

# STAMP

SPRING 2024

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 61

THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL  
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD



## STOMP MAGAZINE ISSUE 61 SPRING 2024

Tales of Eccentric Clergy	4
Harbinger of Spring	8
The Fragility of Freedom	9
Editor's Interview	10
God in the Arts	13
Shine a light	14
News from UK Langa Trust	16
God in the Sciences	18
Hemel Community Fridge	20
Random Smiles	23
St Paul's Patronal Service	24
The Weight of Oil	26
The Life and Mission Choir	27
The Parish of St Mary & St Paul	28
For your Diary	28

Cover picture: As I was considering the cover for this issue I glanced out of my window and saw thunderous black clouds and the rain hammering down and bouncing up off the pavement; about 15 minutes earlier there had been a heavy hailstorm. Looking skyward in another direction there was a patch of blue (just about large enough to make a pair of trousers for a sailor), and sure enough a few minutes later the sun was shining.

This display of contrasting weather reminded me of a photo I had taken some years ago on a bright April Sunday morning. That magnificent flowering cherry by the Hall entrance was absolutely bursting with pink/white blossom weighed down with an overnight fall of snow – the picture is on the cover.

As is sometimes said about our weather, If you don't like it, stick around - it'll soon change!

*Jeff W*



## FROM THE EDITOR

As I get older I don't know whether I'm getting nuttier or more philosophical. I keep on wanting to explore the meaning of words and to put these words into thoughts, the thoughts flowing on and on taking me into distant parts!

The words sometimes crop up together as opposites, like 'goodness' and 'wickedness' and 'love' and 'hatred' or together, say as synonyms, like 'soul' and 'spirit', or sometimes as a single word like 'happiness' or 'power'.

I spend a lot of time reflecting about such words and word combinations and see them in the context of happenings in the past and the present and what might be in the future.

Bible readings and sermons are an important context for such reflections.

A Lenten sermon by Revd Luke included interesting references to happiness. What is happiness and how is it attained? The thought was that people search for happiness but do not find it. Perhaps this is because happiness, say you warming in the sun, or your team winning, or you reading a heart-warming book, is ephemeral, here today and gone tomorrow. However, Rev Luke's key thought was that real and continuing happiness is in giving oneself to others, a very succinct message as we approach Easter, our commemoration of the betrayal, trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



# TALES OF ECCENTRIC CLERGY AND THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE

I doubt that many people were surprised, when my recent sabbatical leave was announced, that I wanted to spend some time studying eccentric clergy and the preservation of the British steam train. What perhaps surprised Bishop Jane, amongst others, was that a lot of this could be done with the help of the internet and books of course, from the beaches of Spain and beside the swimming pools of Beverley Hills! So it was that I would be doing much of this study whilst visiting Penny's two sisters, one in Valencia and the other in the famous hills around Tinseltown.

The point of Extended Study Leave (ESL) as it is now termed, is twofold; first to take a break and look at things from a completely different angle after another 10 years of parish ministry, the second is to do some form of study or body of work, which helps to improve your understanding of the world, of other people and of mission and ministry.

When I embarked on my last sabbatical leave, 10 years ago, I spent time in America at Ground Zero in New York, studying the faith response to the 9/11 attacks on the United States as well as visiting New Orleans to look at a rather less successful response to hurricane Katrina. These visits were at the instigation of the Metropolitan Police, for whom I was acting as a chaplain in readiness for the London Olympic Games. The chance to research the response to major incidents on the other side of the pond was thought to be highly useful as we had every expectation that there would be some form of disaster or terrorist attack at the London Olympics. Luckily this didn't transpire, but my study leave period in preparation for it was heavyweight, and anything, but relaxing. When you are considering temporary mortuary facilities, possible large body counts, and how to deal with bereaved families of many different backgrounds and faiths it is anything but easy.

So this time, ten years on and with the blessing of the Bishop, it was thought something a little lighter might be more appropriate. My interest in three clerics who made an impact on the preservation of British steam trains was something I wanted to explore in more detail and this seemed the perfect opportunity. It may appear a frivolous endeavour but when we look at how clergy in the past influenced people for good and brought them to faith via unorthodox methods and approaches we can learn something which might help churches today.



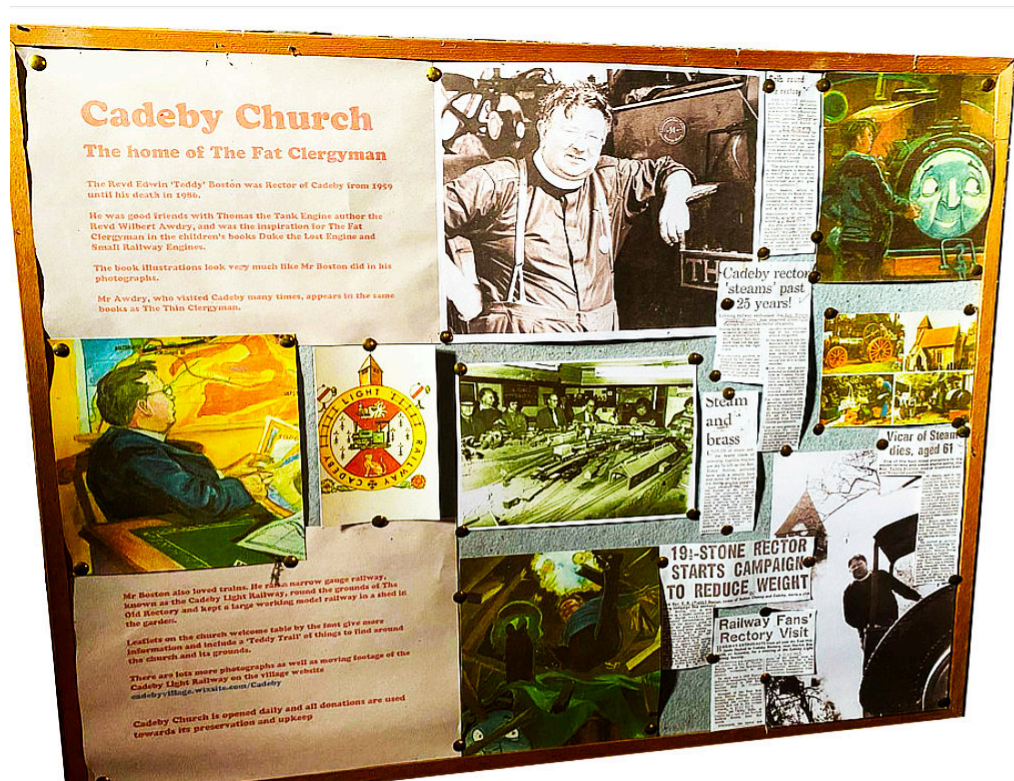
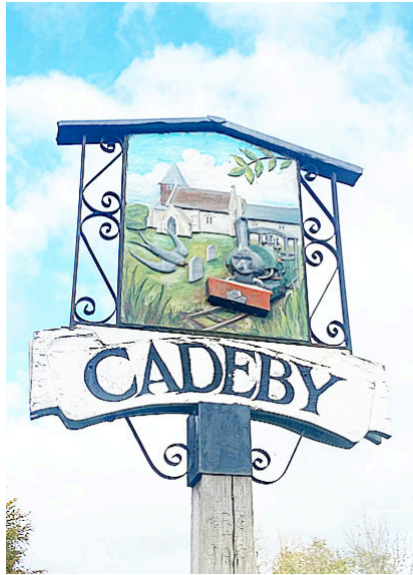
Bishop Eric Tracey (1907-1979) was the Anglican Bishop of Wakefield, who spent much time photographing the end of steam on Britain's railways. He became known as Bishop to the railway men as he was such a familiar sight on trains and in locomotive depots and was someone able to make everyone feel special and valued. His books documenting the demise of steam are still highly valued and his many photographs of the ordinary workers on the railways as well as the glamorous engines are now part of the national collection at NRM, York. Soon after retirement as a bishop he famously collapsed and died on Appleby-in-Westmorland station, whilst photographing 9F 2-10-0 'Evening Star' the final steam engine built for British Rail.

Along with Treacy, I wanted to look at the life of the Revd Wilbert Awdry (1911-1997), who is renowned as the creator of the Thomas the Tank Engine stories and through them inspired many young people to get involved with steam trains of all types and have a lifelong interest in them. The Thomas franchise has outstripped every intention of its creator much to his annoyance in his later years. He wrote the stories for his son, Christopher, and only wrote them down to make sure he remembered which ones he had told.



*Thomas at our very own Extravaganza at St Mary's back in 2022.*





My third interesting cleric is the Revd Edwin 'Teddy' Boston (1924-1986). Teddy, at his rectory in Cadeby, in Leicestershire, was a remarkable and eccentric clergyman, who rescued traction engines and narrow gauge colliery and industrial locomotives to run in the rectory garden and around the village. He is remembered fondly for his remarkable eccentricity and his ability to inspire young people to get involved with preserving steam and with finding God, both inside and outside of the church building. His church has a stained glass window memorial depicting the figure of the usually soot stained cleric aboard his little 0-4-0 tank engine called 'Pixie'.



*Teddy and Pixie in stained glass*

Upon our return from overseas I took time to visit places and speak to people connected with these three clergymen. I spoke to people who had known them and worked with them, recording interviews with people whose lives had been changed by the remarkable witness and enthusiasm of these three clerical heroes. All this will form the basis of my book which is in progress.

Teddy Boston and Wilbert Awdry were good friends and the Revd Awdry famously incorporated the rotund Boston in his Thomas books as the Fat Clergyman, Wilbert himself appeared as the Thin Clergyman. Do pity some members of our congregations – especially the 10.30am Wednesday folk at St Mary's – who I have constantly regaled with stories of these three clerics and their very smutty engines!

Perhaps more information on these eccentrics could follow in this esteemed journal, at least they may appear rather faster than the book.

*Canon John*



# HARBINGER OF SPRING

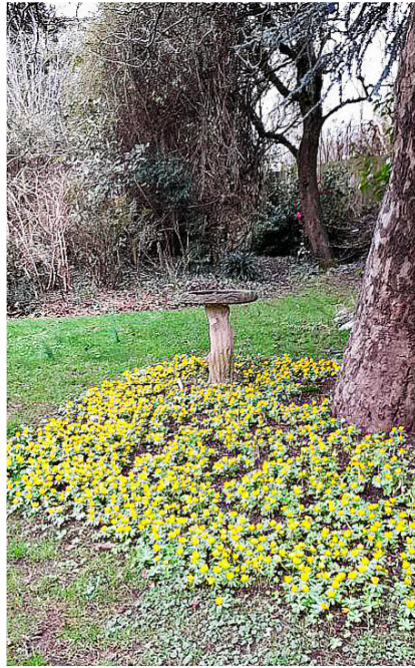
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One plant that is not given its full status as a Spring harbinger is Eranthis (winter aconite). Its bright yellow flowers appear in early Spring when nothing else has appeared including snowdrops. The bright yellow of the flowers stand out from the dormant vegetation around it. From early January it will give a good show.

The photos show the aconites in my garden. I recommend a variety called Eranthis Hyomalis. It grows to a height of 3-8 inches and the flowers are followed by stunning green foliage. It grows best in semi shade and grown as a wild plant naturally in grass.

They are now in the garden centres to buy and as you can see they make a very good show when planted under a tree.

Roger Sygrave



## THE FRAGILITY OF FREEDOM

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At St Mary's on Sunday 28 January there was a sad time of Contemplation and Remembrance relating to the International Holocaust Memorial Day. It was a deeply moving occasion led by the Revd Canon John Williams.

The Mourner's Kaddish, the 23rd Psalm, the time for reflection and prayer, the lit candles, and the beautiful, soulful singing by Paula Sides accompanied by Jonathan Gale were special memories to take away with us.

Particularly poignant, and indeed a warning for us all, was the reading by the Worshipful Mayor of the Borough of Dacorum, Councillor William Allen. Essentially, it was based on the experience of the Pastor Martin Niemöller (1892 - 1984), a German Lutheran priest, a committed member of the Nazi Party, until later he strongly criticised Nazi efforts to control the German churches.

He spent eight years in Nazi prisons and concentration camps. After the War on release, he spoke and wrote frequently, words now repeated to us by the Mayor,

*'First they came for the Communists and I did not speak out  
because I was not a Communist;*

*Then they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out  
because I was not a Socialist;*

*Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out  
because I am not a trade unionist*

*Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out  
because I was not a Jew*

*Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me'.*

Gordon Gaddes



## EDITOR'S INTERVIEW

### TINA MOORE, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD COMMUNITY FRIDGE

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**Complementary to a further piece of writing on the Hemel Hempstead Community Fridge, based in Highfield, I decided that the story of one of the Fridge's leading volunteers, Tina Moore, would interest STOMP readers.**

Tina was born in Plymouth in June 1960, to Jenny and John. This was a home birth and 18 months later there was a diagnosis that she had two dislocated hips. This being treated and living with the result has been a perennial feature of Tina's life.

Between the age of 3 and 9 Tina had seven operations, which enabled the right hip to be sorted out but not the left. During this time her family moved from Plymouth to Epping to be closer to the Stanmore Orthopaedic Hospital, and later to Tring. Over time there have been seven more operations, including two hip and one knee replacements. For years, with a shortened left leg and a special raised shoe she has made her way in life using a stick, this better than the crutches of her early childhood days. Reflecting on those crutches Tina reminisced that being shy at junior school she would be bullied and her crutches taken and hidden. However, her sister, 13 months younger was always there to protect her.

Most of Tina's teenage years were spent in hospital. When she was 16 years old, her Mum and Dad divorcing, she and her sister opted to stay with their deeply loving and kind Dad, and they came to live in Hemel Hempstead during 1978.

It is hard to imagine how those teenage years must have been for her, hardly at school, with no remedial education, but what a character emerged from all of this. In 1976 she first met her maternal grandmother. She was a £10 pom who had made a life in Australia, indeed so happy and successful was this that most of the family joined her out there. The stories she heard so excited Tina that she got a one - year work visa and left for Australia, this to be followed immediately by another such visa. She loved Australia, during two and a half years working in various places to earn the money to allow her to travel around Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania.

To her great regret at that time she was not able to get a permanent stay visa and she returned home via Canada and the USA. Once at home she earned enough money to fly to Australia again for a six - week holiday.

Returning to the UK, and now aged 24 her life was on the edge of being transformed yet again. The story hinges on house cats. A friend, away for several weeks, had arranged a rota of friends to visit and mind the cats. A mistaken double booking led to Tina meeting Mick Moore but somehow one cat escaped. Hunting the escaped cat together, sharing cake and chat, Mick giving Tina a lift home led to the exchange of phone numbers. Three years later married at St Mary's and now 37 years on, living in Woodhall Farm, they are blessed with their York based daughter Chloe, born in 1993 and two granddaughters and a son in law.

To follow the work path of Tina, given her early years of incapacity is a lesson of triumph in adversity and a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit. Aged 22 In Australia, working in the office of a private school, Tina rented a flat and a purchased car, of all models a British Morris Marina whilst settling in Rockhampton, Queensland. Coming back to Hemel Hempstead her work at Dale ACI introduced her to the computer. Many years later, volunteering at her daughter's primary school on Woodhall Farm, was the start of 20 years working in the office, ending up as the manager with a staff of three in the Nursery and Infant school.

Interested in the whys and wherefores of volunteering I asked Tina when this had started in her life. It was early on, wanting to use her time meaningfully and to help those who were isolated and lonely as well as giving something back to the community.



11 years ago, faced with Chloe leaving home to study Occupational Therapy at Derby Uni and Mick returning home from work around 7/7.30pm, Tina approached the Volunteer Bureau to see what they had to offer and decided she liked the sound of befriending for Age UK Dacorum. At that time, the befrienders were supporting people for a short time when they came out of hospital and may have been suffering with mobility issues, which Tina understood from her own stays in hospital. This was the start of her voluntary work.

She befriended approximately 12 clients over her 9 years of befriending. Through her volunteering, her husband also became a volunteer for Age UK Dacorum. Together, they shopped for isolated and/or housebound clients during the pandemic and Mick still continues to do so for one of their clients he met in May 2020. Then again, two years ago they both became heavily involved with the Hempstead Fridge, another story in this issue (page 20)

It is interesting why so many people, sacrificing their leisure or the opportunity to make more money, give their time to help people in need. What are the reasons for this goodness? Is there social conditioning arising from ethics and religion? Is it to do with how the brain is wired? Maybe a final piece from Tina will give part of the answer: 'We do work on an ad hoc basis delivering flowers for a local florist, which we started on Valentines' Day 2022. We particularly enjoy spreading love and joy delivering on Valentine and Mothers' Day.'

*GG 18 February 2024*



Tina and Nick's daughter Chloe, son-in-law Matt, and grandchildren Freya & Erin.

## GOD IN THE ARTS

**'He gave us eyes to see them' – Wall painting of Pompeii**  
**Michael Burgess continues his look at great works of art.**

In this series we have explored how art celebrates the wonder of our world – the seasons, the elements, animals and fish, flowers and fruit. They manifest the glory of God the creator. Irenaeus, the 2nd century theologian, went further and wrote that 'the glory of God is a living person.' He was echoing Psalm 8: 'What are human beings that you are mindful of them...you have crowned them and put all things under their feet.' Yes, the universe teaches of God the creator, but in becoming one of us, the Son of God has put human beings above all Creation.



Naples National Archaeological Museum

The nobility of that vision is captured in this 1st century wall painting from Pompeii showing Neo and his wife. They lived at a time when St Paul was preaching and the gospels were being written. We don't know if those events made an impact on their lives. But we do know that St Paul was executed around AD67, and just twelve years later this couple were victims of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Their almond-shaped eyes are like windows into their souls. We sense the beauty, but also the fragility. They tell us that life is a gift to be cherished precisely because it is so easily taken from us. Neo's intense eyes look at us, while his wife looks beyond into the distance. She has the eyes of hopes and dreams that were cruelly shattered by the volcano.

Living men and women, like this couple, are tokens of the wonder of creation, but they also tell us of the transience of that very gift of life. 'Where can we place our hope?' we ask ourselves. The feasts of All Saints and All Souls tell us that the end of life here is a door opening into a greater glory and a brighter light. There is wonder and beauty in life here, and with the eyes of faith we can look beyond to glimpse the wonder of eternity.





### What is Inner Wheel?

With the Objects of promoting true friendship, encouraging the ideals of personal service and fostering international understanding the Inner Wheel is closely linked to Rotary and is recognised as one of the world's largest women's voluntary organisations, with representation at the United Nations. There are over 100,000 members active in 104 countries, with 11,000 of those members being in Great Britain and Ireland.

### When did it begin? – A bit of history!

After the First World War Rotary International had spread to Britain and, with virtually no welfare or social services available for those in need, Rotarians worked hard to do all they could to help alleviate the suffering of those around them. Their wives would be invited to help with the projects and they often stayed together having enjoyed the friendship that grew out of working together.

On the 15th November 1923 twenty-seven wives of the Manchester Rotarians met together with the purpose of setting up a ladies' club to run along Rotary lines, to foster friendship between the wives and daughters of Rotarians and widen their opportunities of service without encroaching on the prerogatives of the men. The meeting was led by Mrs Margarette Golding (an astute businesswoman and qualified nurse) and held in the lounge at Herriott's Turkish Baths in Deansgate, which had been chosen as the venue "because it was the only room they could get for nothing"!

On 10th JANUARY 1924, the first Club was formed and named the 'Inner Wheel Club of Manchester' with the 'wheel within the wheel of Rotary' logo, cleverly indicating the connection with Rotary. This date is now celebrated annually as 'World Inner

Wheel Day'. Membership grew steadily and in 1928, at Mrs Golding's suggestion, steps were taken to unite all women's clubs that existed alongside Rotary Clubs and this became known as 'The Association of Inner Wheel Clubs in Great Britain and Ireland'. In 1967, and in recognition of international understanding, 'International Inner Wheel' was formed and is now active in 104 countries. At that time only wives and female relatives of a Rotarian were eligible for membership.

### Inner Wheel today.

As society has changed over the years Inner Wheel Clubs have adapted to the needs of the country and their local communities. Membership is now open to women who wish to embrace the objects of the Association. Clubs have monthly meetings to discuss ways of supporting charitable projects and often include a guest to speak on a topic of interest.

Every year the International President chooses a 'Theme' for members to work collaboratively towards. In our Centenary year the theme is 'Shine a Light', a call to bring brightness into lives for future generations. A major project this year is the purchase and kitting out of a 'Book Bus' for visiting schools in Zimbabwe, brightening the lives of the children.

I became a member in 1985, supporting my Rotarian father after the death of my mother, a very active member of the Hatfield Club. I have since been privileged to hold a number of roles at Club and District level, visiting other Clubs, and encouraging the ideals of personal service. I am currently a member of the Inner Wheel Club of Berkhamsted Bulbourne. Many charitable projects have been supported in the thirty-seven years since the club was formed and thousands of pounds raised through events such as Soup and Pud lunches, coffee mornings and afternoon teas. Knitted goods have been made, and useful goods collected and distributed wherever needed. We have recently funded three Bleed Control Kits to go with Public Defibrillators in a school and Berkhamsted town centre. Members have also been involved in supporting the Rotary Club's fund-raising events sharing the proceeds for distribution to local charities and overseas projects at the end of the Inner Wheel year in June.

This year we are celebrating 100 years of friendship and service since the founding of Inner Wheel with an International Convention in Manchester (not at the Turkish Baths I hasten to add!) which will be attended by thousands of women from all over the world, and promises to be a very colourful and enjoyable occasion.

*Emmeline Lambert*





The aim of the SHOP PROJECT is to provide a Resource Centre for the Langa Early Child Development Forum to develop and teach best practice to newly formed Langa Township pre-school playgroups and so enable them to qualify for government registration.

#### Progress to date

- \* Fund established by LTPT & Clueit Foundation to cover currently assessed cost of project
- \* Project plan established aiming for completion Spring 2025
- \* Building & site plans drawn up by Cape Town architect, David Talbot, following consultation with Langa Early Child Development Forum

- \* Supplier of made to measure pre-school buildings identified & visited
- \* Visit to City of Cape Town authority pending to identify site and establish agreement for usage
- \* Monthly video meetings planning Trio continue (Cape Town, Douglas Isle of Man, & Hemel Hempstead)

Above - One of the working sketches for the Resource Centre produced for Chris Beech, the Project Manager, by David Talbot of Platform, a Cape Town practice covering property, architecture and sustainability.

Agreement of these sketches with the Langa Early Child Development Centre is the essential first step in preparation for discussion with the City of Cape Town on the location of the building on public land within Langa Township.



# GOD IN THE SCIENCES

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*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.*



## **What will Spring bring? Mental health ideas for uncertain times**

We may all have rather mixed feelings on reaching March this year. On the one hand, it is lovely to see the onset of Spring, but the wars in Ukraine and Israel-Gaza grind on, as does the cost-of-living crisis. We may need to find new ways to keep going, so here are some suggestions that draw on both science and Christian theology.

### **Getting outside**

Time outdoors in a natural environment is very good for you – and you can't argue with the happy hormones produced by exercise. Attending to the details of nature can also inspire awe, which has been linked to positive mood, and increased life satisfaction. Enjoying Creation can also help us connect with God.

### **Looking outside**

If you are truly stuck indoors, try putting bird feeders outside your window so creation comes to you. This is also an act of kindness (see below)!

### **Lament and praise**

The Psalms are a rich resource to help us express both our grief and our thanks to God. Try reading one or two each day.

### **Journaling**

Keep a journal of thoughts, experiences or practices you have engaged with during the day. Constructing a personal narrative or story is now recognised as a very powerful psychological and spiritual tool for building resilience. It is also a vital learning tool that we can go back to when tough times return in the future.

### **Acts of kindness**

Helping or encouraging someone else is obviously a good thing to do in itself, but it also has a very positive effect on the giver - spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and even physically. Whichever way you look at it, finding new ways to show kindness to others can be a very effective way to help ourselves feel better too.

### **Gratitude**

Gratitude is another natural drug – in a sense – that can help us feel better. Try keeping a grateful diary, adding a few things each day.

### **Laugh, sing, make music, dance**

All of these activities are deeply rooted in our physical and mental makeup. You may have forgotten how great they feel, especially in times of sadness, but we can learn from children who do them very naturally.

I hope these ideas may help bring us closer to God, each other, and His creation.



# THE HEMEL HEMPSTEAD COMMUNITY FRIDGE

*How does a new charity body run by volunteers emerge to support those in need? That need must be identified by a person, who decides to try to do something about it. There must be a supportive environment and community, including people who will give of themselves, and supportive institutions. In recent issues of SToMP (56 & 58) attention has been brought to the admirable work of our local 'Fridge', (HHCF for reference below) but how has it developed over the last three years to what it is now? The brief story below shows the development and how 'The Fridge' fits into a major national voluntary movement led by Hubbub.*

The first Community Fridge opened in December 2016 and following this Hubbub, now a registered charity, developed as an umbrella organisation aiming to bring people together to share surplus food and reduce waste. By the end of 2022 there were 450 Fridges, up 180 on the number at the start of that year. Additionally, there were 50 hubs covering between them broader activities such as developing food skills, growing food, providing welcoming spaces, and creating collaborative purchasing. Hubbub gives guidance to support local initiatives, trains, develops best practice, shares experience and knowledge and raised public awareness through the media. Throughout the country this social movement caring for people is driven by dedicated volunteers and supportive partners. Since 2021 the Co-op has been the major financial supporter and others include Rothschild and Starbucks.

It is understood that interest in setting up a local fridge arose in the mind of Dean Porter during an TV programme. He linked up with Donna, Sue, Andrea, Lesley and Jackie and the The Hemel Hempstead Community Fridge opened on 22nd February 2021 in the Highfield Community Centre at Bellgate and distributed 40 kilos of food. How far the Fridge has gone since then is demonstrated by the 2,321 kilos distributed on 24 January 2024. Originally a community interest project, HHCF is now registered with the Charity Commission. Whilst the project has been the brainchild together of several people it was made possible by a key decision of the Community Association, to provide free of charge permanently a room for the storage of foodstuffs and a larger adjacent room for laying out and packaging each Wednesday and Saturday morning.



Quoting Tina Moore, 'if Sasha, the manager of the Community Centra, had not offered Dean this free space during COVID there would have been no Community Fridge'. This decision was helpful both for The Fridge and the Highfield Community Centre's kitchen/ cafe, which have developed a symbiotic working relationship closely helping each other as the kitchen works to provide an invaluable service and social hub for the community.

Hubbub was helpful from the start, for example paying towards refrigerators and giving them general advice and the guidelines to work within. Dacorum Borough Council have been supportive, and has certified a hygiene level certificate to undertake the work of storing, supplying and distributing the food. Local businesses have been supportive, with special mention given to Aldi, the Co-op, Tesco, Prudens, Bellgate One Stop Shop, Adeyfield One Stop, and for the animal Charity Pets In Need. Local churches have helped, especially St Paul's and St Mary's, as have many individual donors.



Canon John and Gordon present a donation of £500 from St Mary's and St Paul's



As a reflection of past help, currently there are 23 helpers, ranging from Duke of Edinburgh Awards lads through to pensioners.

Generally, in the store and at the outside tables there are 8 or 9 people each Wednesday and Saturday morning, with others involved in linking with the stores and in transport. Opening at 11am, the queue starts to form whatever the weather, from 10am onwards. What do the figures tell us about the number of visits from people coming for help? Well in the 11 months of 2021 the total number of visits was 4,018, the lowest number being 107 in February, the first month of opening, the highest being 451 in May. In 2022 the lowest was January with 361 and the highest was November with 650. In 2023 the lowest was December with 438 and the highest was April with 547. Modern technology has an important role to play in supporting this system, for example the Fareshare and Neighbourly app with its links to stores gives intelligence as to what is available and when.

Also, fascinatingly there is the Olio App which members of the general public can download if they wish to be Food Waste Heroes. The Hero collects food from a local supermarket, uploads photos of it and local people can come to the house to collect their choice free of charge. How ingenious and it helps to save food from landfill sites and to fill tummies!

This then gives us all a further insight into what is going on in our area. Should any reader wish to help out with admin support and food collection please contact [tinamoore0706@gmail.com](mailto:tinamoore0706@gmail.com)

GG 20/02/2024



For more information about the national organisation, click here:-

[https://issuu.com/hubbubuk/docs/cfn-annual-report\\_2022](https://issuu.com/hubbubuk/docs/cfn-annual-report_2022)

or scan:-



HHCF Admin team : Vikki, Donna and Tina

## RANDOM SMILES



### Destination?

Lenora, 95-years-old and in excellent health, confided that she was terribly worried: "Every one of my friends has already died and gone on to heaven. I'm afraid they're all wondering where I went!"

### Noah had problems, too

When Noah sailed the waters blue,  
he had his troubles same as you.  
For 40 days he drove the Ark  
before he found a place to park.

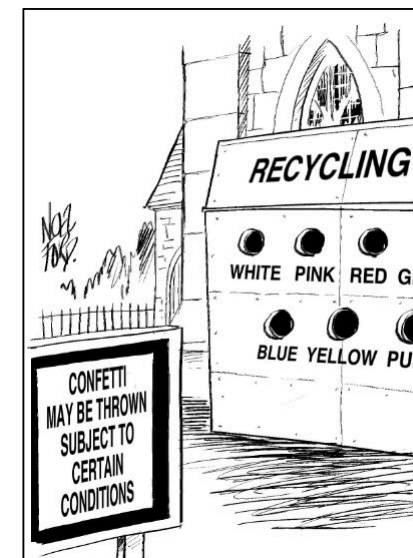
### Mother's reward

A man was decorating his new den and decided it was a good place to display all the awards he and his two sons had won at various athletic competitions. When he had filled two whole walls, he remarked to his wife that it was a shame she had no awards to contribute. The following day, she produced, neatly framed, the birth certificates of their two sons, and added them to the display.

### Do what we can to help...

Several women in the church prayer group were visiting an elderly friend who was ill. After a while, they rose to leave and told her: "We'll do what we can to help. We promise to keep you in our prayers."

"Thank you," she said. "But really, I can do my own praying. The thing I can't do is the dishes in the sink in the kitchen...."



## ST PAUL'S PATRONAL SERVICE – 4TH FEBRUARY

### A reflection by Revd Matt Renard, Team Vicar at St Barnabas...

When Revd John asked me to speak this evening, I wondered what I would say. What I have felt called to share is a little about my testimony as to why I am standing in front of you now.

I am the son of a Church of England priest. Born into and brought up within the Anglican world in all its different guises. My earliest memories are of acting in the nativity at Christmas, eating hot cross buns at Easter, coughing on incense when Dad got a little carried away, singing in the choir, trying to remember Bible verses for Sunday school and falling asleep in my dad's sermons!

To be honest, growing up, Sunday meant one thing: Church. But what I did for the rest of the week had very little to do with what I did on a Sunday. Now I wasn't some drug-taking, party-going, version of the younger son we read in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. And I certainly wasn't like Paul before his conversion; I didn't persecute others with faith.

Simply put I was quite ambivalent.

I quickly worked out if I knew the answers to keep people happy at Sunday school and the youth club (which I only went to because it's where the girls hung out!) it kept the peace and meant a quiet life for me. Yes, I read the daily Bible notes my parents gave me, but only for the same reasons

Yes, I heard about Jesus, week in and week out, but no one asked me if it meant anything to me. Even when I was confirmed in my early teenage years.

So, for my childhood and teenage years, Sunday meant one thing: church. For me, it was learning a bunch of rules and stories that would keep everyone happy. But really if I'm honest it didn't affect how I thought or treated others, what I did with my time, my money, or my talents. To be honest I was quite selfish and self-centred; this Jesus I heard so much about really hadn't had an impact.

That began to change when I decided to take a year out... like all my mates were. I naively thought that the bank of Mum and Dad would pay for it. As you can guess the short answer was 'nope – not a chance.'

By this time Dad was working at the local hospital as the Chaplain. So, he agreed to the year out, but I had to pay for it myself. Because he was working at the hospital, he said he would get me a job. Eventually, I ended up becoming a nursing auxiliary, the lowest of the low in nursing.



At the age of 18, I had a very rude awakening to the realities of life and death. I remember after my first week of shifts walking around a little more than shell-shocked.

It made me begin to ask those deeper questions we all have from time to time. If God is love, why is there pain and suffering in the world? Why does bad stuff happen to good people?

Working in the NHS in the 90's brought me face-to-face with those kinds of questions.

So, I began to look at what I had been taught and told, but to be honest I didn't have many answers that had depth. But I carried on working and carried on digging...

When I had enough to go travelling, I decided that unlike all my friends who had gone to Asia, Australia and across Europe I would do something different.

Reading my Bible and all that is recorded of Jesus' time made me think that if I went to Israel, I'd find some answers to my questions. Remember this is 18-year-old reasoning we are talking about.

The short end of a longer story of getting to Israel was that I ended up working in a Christian-run hotel on Mount Carmel, north of Haifa where a mix of Christian traditions came together and worshipped weekly.

I got to meet Christians from all over the world, who brought with them their understanding of who Jesus is. It helped me realise that this person of Jesus was not some white, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, sandal-wearing hippy that I had made him to be in my head.

But I came face to face with a Jesus that was reflected by all kinds of people from across the world. This Jesus I had read about became a living and breathing reality in countless strangers who spoke of how Jesus had changed their lives. ▷



Going to Israel and standing in the places Jesus stood helped me to bring to life all that I had read of him. Standing on the lake of Galilee where he called his first followers, standing on the hillside where he preached God's version of what life should be like, and sitting in the Garden tomb reflecting on what Jesus did for all of us changed who Jesus was to me.

Like Paul Jesus became a living breathing reality. Someone to love and follow for my life. A reason for being and for living.

I returned from Israel changed. I began to see Jesus in my patients and my medical colleagues. It ultimately drew me away from a world of academics and studying history into a vocation of nursing. Using the skills and talents God had given me to help care for others; not to just benefit myself, allowing this Jesus I had read about to change who I was.

Ultimately, I had an encounter, like Paul, I came face to face with Jesus where I had to decide who Jesus really was. I had to ask that question Who are you Lord?

Was Jesus someone to ignore, a threat, or someone to follow? The reason I'm standing here now is because like Paul I chose to follow Jesus for my life. Like Paul, I listened to that call to walk a different way in my life.

For twenty years it meant I worked in the NHS, vocationally as a nurse, before walking with Jesus meant I was called to a vocation of ministry. Which is a whole other story for another day.

## THE WEIGHT OF OIL

Before he moved away to Cambridge Tony Harris was STOMP Magazine's unofficial poet in residence.

With his Christmas card he sent a recent offering inspired by a sermon preached in his local church.

No time for Godot? Such hopelessness  
Others interpret as pure patience  
Turning the oiled-cog of happiness.

Treat your wounds with fine oils of fragrance  
Heal your mind with oils of holiness.  
Emit light, ignite oil in silence.  
Refine plastic pearls of emptiness  
Engineered to drive through our presence.

Yonder lies a time of silliness.  
Evening ending within our absence.  
Think judgement will be just carelessness?

ARH 14nov23 (acrostic)



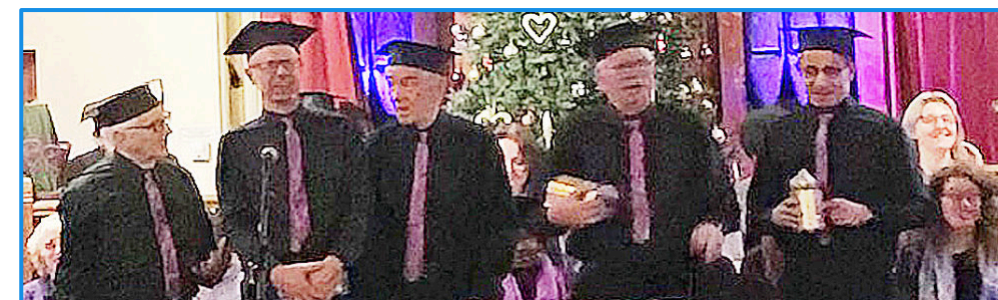
Next Sunday, I think I'll do a new take on the Parable of the Virgins and the Oil

## THE LIFE AND MISSION CHOIR

The Life and Mission Choir is a Christian choir — open to everyone and anyone with a love of singing. They are a bunch of enthusiastic amateurs of all ages and there are no auditions to join. They have been going for 24 years and have sung in many venues in North London, presenting Broadway style concerts, community events and musicals. They love singing a wide range of music in many styles. However, they like to keep their repertoire varied. As a choir they have premiered a number of original and successful home grown musicals, written by musical director, Paul. These musicals have toured many churches across London and the South East, as well as further afield, and are still going strong, moving audiences and sharing the joy of knowing Jesus. They rehearse in Friern Barnet in North London and are always happy to welcome anyone with enthusiasm and a need to smile, sing and worship.

In December, the choir came to St Paul's and treated their audience to their joyful toe-tapping Christmas musical, 'Light of Bethlehem'.

If you would like to learn more about them, take a look at their website: [lifeandmissionchoir.com](http://lifeandmissionchoir.com)



'Light of Bethlehem' - the wise men.



## FOR YOUR DIARY

# ART IN THE NAVE 2024



Art in the Nave 2024 will once again focus a bright spotlight on the visual arts when it opens at St Mary's Saturday 24th August. The three-day festival, from 24th to 26th August ( Bank Holiday) , now represents a major event in the Hertfordshire arts calendar with an exhibition and sale of high quality art works.

## THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL

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The Revd Dr. Luke Geoghegan (away on ESL)

The Revd Canon Richard Leslie

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