



A candle in...

THE

WINDOW

News and Views from the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames



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shaped by:

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Amazing Grace

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

You may have seen the singing of Amazing Grace at the start of the Diocesan service on Sunday June 7th. If you didn't, or you want to watch it again, [here it is](#):
The hymn was written in 1772 by John Newton who was then the Curate at Olney in the Diocese of Oxford. His life story is very relevant to this issue of the magazine.

He was conscripted into the navy and after leaving the service he became involved in the Atlantic slave trade, becoming a ship's captain. One night a terrible storm battered his vessel so severely that he became frightened enough to call out to God for mercy, a moment that marked the beginning of his spiritual conversion. He eventually repented and became, with William Wilberforce, an advocate of the abolition of the slave trade. Later, they worked together to establish a home for freed slaves in Sierra Leone.

John Newton was later to become one of the founders of the Christian Missionary Society which held its first meeting on the 16th January 1783.

World Refugee Day

Abielle Hallas



World Refugee Day has occurred annually on June 20th since 2001. This has been an important event for raising global awareness on the continued vulnerabilities refugees face, generating support for organisations working with refugees, and providing a platform for refugees to share their experiences. The focus of these days is therefore global, humanitarian, and political. It can also be an opportunity for us to consider how we as individuals and as a church community, can support refugees in our local area and across the world.

There are currently an estimated 70.8 million people across the world who have been forcibly displaced from their homes. The [United Nations Refugee Agency \(UNHCR\)](#) estimated that in 2019, 37,000 people were forced to flee from their homes every single day. For context, the population of Abingdon is around 39,000.

Refugees are some of the most vulnerable people in the world. Living conditions in refugee camps are poor – many have basic WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) and mental health infrastructure at best, and few are set up to cope with an infectious disease outbreak. The Calais Jungle, which was less than 200 miles from Abingdon when it stood, was set up on a former landfill site. Refugees and asylum seekers are often excluded from political platforms and processes, experience social discrimination in host countries, and are vilified in the media and by politicians. In addition to this, the majority of forcibly displaced people never leave their country, where they are vulnerable to continued persecution, conflict, or humanitarian disaster. Many IDPs have been displaced more than once.

Kindness, generosity, and hospitality towards refugees and strangers is intrinsic to Jesus' teachings. Every Christmas we remember Christ as a refugee, and every Passover we remember the Exodus out of Egypt. However, our support for refugees should not be constrained to a few Sundays a year, but rather should be a broader part of our Christian practice.

Every Action Counts

It may sometimes feel that the issues faced by refugees are too far removed from Abingdon, or are too large and complex for our actions to make any difference. The theme of this year's International Refugee Day is Every Action Counts – as members of our local community, and as global citizens, there is always something we can do.



- *Get Involved:* there are several local organisations working with refugees that we can learn more about and get involved with:



- [Host Abingdon](#): take a look at the article on Host Abingdon on page 9

- [Asylum Welcome](#): Asylum Welcome supports asylum seekers and refugees, including unaccompanied children. They host a Welcome Centre, and provide community information and a sending address for letters. They also provide advice on the immigration process, and host women's and men's groups.



- [Refugee Resource](#): Refugee Resource supports refugees, asylum seekers, and vulnerable migrants by providing psychological, social, and practical support. They also work with the Citizens Advice Bureau and immigration solicitors.

- [Open Door Oxford](#) – this is a drop-in service for refugees and asylum seekers at the East Oxford Community Centre run by volunteers offering advice, information, support, recreational activities and a free lunch



- [Sanctuary Hosting](#): Sanctuary Hosting helps refugees and vulnerable migrants find options for independent living across the Thames Valley, including finding host families.

Donate: you can also donate to local groups, or global organisations such as the UNHCR. Asylum Welcome are always glad to receive donations of packaged food and toiletries.

Pray: there is of course no right way to pray on any topic, but the Church of Scotland has curated prayers, psalms, hymns, and reflections as a [prayer resource](#) should you wish to use it.

We could also use this year's World Refugee Day as an opportunity to start a conversation about how we support refugees as a church community. How are we welcoming refugees into our churches? How are we supporting refugees outside of our buildings? How are we listening to refugees, and using our voice as a church to support them? [Welcome Churches](#) is an initiative to ensure that all refugees feel welcomed by local churches, providing training and support for congregations.

On the Importance of Listening

It is important to remember that refugees are not just victims and are not a homogenous, faceless group. And whilst we must absolutely recognise the challenges and vulnerabilities they face, we must also remember that people who are refugees have names, individual personalities, hopes, and dreams, even if we never know them.

We do not need to give refugees a voice – they already have voices. We just need to listen.

Media and political attention on the refugee crisis has significantly declined, but conflict, persecution, and environmental disasters persist. With current affairs being dominated by COVID-19 the continued challenges faced by refugees is in danger of becoming even more invisible. In these times, we are all thinking about what our churches will look and feel like when the buildings re-open. This week is therefore a time to reflect on what we want them to look and feel like for refugees.

God is a righteous judge

Bishop Steven Croft (abridged by RR) from his blog found [here](#).

Reproduced with permission from the Diocese of Oxford

The corona virus pandemic has led the news bulletins every single day from mid-March, through the whole of April and almost to the end of May. But on 31st May, a different – though related – story at last broke through.



Six days earlier, on 25th May, in the city of Minneapolis, an African American man named George Floyd was arrested by police. Footage taken by eyewitnesses shows a white police officer kneeling on George Floyd's neck during the arrest. Tragically, George died in police custody. Over the following week, riots have broken out across America and are raging still. It is these riots which at last stole the headlines from the virus. At the heart of the riots is a cry – a cry for justice. An appeal for the judicial system, for the courts, for society, for the economy, for the world, to be fair – especially in this case to be fair and not discriminate on the grounds of race or colour.

We will need to hear and to think much more about justice in the coming months as the pandemic continues to do harm. On 9th April, the journalist, Emily Maitliss, offered a powerful introduction to BBC's Newsnight. Her words as well turn on the idea of justice. They are worth repeating:

"The disease is not a great leveller, the consequences of which everyone – rich or poor – suffers the same. This is a myth which needs debunking. Those on the front line right now – bus drivers, shelf stackers, nurses, care home workers, hospital staff and shopkeepers are disproportionately the lowest paid members of our workforce. They are more likely to catch the disease because they are more exposed. Those who live in tower blocks and small flats will find the lockdown a lot tougher. Those who work in manual jobs will be unable to work from home".

The corona virus does not discriminate but its effects do not fall evenly. The virus itself and its aftershocks will disproportionately affect the poorest and those left behind. As the world rebuilds, we will need to remember as a society our deep instincts of fairness and goodness and justice. As Christians we will need to remind the world where those ideas have come from and what underpins them.

Psalm 7 is a very good place to begin. The psalm is a prayer for help, like Psalm 6. The situation is not sickness but persecution by enemies without cause:

O Lord my God in you I take refuge; save me from all who pursue me without cause.

The psalm protests innocence and we will return to that later. But at the centre of the prayer and running through the psalm like a thread is an appeal to God as judge. God is a God of justice. His judgement is right and true and fair.

"Awaken my God the judgement that you have commanded" (verse 6)

"Let the malice of the wicked come to an end but establish the righteous for you test the heart and mind, O righteous God" (verse 9) and finally:

"God is a righteous judge; he is provoked all day long" (verse 11).

The keystone of this ancient, powerful prayer is that God the creator of the world is a moral and ethical God: a God who is righteous, a God who cares about justice.

Where does that idea even come from and how does it come to be at the heart of this ancient prayer?

In the tiny community of the sons of Israel, Hebrew wanderers, there emerges an extraordinary idea with such power that it was to change the entire world: God is a righteous judge.

God cares for widows and orphans. God cares for the poor. God calls for society to watch over the weak.

If God is just then that places an especial burden on the powerful who hold power in God's name to seek to be just and fair also. It places a burden on the laws of a society and those who administer the law to embody fairness and transparency and equality.

Jesus was born in the reign of the first of the Caesars, Augustus: God's justice taking human flesh. After his death and resurrection the new Christian faith spread like wildfire, despite persecution and threat: such was the attraction of a faith which proclaimed a moral centre to the universe: that God is a righteous judge and more than this a God of love, that each life matters, that even slaves and children count, that everyone is worthy of fair treatment.

It has taken two thousand years but these ideas of God's justice in Psalm 7 now undergird our courts and our parliament, our free press, which has the right to hold the powerful to account, our electoral system, our sense of fairness as a society, our national health service, which holds that basic healthcare should be free at the point of need, our human rights legislation and our approach to new technologies. The same principles undergird the United Nations, the global development goals and the other key international institutions.

As a Church we need to nurture our sense of God's justice and fairness in the world. We nurture that sense of justice by reading the prophets and the psalms, by retelling the story of our faith to all who will listen, by taking up the cause of fairness in the public square, by understanding the capacity of our faith to change our world, by passing on this world changing commitment to justice to our children and grandchildren, by working for a better and more sustainable world.

Christians have played their part – in many cases a leading role – in the fight against slavery, in the battle against apartheid, in the civil rights movement in the United States, in the founding of the welfare state, in the extension of the franchise, in the founding of the United Nations, in the global battle against poverty and in the environmental movement. We have done this because we say Psalm 7 with integrity: God is a righteous judge. The faith and courage to lead in these ways is nurtured through our worship and in our prayers and by our whole community, patterned on the person of Christ. This Pentecost is a moment to seek God's strength for the next chapter in this long struggle to nurture a commitment to justice in our common life in the coming years.

The faith that God is a righteous judge leads to a reappraisal of our own standing before God. Our faith leads us to the place where we know we cannot stand before God on our own merits or record. We stand in need of a saviour, a redeemer. God gives his Son in love for the sins of the whole world. We stand before God not through our own merits but through faith in Jesus Christ: he becomes our righteousness and our salvation.

The corona virus pandemic is a season of terrible desolation but it will also become a moment of profound reflection as the world and as our country begin to rebuild. In such a time, it is the calling of the church to remember that God is a righteous judge, that there is an ethic of fairness at the very heart of the universe, and to lend our support and our voice to those who fight for justice: those who are ignored or forgotten; those whose lives are disproportionately affected by the pandemic; those who are victims of prejudice, discrimination and violence.

Psalm 7 sets before us a clear vision of justice at the very heart of God and at the heart of the universe. God is a righteous judge. For that reason God is worthy of our praise. The psalm ends with thanksgiving and adoration:

*I will give thanks to the Lord for his righteousness,
And I will make music to the name of the Lord most High*

Abingdon supports BLM

Gwen and David Bevington

Did you know about the protest rally held in Abbey Meadows on 14 June? David happened to spot it on the Oxford Mail website. OK, it wasn't a good idea for older people to risk catching Covid in a heaving multitude; but it seemed too local an event, and too important an issue, to avoid entirely. We went with some trepidation, clutching face-masks and our fully charged mobile phones with our solicitor's (ie daughter's) number on them - as advised by a lawyer speaking on Woman's Hour to parents anxious about teenagers attending such events. We thought we'd stand well outside the edge of the crowd.

We could have realised that Abingdon is a town, not a city - and Abbey Meadows is a big space. The two or three hundred people there were easily able to socially-distance, and you couldn't imagine a quieter, calmer, more law-abiding "crowd". We were shamed and humbled by the testimonies of the black people who spoke, especially by the Abingdonian who challenged us to call out racism when we see or hear it. It was good to hear from Neil Fawcett - Town, Vale and County councillor - who spoke on his own behalf and also read a message from our MP.

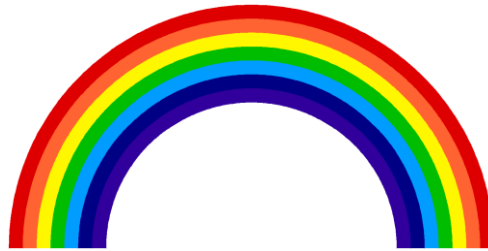
Most people there were young, or younger than we are, and white; we didn't see anyone we knew. We guess all was arranged last-minute and not overly publicised. We were glad the Team Parish wasn't totally unrepresented, and hope others are too.



Thought provoking Images:

Do make suggestions for future issues to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk





A Rainbow Prayer
Based upon the colours of the rainbow
- a symbol of God's promise.
 With thanks to Peter Hemmings

Remember and give thanks for:



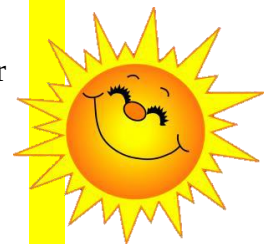
the fire and rescue services, their bravery and dedication
 postal workers and others delivering parcels, news and goods
 blood donors and precious gift they give
 the Red Cross, Red Crescent and all organisations seeking to save lives and relieve suffering



the people who produce and bring us food giving a balanced diet of vitamins and nourishment
 the hungry and the dispossessed



paramedics and the work of the Ambulance Service
 the warmth of the sun and people who bring sunshine into the lives of others
 wisdom to use the gold that we have wisely and for the benefit of others
 prisoners and the work of Amnesty and other organisations
 people who are afraid and cannot find the courage they need to face their problems and challenges





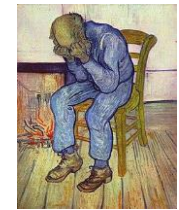
the abundance of nature, and its variety (teach us
respect of earth on which we live and forgive us
our extravagance in the way we use your gifts)
people who are consumed with envy, unable to
rejoice in the success or good fortune of others
(help us to put aside jealous thoughts which
prompt malicious words and deeds)

all who work in the NHS: the medical staff,
technicians, pharmacists and all who help
hospitals and surgeries function
the police and armed forces
all who suffer from depression, frustrated that life
can seem so hard, and for whom it is difficult to
find joy

people who are unsure of their role in life pulled in
opposite directions.
people who face an uncertain future

those called to be leaders of nations
people whose nature is to be shy, quiet and
uncomplaining
all who mourn
people who have gone before us, and we know we
shall meet again.

We thank God for all the experiences of life.
Bless us all and those for whom we have prayed.
We ask this in the name of your son
Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.
Amen.



Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times...

Gwen Bevington

...is how some people would describe refugees. Across the world, millions of ordinary people – people like us – are having to abandon everything familiar to flee war, persecution or terror.

If a refugee lands up here or in other western countries, they have to claim asylum and will go through a grim and lengthy process to be granted refugee status. Until then, they will be classed as asylum-seekers, NRPF – with No Recourse to Public Funds. People who work with asylum-seekers encounter utter desperation.

One group who have been (in a sense) privileged are those who came here under the (Syrian) Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme, launched by David Cameron with the aim of granting asylum to refugees from the war in Syria. The families who arrived under this scheme are here by invitation, have refugee status with five years' initial leave to remain, and may work and receive the benefits to which any British citizen is entitled. There is now a significant Syrian community in Oxford, as the city council have invited many families under the VPRS scheme. There are also some families in Vale and South Oxfordshire; these were supported initially by the British Red Cross and subsequently by the local charity Host Abingdon.

I've had the privilege, through involvement in Host Abingdon, of getting to know some of the families. So I know that the words at the head of this article are very apt. These are ordinary people: people who want their children to have a happy childhood, a decent education and the chance of a good future; people who try hard to make ends meet; people who value family relationships and friendships. The adults badly want to learn/improve their English (and envy their children's ease in so doing) and to understand British culture, while treasuring the ways from home. They have ordinary strengths and weaknesses, quirks and flashes of brilliance; they can be at different times resourceful and independent, or needy and dependent. They can inspire, move to fervent admiration, amuse and irritate.

Running alongside all this, what I can never forget is that they've been through extraordinary times. They've experienced degrees of loss I can only begin to imagine. That doesn't make them heroes, but it does mean there is a gulf between us. I'm far older than all of them, but my life experience feels shallow beside theirs.

The gift is that we can connect! The most precious times come when we laugh at the same thing. I love it when they mock my old phone (though I still resist a smartphone); I loved it when they cracked up because I offered somebody a lift and then remembered I didn't have the car with me – are all old Englishwomen this crazy?

It would sour the tone of the article if I described what it's like helping people to negotiate the benefits system. I was told at one point that the families should think themselves lucky, as many others are even worse off. Funnily enough, this didn't warm me to the system. The VPRS families are indeed "lucky" compared with other refugees. But they are as bewildered as anyone would be if they receive a letter announcing the unexpected suspension of housing benefit; it's at least as daunting for them to try to make a phone-call involving repeated menus of options, as it would be for me to do it in French. They get as exhausted as we would, if we were suddenly transplanted to a middle eastern culture and expected to manage – and we might not be suffering post-traumatic stress.

I sought out Host Abingdon when we arrived here early in 2017, because I was heart-broken. I felt we had given many people the message that they aren't welcome here – as if we aren't a mongrel nation, as if the air and earth belong to us, as if we aren't enriched by those who come among us from outside. "I was a stranger and you welcomed me," says the Lord in the parable of judgment. My prayer for the refugee families in our community is that they will find a welcome, a home and a future.

Let's welcome diversity!

Charles Masheder

I find myself standing in St George's Cathedral in Cape Town with a neighbour whose name I cannot possibly know, having just simply smiled at one another in passing. We are singing a hymn by Fred Kaan "For the healing of the nations" and it is for me one of those special moments that hopefully we all have from time to time. The words strike me so forcefully that my eyes well up. South Africa has taken amazing steps in the last few years and the black lady next to me hopefully is able to see me, as I see her, simply as an equal human being. We and all the congregation sing together the third verse:

***All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice may we hallow life's brief span.***

As the service progresses, at the Lord's Prayer, we are encouraged to use 'our mother tongue' to pray, so a variety of languages are used. It is so powerful, as in spite of a diversity of sounds, we hold together very well and there is a real feeling of unity in the congregation.

It was 1998, post-apartheid but not by many years, and I was on my first visit to South Africa, the 'Rainbow Nation'. I learnt about my family link with that country; my great-grandmother had grown up there. It is a very beautiful country and I entered into the life of the tourist. I visited many beauty spots but also places which are really disturbing; Soweto, the Cape Flats and Robben Island among them. To see where Nelson Mandela was held for 18 of his 27 years of incarceration in horrific circumstances and to see the Hector Pieterse memorial in Soweto touches the heart deeply. Of course, it was good to be able to feel apartheid, as an institution, was history and that people of different nationalities all have the vote, but true equality is still a long way off as it is in probably almost every country. Where I and friends have stayed in good, but not necessarily luxurious, hotels, not far away will be large areas of poor housing. Poverty and Wealth seem common bed-fellows.

The first time I was taken round Soweto, I said to the driver "how do you feel about us tourists visiting your homes?" He replied "if I came to your country, wouldn't you want to show me round your home?" He did not see voyeurism in my visit (nor, can I say, was there) and he made me feel very welcome and I hoped that if he had come to the UK I would have treated him the same.

When later I was in Barbados, I attended the early service (7am) in St George's Cathedral and I was aware that many were looking at me, certainly not with hostility but possibly with prejudice, possibly with love, because I was the lone white man at such an early hour. I rejoiced that perhaps it might be the reverse of how they might have felt here in the UK if the situation was reversed.

In every human being there is, I believe, an in-built tendency to tribalism, and in many, but, thank God, not all, a reluctance to welcome diversity. I attended some years ago a training session on racial equality and we were challenged to acknowledge our own prejudices. They may be hidden, even deeply, and it is only self-awareness which will lead us to acknowledge them. In the wake of recent Black Lives Matter demonstrations, we have an opportunity to see what prejudices we have that might alienate us from other people and see how to eradicate such reactions.

A prejudice is something to acknowledge; it is what we do with it that really matters. A prejudice may simply be a preference and throughout life we will have plenty of those. We probably have flowers or trees or various foods we particularly like – places or countries where we have felt especially 'at home' – cultures, arts and music which touch us most deeply. What a joy though to learn to appreciate something new. At all times and situations, our actions as Christians should always be motivated by God's love for us and for all people equally. Let us pray that

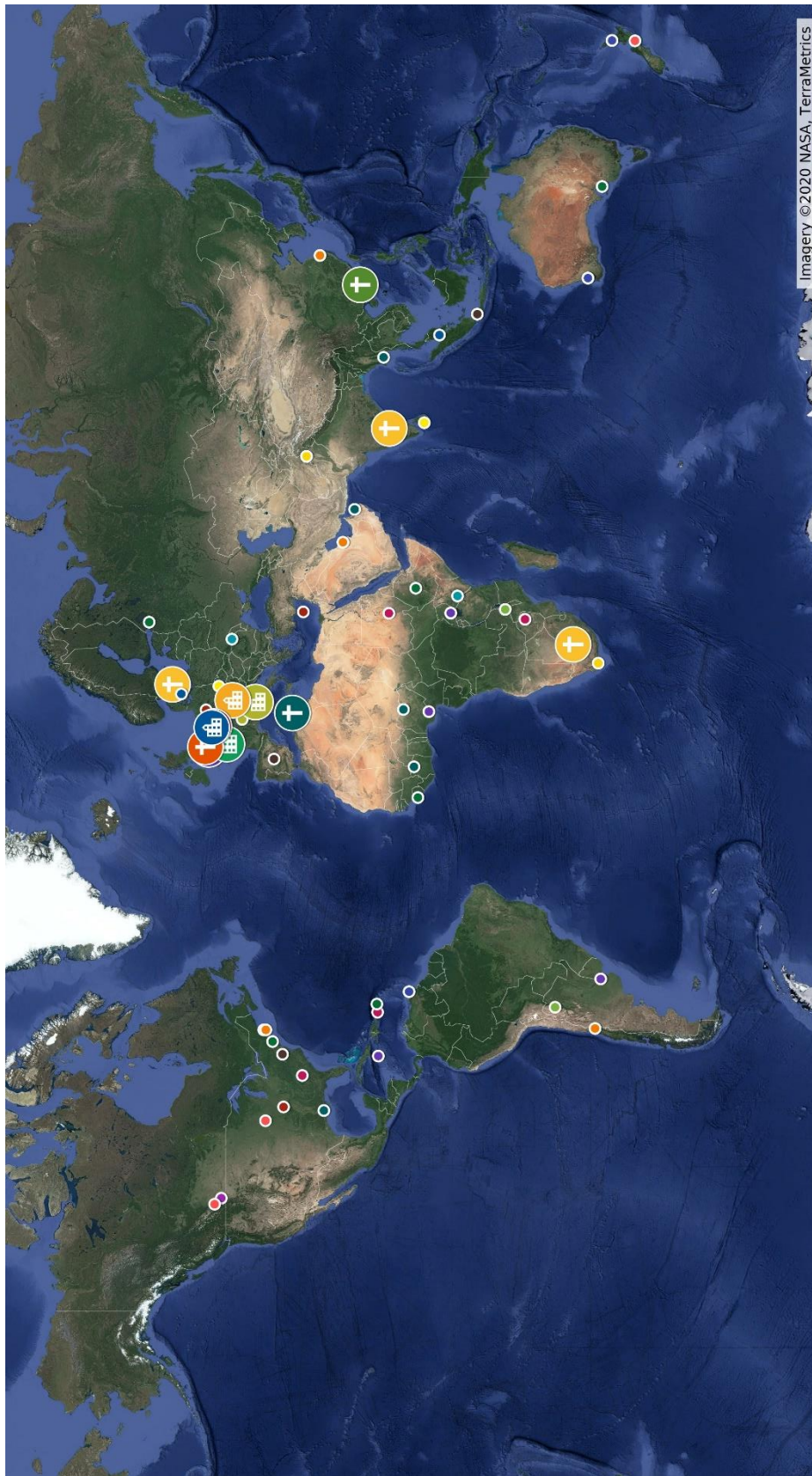
In our common quest for justice may we hallow life's brief span.

World Connectivity

Rob Rutherford with help from Google Maps

Thank you to all the members of the parish that have contributed information. I apologise that I had to restrict some of you to only three entries. The on-line version gives you the ability to zoom in and to click data points etc. It is constructed from 5 layers which can individually be turned on or off.

It is [here](#):



Key

Layer 1

- Mary Anderson
- Bp Henry Scriven
- Peter Penfold
- Tom Hardy
- Louise Heffernan
- Lyn Richmond
- Tony Richmond
- Eluned Hallas
- Rob Rutherford
- Rosalind Rutherford

Layer 2

- Charles Masheder
- Helen Owen
- Roger and Sue Cox
- Valerie Whitlow
- Felicity Masheder
- Jeff & Janet Dale
- Keith and Marian Ward
- Margery Radford
- Silvia Joinson
- Sue Pemberton

Layer 3

- Alan and Margaret Hoskins
- Alex and Gill Titcombe
- Charles Miller
- Gwyneth Lewis
- Claudia Martin
- Evelyn Hancox
- Hilda Mafabi
- Abielle Hallas

Layer 4

- Oxford Link Diocese
- Augustine of Hippo
- Holy Trinity Church
- Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames
- SokHan Yong
- St Peter and St Paul Church

Layer 5

- Argentan
- Lucca
- Schongau
- Sint-Niklaas

A Blessing for a meeting on Zoom

Martin Wroe (*Churches Together in Lewes*) suggested by Mary Anderson

In the place where eye contact is impossible
The silent lexicon of non-verbal cues extinct
May this not be the crowd without the wisdom
Despite our isolation, our social distance

May we give thanks for this awkward digital blessing
May we be admitted, may we not be muted
May our distorted sound and scrambled words
Finally align, may they catch up with our pixelated vision

May travelling this unfamiliar landscape
Neither lose us, nor completely exhaust us
And may our bandwidth always find room
For patience, gentleness and the peace
that bypasses misunderstanding.

May every meeting open and close with a poem,
A joke or a steadying moment of silence
Some brief transfiguration in time, to remind us
Of who we were, before all this,
And who we may be again

May our agenda always be kindness
The waving hand, our ecstatic benediction
And may there never be any other business,
For ever and ever. Amen

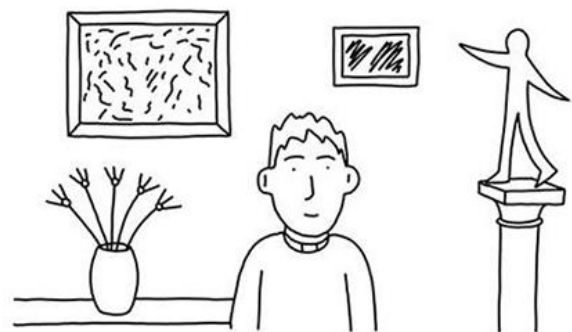


BACKGROUNDS

FOR BROADCASTING FROM THE CLERGY STUDY



SCHOLARLY



ARTISTIC



SPIRITUAL



REALISTIC

Supporting Young Carers in Lockdown

John Tabor – Manager, Be Free Young Carers and Lesley Legge – Chairman of Trustees

These are changed times for everyone. Self-isolation. Shielding. Social distancing. What now is normal? For young carers in Oxfordshire pre-COVID-19, normal is the responsibility and stress of caring seven days a week, many caring over 20 hours a week, the anxiety they feel about the person they care for - will they be OK in the morning? - feeling left out, isolated unable to meet friends, ironing comes first or bathing their brother, looking out for their Mum, weighing up whether to go to school or make sure Dad is safe.



Ask a young carer about their life and they'll probably say they get tired, they're doing good, they're learning to do good things. What else should we expect? Caring for a family member is unconditional, you'd do the same if you had to wouldn't you? The difference here is they're children; they don't get to do what other children do; they don't get the same parental attention, that goes on the sibling or parent with the health condition. They don't get time for themselves which impacts on their development and mental well-being.

Two thirds of the young carers the Oxfordshire charity Be Free Young Carers supports have identifiable mental health issues linked directly to caring: stress, anxiety, isolation, depression. In Oxfordshire, it is estimated there are 12,000 young carers (BBC 2018), on average two in every classroom, most living under the radar of any specialist support.

Begin to imagine then what it must be like for a young carer during these changed times. No school, no school lunches, no socialising, no respite, trapped at home with the person(s) they care for, with the elder brother with high functioning autism, with the parent with an addiction or disability. And of course there will be children who are now, for the first time, caring for those suffering from COVID-19, no PPE for them, they just do it.

Especially at times like these we rightly look out for the vulnerable in society. Young carers have a mental vulnerability they carry each day heightened by the danger of the virus. Recent estimates of vulnerable children continuing with school during the lockdown show only 10% able to attend are doing so.

During lockdown Be Free Young Carers has been in regular contact with families making sure they are receiving the support they need, has been collaborating with other charities to distribute food to those families 'at risk', shielding and unable to food shop and has been providing volunteer based telephone befriending to young carers. In the coming weeks we will make a range of online content available to young carers; it's very important that these vulnerable young people have the opportunity to express their concerns, find out how others in similar situations are coping and, yes, perhaps make good friends.

We know from feedback received from families that lockdown is proving very mentally challenging for many young carers. Once we are through this isolation, once normal returns in some form, young carers will need support and help to recover. Schools, which normally play such a vital role not only in identifying these young people, referring to Be Free Young Carers but also in providing effective in-school support will need to give time to young carers to express their feelings, time to get the emotions back to normal. Outside school young carers will need the specialist support Be Free Young Carers offers, 1 to 1 support, talking with other young carers, having fun, being a child, and we have ensured that our full supporting team is there to help – now and as we come out of lock down.

We are very grateful to all those who have supported us recently through sponsorship of our efforts by the BFYC team in the 2.6/26 London Marathon Challenge to help us do this.

Abingdon Gospel Choir (AGC)

Patrick Mulqueen, Heidi Cottrell, Louise Heffernan



Gospel music is a well-loved genre which originated from the oral traditions of the African-American Church. Since then it has become popular worldwide, a much-loved way to express the joy of the good news of the gospel of Christ.

Abingdon has its very own gospel choir which started life in 2013. The idea was

conceived at a 40th Wedding celebration in Naas, Ireland where founding members Patrick Mulqueen, John Prout and Ian Miles, as they listened to the music being performed by the Irish band, started to chat about gospel music and became inspired to start a choir in Abingdon.

So Abingdon Gospel Choir began to rehearse in October 2013 at what has become its base in Trinity Church, Abingdon, meeting on a Thursday evening. We had help from Oxford Gospel choir who came along to help us with some music ideas but then it just took off. In April 2014 we put on a significant and successful Gospel Concert in aid of the Street Child World Cup charity initiative.

AGC enjoys performing at all kinds of events, from outdoors such as at Abingdon's Big Easter Event to churches, care homes, supermarkets, and weddings. Until 2018, the choir was under the musical direction of Ian Miles. When he and his family moved away, Heidi Cottrell became our MD. Our repertoire is growing with the inclusion of new works and some excellent material written by Heidi herself. Our favourites include "Alpha and Omega" and "What a friend" both of which have become signature songs. We got "What a friend" from Maxine Brooks (Birmingham Community Gospel choir - look for that on YouTube). Also we love "I want Jesus to walk with me", "Every time I feel the spirit", "Assurance", "Total Praise" and many others. And then there are some beautiful new ones from Heidi such as "Planted" and "Why" (which was written especially for us). We enjoy the supportive playing of our fantastic pianist Michiyo Machida.

At the end of last year we had a great time singing at Bridge House followed by Waitrose, where Heidi's children held signs and encouraged the shoppers to listen, the only criticism being that they wished we'd brought more songs to sing! We had planned a concert in April, but that had to be cancelled due to lockdown. Currently we cannot meet physically but meet to sing virtually on a regular basis, which is different, but works well under the circumstances. We hope to restart meeting again as soon as it is safe to do so, and would love to welcome new singers, so please look out for us!

Singing as a group really does make us feel uplifted, and it's good that we can praise God as we do so.

Come and see... and hear!

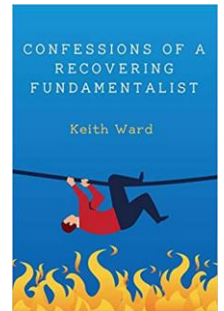
Contact us through: <https://www.facebook.com/abingdongospelchoir/> or: Ring Alan on Ab.521247

Living with Difference

*An excerpt from Chapter 8 of Confessions of a Recovering Fundamentalist by Keith Ward
(quoted with permission)*

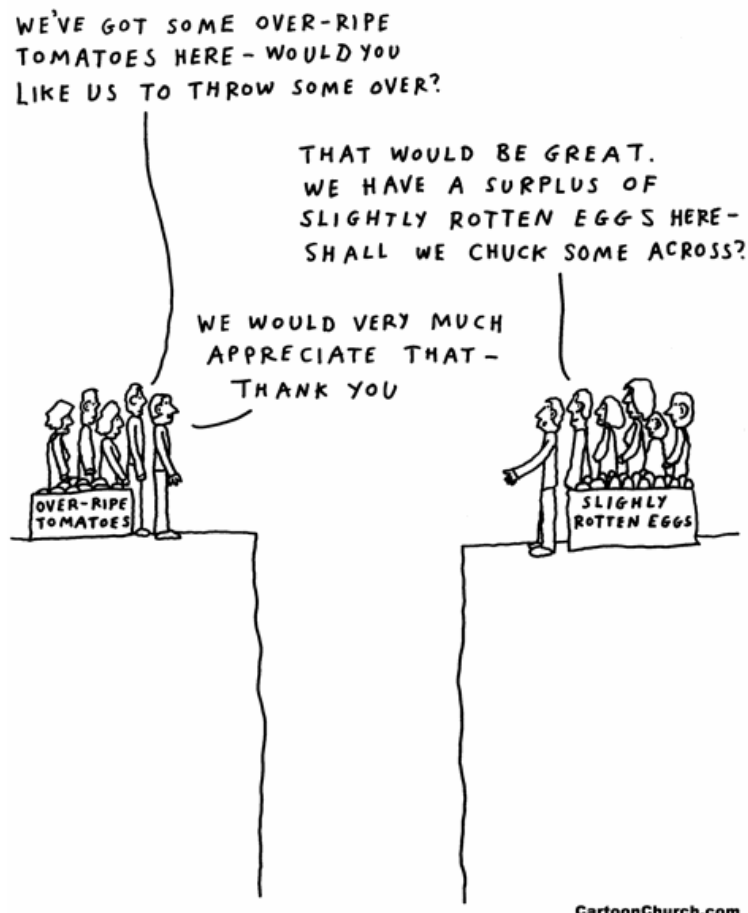
What I have described as the central core of Christian belief is really very simple. It takes no intellectual effort or love of argument to accept it fully and enthusiastically. So why have Christians spent so much time arguing with one another and condemning those who disagree with them about exactly which beliefs are acceptable? I suppose that once a set of people get together in a society, the first thing they are going to do is disagree with each other. That seems to be human nature. Maybe it is not all bad, because argument is a good way of refining our own views and getting clearer about the complexity of understanding the world and human life. It only gets bad when arguments lead to hatreds and the breakdown of human relationships. What is needed – especially in a society like the church, which is supposed to help us love our enemies – is a way of learning to live with disagreements. Especially in religion – where there is usually no way of deciding who is right and who is wrong, and where everyone admits that the whole thing is mysterious and on the boundaries of human understanding – any attempt to draw hard and sharp lines seems inappropriate. I imagine that anyone who wants to call themselves a Christian will see Jesus as the image of divine love and as one who gave his life in pursuing the goal of reconciling estranged human beings to God. They will want to practice a way of devotion to God as truly seen in Jesus. They will pray for the Spirit that was in Jesus to live in them, to make them better mediators of the divine love and wisdom. And they will hope for the eventual fulfilment of human life in conscious relation to God.

Do we need to get more technical than that?



Dave Walker's take on ecumenism....

HOW CHRISTIANS CAN WORK TOGETHER ACROSS THE DIVIDE

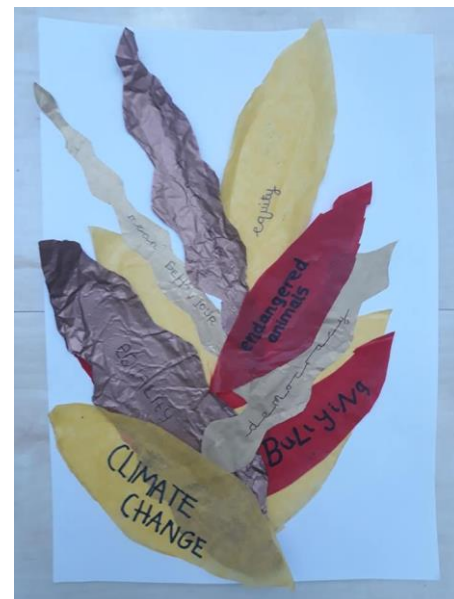


Junior Church

Sue Pemberton on behalf of the Junior Church leadership team.

Junior Church continues to meet through the private Facebook group. We have been following the Gospel readings and making use of the resources provided by Roots. Music continued with a video from Mel and Miriam of Junior Church High Intensity Interval Training – a rendition of one of our favourite action songs: ‘God the Father has many Children’!

On Pentecost Sunday we looked at the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit and how the disciples were enabled to speak out to everyone, and were given the courage to do so. The children were asked to think about what we need to speak out about today (this came before the latest Black Lives Matter events). For an activity they created Pentecost flame collages and wrote on the flames the things they wanted to speak out about. Here is a collage created by the Jarvis family.

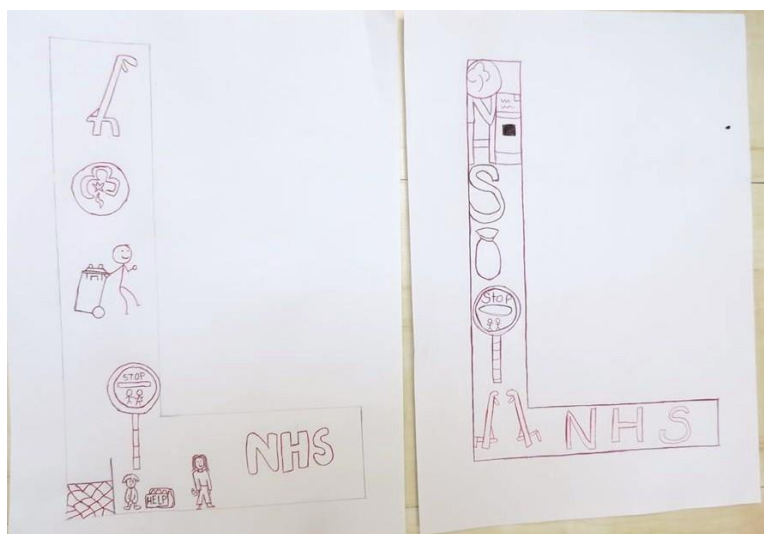


On Trinity Sunday we learned that words starting with TRI usually have something to do with three, and we thought of ones we know, eg tricycle, trio, triple choc cookies. Although the components do work on their own, they are much better when combined together. To explore the concept of ‘three persons in one’ we about how we are all made up of different ‘people’ – you may be a son, daughter, friend, grandchild, Brownie, Beaver, musician,



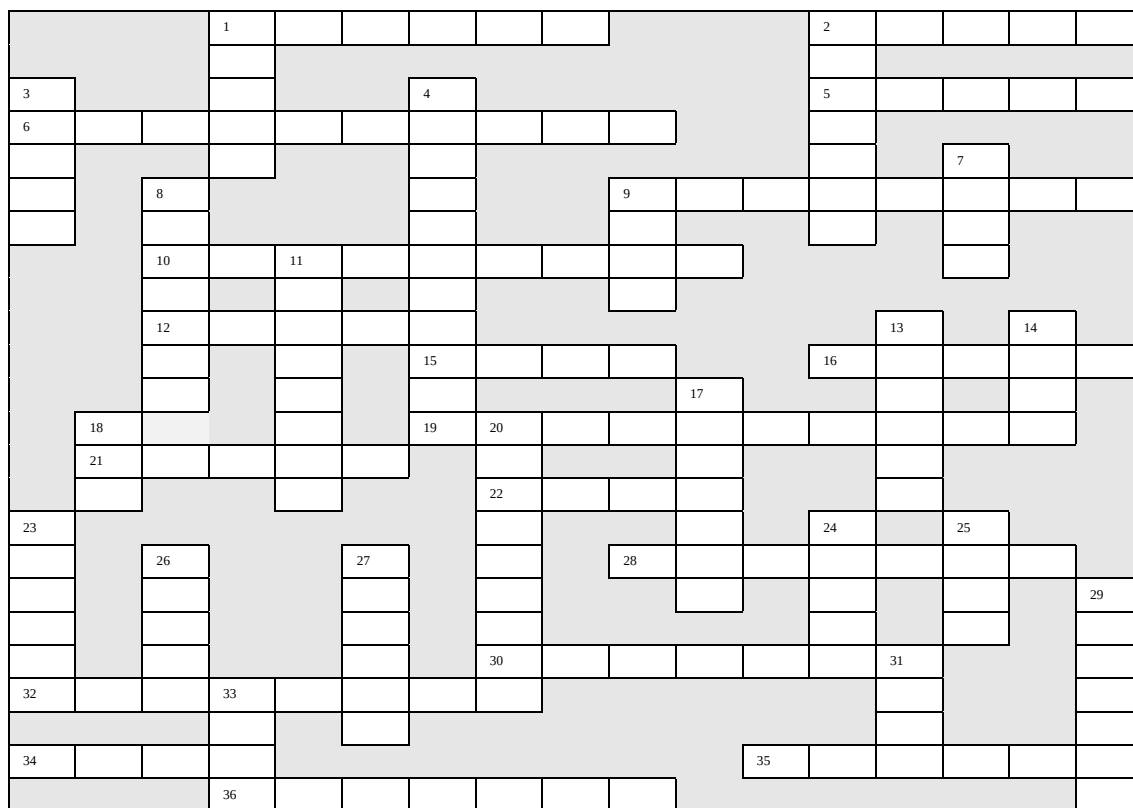
football player, dancer etc. The activity was to make a tri-coloured bracelet, hair tie etc. Maia and Lily made these loom band bracelets and Miriam made a pencil case tie.

On 14th June we learned how Jesus gathered the disciples together and sent them out to further His work. He gave them some guidance, but they were going out into the unknown and having to learn as they went. They were also called on to do this as volunteers, safe in the knowledge that God would support them. This story has great relevance to us today – volunteers have been doing wonderful things and we are all in the unknown, having to learn how to live in this new situation. Jesus warned the disciples that they would encounter obstacles along the way so the children were invited to make an obstacle course. Great fun was had, judging by the photos! The children also made large L (for Learner) pictures with ideas about how we can help our communities and/or thank to people doing this. Eliza and Jemima sent us their pictures.



June Crossword:

All clues link to popular June (or early July) activities

Kryptonite

Clues Across

- 1** Needed in trousers and on the pitch (6)
2 Kind of heel or golf club (5)
5 Fielding position in the water channel (5)
6 Fruit grown from drinking tube with baking Mary (10)
9 Yabba Dabba Doo. Andrew is almost a cartoon character (8)
10 Women, it's your time at 3 down. Put on your hats. (6,3)
12 Nearby, the play is done, (5)
15 Top useful Scotsman (4)
16 Potassium follows a transient new star making a hard-hitter (5)
19 Farm bird and male before rise found in SW19 (6,4)
21 Have a vision of glory to find founder of pop festival (5)
22 Cricketer who can barbeque (4)
28 Egyptians made this stage (7)
30 Sounds noisy for tennis item (7)
32 Midsummer fish holds short glue (8)
34 British golfer known by English emblem (4)
35 See 7 down
36 See 25 down

Clues Down

- 1** Behead shriek for accompaniment to 4 (5)
2 Cyclist has hair piece and drinks (7)
3 Organise shoreline for horse racing (5)
4 US golf venue is hard on the feet (6,5)
7 **and 35 ac.** Born in Ireland, Welsh surname, plays cricket for England (4,6)
8 Jockeys seek prize of good aged tea (4,3)
9 Lowered note for a kind of horse race (4)
11 16 ac.'s surname (8)
13 Arguing on the river (6)
14 Spherical dance (4)
17 Mash character checks linesmen's accuracy (7)
18 Ear, nose and throat muddled for tennis court feature (3)
20 See 26 down
23 Tournament of monarch (6)
24 Flies golden overhead or two under (5)
25 **and 36 ac.** Italy transfers funds for cycling road race (4, 1'6)
26 **and 20 down.** Lose crayon rule sorted for place to keep kings and queens (5, 9)
27 Annoying song pleases golfer (6)
29 Confused I signal water sport (7)
31 For travel, fit our bikes inside (4)
33 Embryonic plant or successful player (4)

Test for Grey Cells

Suggested by Judith Hosking



1. Johnny's mother had 3 children. The first child was named April. The second child was named May. What was the third child's name?
2. There is a clerk at the butcher shop, he is 5' 10" tall and he wears size 13 sneakers. What does he weigh?
3. Before Mt. Everest was discovered, what was the highest mountain in the world?
4. How much dirt is there in a hole... that measures two feet by three feet by four feet?
5. What word in the English Language... is always spelled incorrectly?
6. Billy was born on December 28th, yet his birthday is always in the summer. How is this possible?
7. In California, you cannot take a picture of a man with a wooden leg. Why not?
8. What was the President's Name... in 1975?
9. If you were running a race, and you passed the person in 2nd place, what place would you be in now?
10. Which is correct to say, "The yolk of the egg are white" or "The yolk of the egg is white"?
11. If a farmer has 5 haystacks in one field and 4 haystacks in the other field, how many haystacks would he have if he combined them all in a third field?

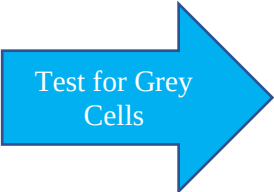
Is this a puzzle?!

Suggested by Rhianydd Hallas

I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible (merely by fluke). It kept people looking so hard for the facts, and for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially since the names of the books are not capitalised, but the truth finally struck home to numbers of readers. To others it was a difficult job. I want it to be a most fascinating time for you. Yes, there are some really easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a pastor, or maybe a deacon, to find one of them, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. One little elderly lady says she brews a cup of tea so that she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax now, for there really are sixteen books of the Bible in this text, and one additional hypothesized source.

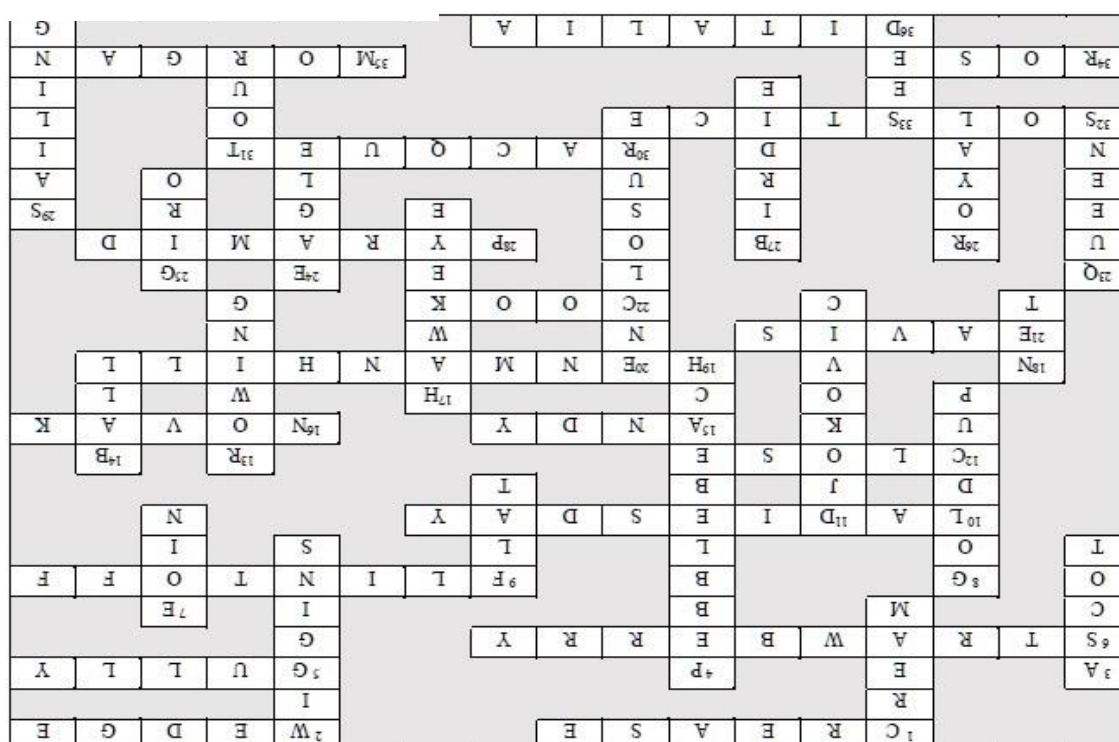
Puzzle answers are to be found on pages 19 and 20

Puzzle answers


 Test for Grey Cells

1. Johnny, of course.
2. Meat.
3. Mt. Everest; it just wasn't discovered yet. [You're not very good at this are you?]
4. There is no dirt in a hole.
5. Incorrectly
6. Billy lives in the Southern Hemisphere.
7. You can't take pictures with a wooden leg. You need a camera to take pictures.
8. Same as is it now – Donald Trump [Oh, come on.]
9. You would be in 2nd. You passed the person in second place, not first.
10. Neither, the yolk of the egg is yellow [Duh]
11. One. If he combines all of his haystacks, they all become one big one

Crossword Answers:



Useful Weblinks:

To take part in the Diocesan services led by the Bishops and to find live streams from other churches:

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/coronavirus-covid-19/livestream/>

Parish Resources: for worship and for reading

http://www.abingdon-st-helens.org.uk/Parish/P_resources.html

The Abingdon Blog with its thought for the day:

<https://www.abingdonblog.co.uk/>

Page for Church of England links: services, daily readings etc

<https://www.churchofengland.org/>

FOOD BANK. The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support even though churches are closed. **Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm.** Their immediate need is tinned meat & vegetables (not tomatoes), long-life milk, fruit squash or juice, jam and sugar. You can also make donations by sending a cheque made out to *North Abingdon PCC Christ Church*, clearly marked 'for Food Bank', you can also donate via CCA website at <https://cca.churchsuite.co.uk/donate/fund/njbejebi/foodbank> or the Parish office have details if you want to donate via online banking.

Thank you for reading.

Finally,

Fish and Chips!

Eileen Duckett

Fish and chips
How sweet the sound
In a lockdown granny's ear.
It soothes my appetite
Fills my tum
It's the best meal of the year.

The chip shop's been open
For a few weeks now
As the lockdown is beginning to ease.
But until tonight
The closest we got
Was a whiff of fish on the breeze.

The smell was good
The taste divine
It really couldn't be beat.
To be eating
Fish and chips again
Was a real birthday treat..

If it was a puzzle,
these are the answers.

Mark, Luke, Kings, Acts, Revelation,
James, Ruth, Numbers, Job, Amos,
Esther, Judges, Titus, Lamentations,
Hebrews, Peter. And the hypothesized
source, Q.



and... Archbishop Sentamu laying down his crozier

Thank you to all contributors. The next issue will come out in a few weeks. The theme will be 'Time' – past present future – and other aspects too no doubt. If you feel moved to contribute an article, an image, a puzzle, a quote or simply a thought... please email to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk