expenditure on the Church was approved, as now, once each year and interesting items were the £5/yr set aside for winding the clock (paid by the Boxmoor Trust) and £7/yr paid to the Pew Openers – sort of Sideswomen.

In 1842 serious, but undefined, repairs were carried out on the church at a cost of £1,266 and this was more than the Churchwardens could afford so they had to borrow £1,000. Might this have been a re-leading of the spire, it is about the right timing at 140 years before it was redone in 1985?

It is interesting that the Churchwardens seem to have needed to spend their own money on repairing the church and then recovered it by the ' setting of a Rate' at the end of each year. Stewardship hadn't yet been invented, the Vicar was paid out of the Parish endowments so the other activities were funded by this annual setting of a Rate. There is no indication that pew rents were charged in St Mary's, in fact there was discussion in 1860 when money was short but the decision went against doing it.

And then we struck gold. In 1857 're-pewing' the church was proposed and voted down but it came back on the agenda two years later in January 1859.

The reasons noted are to provide 'additional, more healthy and convenient sittings'. This time a team of 3 people were commissioned to see how much money could be raised. They reported back in March that they had received commitments amounting to £1,287 and after some further discussion around the options of widening either one or both side aisles, re-pewing was approved in April. The main discussion seems to have been over whether the nave pews should or should not have doors, there is no discussion of the style. The no door option was approved and interestingly the pews in the South Transept were reserved for children. You will have noticed that all the pews are numbered and this is because in those days each family or person had a set seat in church, and so the next appointment was a committee to allocate the pews. But enough for now as the next years of the 1800's were busy ones at St Mary's. Happily the DAC seemed satisfied that pews installed around 1860 were likely to be run of the mill ( machine cut) Victorian ones so of no special significance. Job done.

*Robin Woodd*

#### SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



*Can you spot ten differences between this 1890 engraving and how the same viewpoint looks today? Answers on page 27. (There are probably more than ten).*



## FROM 'NICKER' TO VICAR

With the BBC's local radio services under threat a recent Three Counties radio programme shows the sort of thing we could miss if the economies hit home. On her early Sunday morning programme Kady Braine was interviewing the Revd Kelvin Woolmer, the Vicar of St Peters in Bedford. What a story was revealed. My wife Rosina referred me to this, being very moved, partly because she had spent months at Great Ormond Street Hospital where both her sons were treated. I was able to listen to the interview on catch up radio.

An East Ender, born in 1955, Kelvin from boyhood was ambitious to join the police and, aged 16, he left home for a two - year course at the Hertfordshire Police College. Then he joined the Royal Military Police, which with others he bought himself out of following a regrettable experience. A friend of his had been murdered in Northern Ireland, and officers refused permission for some to go to the funeral.

Such insensitivity proved the last straw. Quickly accepted into the Metropolitan Police he spent the next 30 years in the force. His first major assignment was in Soho, where he had a single police accommodation and where a year later he met his wife-to-be, Jean, also a Soho 'bobby' and another East Ender. From Soho, to Notting Hill to Romford, variously he saw service in the vice squad, the riot squad and as a community officer.

He faced danger, shot at, stabbed, run over twice, 'singed' when trapped in a crashed car trying to give resuscitation, and very badly beaten up by a London gang, leading to his face being restructured.

Kelvin and Jean had three children. The eldest, Janet, aged 4 in 1985 was diagnosed with Leukaemia, this at a time when the survival rate was only 10%. Indeed, in one week ten children died in the Ward whilst they were there. The eight weeks spent by Janet in the Great Ormond Street Hospital was a major turning point.

The Police gave Kelvin all the time needed to be with his family, people from a local church helped to look after the other two children, to provide food and comfort and to support him and his wife. A new drug brought in from the USA saved Janet's life and she became part of a research project the results of which saved the lives of other children.



*Revd Kelvin with his wife, novelist Jean Fullerton*





*St Peter's, Bedford*

Jean remained close to the church and in 1987 the family attended a church weekend.

Kelvin, an agnostic, ended up at a lecture by Hugh Palmer in the theatre. He intended just to look and depart, but the tide of people coming in stopped him from leaving.

After the lecture Hugh said let us close our eyes and pray and Kelvin just felt he could not leave. With closed eyes, quoting his words, 'I don't know how to pray but if you are there I am here. I felt a hand on my shoulder, looked up and saw a bright shining face and a voice said you will be alright now. I knew this was Jesus, and he lifted all the anguish, anxiety and anger from me'. It was the 6 September 1987 a turning point in his life and he has met Jesus several times since then. He became a lot calmer with the public and the family. Police colleagues asked, 'what has happened to you?'

The jigsaw pieces had fallen into place as he listened to the lecture. Now he ended up running a bible study class. The seed was planted to take a degree in history and teach when he retired but he slipped into the Anglican ordination process and, whilst still in the police force, he was ordained in September 2001. The 9-11 Attack in New York sparked the Superintendent at Lime House Police Station to appoint Kelvin to be the borough police chaplain, broadened four days later to include the whole of Tower Hamlets!

Retiring he went to Zermatt, France and Corfu for a year in the Diocese of Europe covering some short-term chaplaincies. Then the Bishop of Barking made him a full-time stipendiary priest, the Vicar of St Paul's, Maryland and linked through this are some major missions, to be to the Olympic Stadium project, a work force of 16,000. This six years' chaplaincy was followed by one for the St Pancras Station project and then for the London City Airport.

Branching away he became a vicar in Waltham Abbey for 4 years and then in 2017 he was appointed to be the Vicar of St Peter's in Bedford, where he will be until he retires at the age of 70. However, a worker since the age of 16 he does not see himself turning to gardening and washing the car repeatedly. He would hope to carry on with his spiritual mission variously in the Diocese of Europe and perhaps with cruise ship chaplaincies.

Concerning the latter, with his famous 'Queen of the East End' books author-wife, Jean Fullerton, on board what fascinating cruises these would be for passengers.

In the BBC Three Counties Radio interview Kady focused on the Revd Kelvin's reflections on the unending criticism of the Police, in the context of his thirty years of experience.



SHORTER ROMANTIC NOVEL

**Jean Fullerton - Finalist 2022**



*Jean Fullerton was born into a large, East End family and grew up in the overcrowded streets clustered around the Tower of London. She feels it is that background that gives her eight historical 'Ration Book' series of East London stories their distinctive authenticity.*

I resonated very much with his response, knowing about my brother Robert's 30 - year experience, in Lincolnshire starting as a beat bobby, moving through the ranks to be a detective inspector and ending up in Special Branch. The Police are in the front line for us all, as are the clergy, the social, probation and prison workers, and those in health and care.

They give their lives to the rest of us. In the context of current criticism, I think of the tens of thousands in the police who continue to work with integrity and who need to be respected and honoured for that work. Revd Kelvin Woolmer's life story gives us important insights from a man who has been at the heart of the Metropolitan Police Force and who found God through Jesus.

*Gordon Gaddes*

## SOLWAY REFRESHMENTS



*Left back: Richie, Donni, Dylan  
Front: Emile and Christian*

Monica Philips posted the following on the parish 'WhatsApp' group –'If you are near St Paul's have a walk - lovely young neighbours are giving drink and having a chat with neighbours and people passing by near the car park. So lovely to see them and hear them'.

Gordon walked round, bought a lemonade and had a chat. One of the mums, Adele, took a photo and sent it to him later having cleared with parents that this could be shown in the June issue of STOMP.





# In Full Flower The Bishop's Garden

Abbey Gate House,  
Abbey Mill Lane  
St Albans AL3 4HD

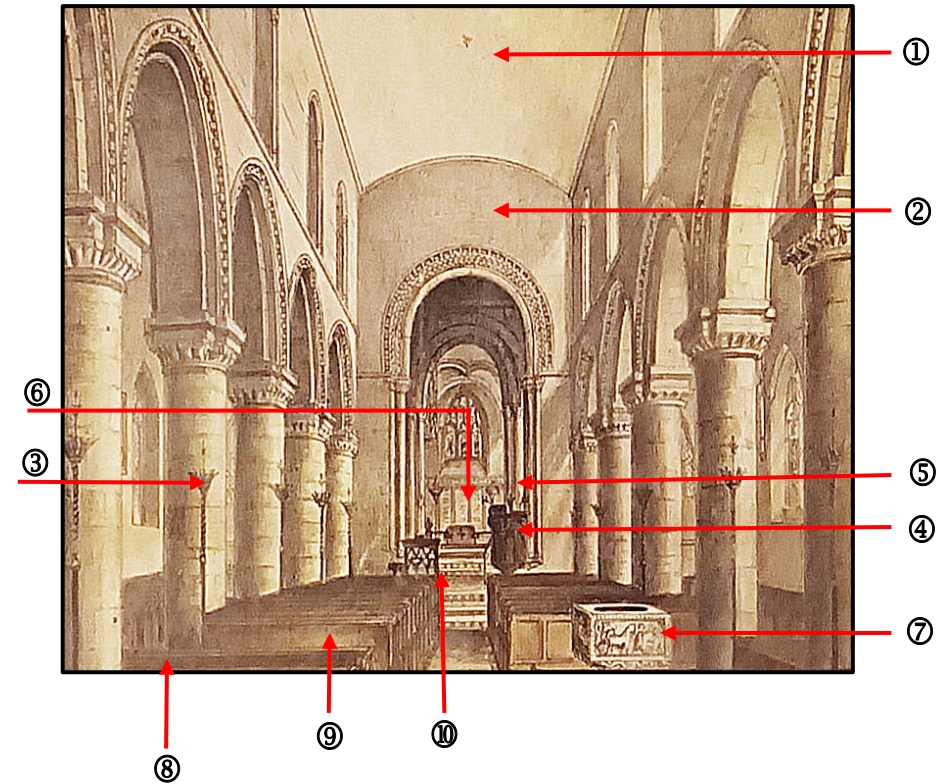
Open Garden every Sunday  
between  
18th June-6th August  
2-4pm  
Entrance £4 per adult  
(children free) as you enter.

In aid of the Herts and Beds  
Historic Churches Trust

Dogs on leads  
No toilet facilities  
Queries Monday-Friday,  
9am - 5 pm only.  
01727 229 073  
jsmith@stalbans.anglican.org

## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

(See page 21)



1. Curved Plaster ceiling to Nave
2. No Annunciation picture
3. Gas lighting
4. Pulpit on South Side
5. No eagle lectern
6. 'Our Father' or Ten Commandments behind High Altar
7. Font in different place
8. Pews at the back of the church
9. North-South aisle in different place
10. No handrails for steps to crossing



## PENTECOST - A JOYOUS SERVICE AT ST MARY'S



On 2<sup>nd</sup> June, Pentecost Sunday, we celebrated the confirmation of three young people - Philip, James and Elizabeth Barber by Bishop John Gladwin.

After the service everyone was invited to join the family for lunch in the church hall.

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The Revd Luke Geoghegan  
The Revd Richard Leslie

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