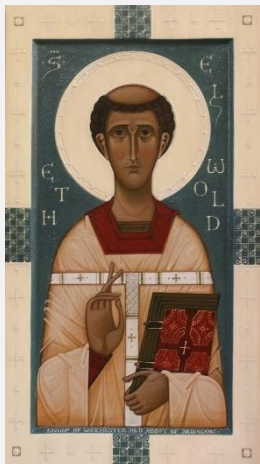


Issue 3:
April 2024



St Ethelwold

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A candle in....

THE

WINDOW

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

Easter

Taize

Poetry

Ecochurch

Is there a God?

Agnostics Anonymous

Caring for Creation

Events

Puzzle

Hot Cross Buns

Dave Walker



What does Easter mean to me?

John Maxwell Kerr

Celebrant: Alleluia. Christ is risen.

People: Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Easter, upon which I have been asked briefly to reflect, is the Great Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus, the Christ of God.

The cross is empty.

The tomb is empty.

Christ is risen indeed. And we, the Easter people, celebrate God's raising Jesus from the dead.

That is what Easter means to me, and to all Christians everywhere and always.

How Easter speaks to me visually has changed over recent years thanks to five years of very painstaking scholarship by Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker. The book which changed my image of the risen Lord is called "Saving Paradise". The insight revealed in that astonishing research is this:

If you go deep into the cool, dark, catacombs in Rome to view the very earliest Christian images portraying Jesus, you will not see any depiction of Jesus hanging dead on the cross. The empty cross appears, but no dead Jesus, nowhere. Nor is he portrayed lying in the tomb. "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" the angels ask the women. (Luke 24:5). And in the earliest Gospel: "He is not here." (Mark 16:6).

For nearly a thousand years, in all visual representations of our risen Lord, Jesus walks in Paradise. Not an insipid anaemic "heaven" full of wan people sitting on clouds plucking listlessly on harps. In Paradise, Jesus walks alive eternally through a verdant meadow of wildflowers. At the feet of the Good Shepherd, sheep are safely grazing, lambs frolic, rivers of pure water flow from the tree of life, swans are a-swimming, jewel-like birds flutter about. In those golden-tiled mosaics, brilliant sunshine illuminates all life or brilliant stars shine down on the saints in glory. Using Google, look for the mosaics in Ravenna (for example, see below for the apse mosaic in St Apollinare Nuovo church). Look further - never a crucifixion! Not in Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, nor St Giovanni in Latero in Rome, nor in any Christian church anywhere throughout the first millennium of our faith.

The spokesman for all repentant sinners, such as ourselves, on Good Friday is the penitent thief. He turns to the Lord asking for mercy. Christ's reply is: "Today you will be with me in paradise."

The cross is empty.

The tomb is empty.

Christ is risen indeed.

In paradise.

But now? For the last thousand years, what do we find? On display, in all our churches, is only a sort of Good Friday afterimage imprinted on the retina of the church. Churches now display images of the crucifixion. That image, of dead or dying, unrisen Jesus still hanging on the cross, was seen nowhere, *nowhere at all*, anywhere, in *any* church, throughout the first near-thousand years, the first millennium, of Christianity. No images of the crucifixion appear, and yet that is all we have now. And some of those crucifixions, such as Gr newald's Isenheim altarpiece (details can be found [here](#)), are obscene images of torture. Paradise has been supplanted by torture and death. Easter has been undone.

Jesus Christ: Risen. Ascended. Glorified.

Christ is risen indeed. We, the Easter people, may look for our risen Lord in Paradise. The cross is empty. The tomb is empty. The risen Lord walking eternally in paradise is what Easter means to me.



source of picture: <https://homepages.bluffton.edu/~Sullivanm/italy/classe/santapollinare/0018cropped.jpg>
The church is in Ravenna, Italy. You can see many examples there of early Christian mosaics.

Caring for Creation Across our Churches

Rev Jennifer Brown

The Abingdon-on-Thames PCC recently agreed to recommend to DCCs that each of our churches register with Christian environmental charity, Arocha, to become Eco-Churches. The PCC is also interested in adopting a parish-wide Environmental Policy that would help ensure that all three of our churches are working towards best practice. These recommendations are currently being considered by the DCCs of each church.

Becoming an Eco-Church and adopting an Environmental Policy both involve more than just making what adjustments we can to our buildings and grounds. Worship, teaching, and fellowship/hospitality are all part of how we can work towards improving our care for God's creation. It's important to remember that this is *not* about coercion but about encouragement, educating and raising awareness, entering more fully into our shared vocation to be caretakers of God's world, and working together across the parish to accomplish more than we could as individuals or even as individual congregations.

Buildings & Grounds



The most obvious place to make eco-friendly changes is in our buildings and grounds. This may have you thinking of big (and expensive) changes, but small things can make a big difference. For example, replacing any remaining old lightbulbs with low-energy bulbs and moving to eco-friendly, cruelty-free cleaning products as and when current supplies are used up. It is true that eco-friendly products can be more expensive than, for example, non-branded products that are less kind to the environment, but the difference is not always that great, and it's important to remember that Christian stewardship is not about spending as little as possible, but using our money in-line with the values of God's kingdom.

Big projects can also be a part of our eco-journey, but the environmental element can be included in projects already planned. For example, many of you will be aware of the existing plans to install new lighting in St Helen's. This will involve more energy-efficient lighting than we have currently and will therefore contribute to our desire to be more environmentally friendly, even if that wasn't the main reason for embarking on the project. It is also possible to 'think eco' when repairs and upgrades become necessary, such as when a heating system needs to be replaced or upgraded. The idea is not to force the churches to set out on new, grand projects but to incorporate environmental considerations into the projects we would undertake in the normal course of events.

As we are town-based churches, we don't have large churchyards, but each of the three churches has some green space around it (or, in the case of St Helen's, around the parish centre next door). This presents us with opportunities for easy wins, eco-wise. We can plant wildflowers and other plants that benefit our pollinating insects, and put out birdfeeders and (where appropriate) nest boxes, and bug houses. This also creates secondary benefits by creating opportunities for people to come together to do gardening projects in our green spaces – which would provide physical activity and social interaction, both good for physical and mental health! – and children in the parish could perhaps be invited to craft sessions to build bug houses and nest boxes.



Photos: Courtesy of Chris Brown

Worship

It's not difficult to incorporate creation care into our worship. There are several hymns that celebrate the beauty of creation and its ability to point our hearts and minds towards God, the Creator (*How Great Thou Art* being one example). All three of the churches in the parish regularly celebrate Holy Communion, a service and sacrament in which the material things of nature, bread (wheat) and wine (grapes) are offered to God and God makes them holy. Simply doing a little bit more to raise awareness of this reinforces within our worship the importance of creation and the fact that God does not disdain the things of the natural world, but uses them as a means of bestowing God's grace.

It is also possible to make creation and creation care the explicit focus of some of our services. Harvest services, for example, can be a point in the year at which we reflect on the natural world, how the planet provides for our needs, and how we care for it. Our individual congregations might also want to consider making more of creation-tide in the liturgical year, celebrating Animal Welfare Sunday (the Sunday nearest to St Francis' Day), and (re?)introducing pet blessing services.

Teaching

Sermons are the meeting point between worship and teaching. A sermon need not be entirely environment-focused to include creation care in its teaching and message. Sermons help us to think deeply about the scriptures and how we apply them to our lives, as individuals and congregations. There are many instances in which the implication(s) of a particular passage of scripture has a bearing on how we relate to the natural world.

Our parish also offers other opportunities for creation care to be incorporated into teaching, for example, house groups, reading groups, and Faith Forum. Individual congregations may also want to consider as Advent or Lent books those that look at Christian environmental responsibility.

Fellowship/Hospitality

This is probably the area of church life in which moving towards being more environmentally friendly becomes the most contentious. Part of the suggested Environmental Policy being considered by the PCC and DCCs does talk about doing our best to use foods at church events that follow the LOAF principle: Local, Organic, Animal-friendly, and/or Fairtrade, and providing vegetarian and vegan options at all church events at which food is served. This does not mean that if someone brings a meat dish or offers something from a supermarket's 'basic' range at a bring-and-share meal (or when providing hospitality for an event such as Faith Forum) it will be refused. Nor does it mean that we are going to try to make everyone in church a vegan! This is about encouraging our congregations to think about our food choices and the impact they have on the environment, farmers, and our fellow creatures. And it is about being hospitable, making sure that, just as we cater for the needs of those with health-related dietary requirements, those who for reasons of conscience follow a plant-based or vegetarian diet are also made to feel welcome.

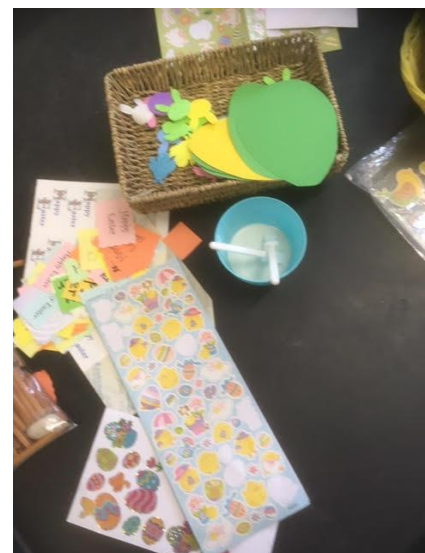
What next

So what happens next? A joint meeting of the DCCs is currently being planned, at which DCC members can ask questions and raise concerns about how working towards Eco-Church and adopting the Environmental Policy may affect their individual congregations. Eco-Church itself is a multi-stage process. Churches aren't expected suddenly to become models of eco-perfection. The first step is for each church to register and carry out a survey to help us discover what we are already doing that is environmental good practice. We can then identify areas where we can improve and begin doing things that help us achieve the various eco-church awards, bronze, silver, and gold. This won't happen overnight – it's a long-term project in which, it is to be hoped, the churches of the parish will make steady (and if sometimes slow, that's ok) progress towards being better stewards of God's creation.

There is a good theological basis for believing that we are called to care for creation, and that such care is part of our Christian witness (more on that in a later article, perhaps). And it is also missional. The Church of England's Five Marks of Mission includes as its fifth mark, "To strive to safeguard the

integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.”¹ The Church, therefore, sees this as a core part of mission. It is also the case that care for the environment and animal welfare are important issues to many people, especially the young. Demonstrating that our churches also care about these things creates a point of connection with those ‘outside’ church and is one way in which we can begin to share the Good News of God’s love. In a very practical way, some of the activities described above, such as gardening projects and children’s activities to make our spaces more bird- and bug-friendly, are potential opportunities to reach out to those in our communities who aren’t churchgoers, but who might wish to be involved in these activities, and help them to get to know our church families.

Easter with the toddlers!



Photos: Elizabeth Dawson and
Rosalind Rutherford
Chicks courtesy of the Mothers Union

¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/mtag-the-5-marks-of-mission.pdf>

The Eighth Day

Almost imperceptibly
the darkness faded,
the sky lightened and pale
fingers of sunshine filtered
through the trees
into the quiet garden.
No sigh of breeze to disturb
the trees, no bird song
to pierce the silence.

No hint that this day
was the dawning of
a new creation:

no golden fanfare,
no voice from heaven,
no angel song,
no stones crying out,
no trees rejoicing,
no flowers springing up
in every footstep
of the risen Lord,
tracing his path in red,
purple and gold.

No,
just startling messengers,
a woman weeping,
and the figure of a man,
wounded yet glorious,
drenched in resurrection
light.



Susan Gee
13 March 2024

Agnostics Anonymous 4

Is there a God?

Can we know God?

Keith Ward tackled the central question of whether God exists in the March meeting of Agnostics Anonymous with another audience of 60 or so.

It is a question as old as the human race and whether we answer Yes or No, we are then faced with the second question, “So what?”

What is God like and how do we get to know God? Christians will answer that God is revealed most clearly to humans in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, but this is not a knock-down answer. An old approach talked about a Cloud of Unknowing and St John of the Cross talked about the dark night of the soul.

When Jacob wrestled with God, he was left limping. Agnostic Anonymous offers a space to think about questions whose answers often leave us with more questions. If you find yourself limping, it is a good place to be.

Paul Sheppy

Keith Ward described philosophers thus:

There are materialists and there are idealists.

Materialists believe that the fundamental things that exist are those uncovered by physics – particles like electrons, protons and neutrons and the fields through which they interact - like electric, magnetic and gravitational fields.

Idealists, of whom Keith is one, argue that minds are the fundamental entities that underly reality. The God that Keith described is a conscious mind existing outside spacetime and who creates spacetime and all it contains in such a way that love and beauty can emerge. This is hard to get your head around but then again physics is odd too and many of its recent discoveries (particularly ‘quantum entanglement’) are equally hard to picture.

Keith’s approach in this talk was to argue that many, many important things are not made of atoms and in some sense live outside spacetime. The world of mathematics for example. Physicists describe the cosmos using mathematical equations but where are those equations? Not in the world of space and time. There are other things of great value that are also absent from the world of physics – love is one. What others can you think of?

Another problem for the materialist has been identified by Stephen Hawking. He wrote “What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe... Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?:

Keith’s answer, I think, is that God uses ‘breath’ to do exactly that. It is quite a long way from the Christian picture of God but watch this space – Keith as theologian will return.

Do we invent God?, a questioner asked. Many misconceptions of God exist – God is not a white, male, old, bearded Anglican, English person. We have to be careful not to create God in our own image and we are still learning how best to describe ‘him’.

Rob Rutherford

The fifth meeting of Agnostics Anonymous will be in the Parish Centre at 6pm on Tuesday 23rd April. (see page 11)

Taizé

On Sunday April 14th at 5.30pm there will be worship in the Taizé style at St Helen's Church. Do come and invite others.



Picture take from this video 'Life at Taizé':
https://www.taize.fr/en_article4768.html

Dominie Burton (St Helen's Choir member) writes about her experience of Taizé:

Taizé is a small village in France. In fact there are at least three villages in France called Taizé. The village of Taizé that I go to is in the Burgundy area of France just north of Cluny. It sits on the top at the southern end of an outcrop of rocks that is about a mile long. The village of Ameugny sits on the northern end. The Community of Taizé lies between the two.

It was to this small village in 1940 that Roger Schultz went looking for a house to rent. At 25, he was a newly ordained pastor. He had grown up in Switzerland in an ecumenical family; his father was a Protestant pastor, his maternal grandmother a Roman Catholic. He felt that God was calling him away from the safety of Switzerland to a life in communion with people who were struggling in occupied France. He was joined by a few friends and together they got involved with the underground movement moving people to safety; visiting prisoners in the nearby POW Camp. They became known to the SS and for a while had to flee back to Switzerland. They returned in 1945 and started to live their life by faith in joy, simplicity and sharing, according to the Beatitudes. They continued to visit the POW camp where the prisoners were now the German SS guards. The impact on these German guards, as they were treated by Br Roger and his friends in exactly the same way as they had seen them treat the French prisoners, caused many to come to Christ. After they were repatriated they returned to visit Br Roger, bringing friends. They helped repair the damage that the SS had done.

Over the years their friends brought their friends who in turn brought their friends until today if you visit you will meet with people from up to 70 to 80 countries, from every denomination of Christianity, from all five continents.

I first went to Taizé in 1974, not knowing anything about it. Over the years I have been back many times, drawn by the contemplative style of worship; the ecumenism and the opportunities to meet and learn with such a wide range of people. The teaching is from both the Old and New Testaments and always aimed at deepening our relationship with Christ. The two questions which seem to be the underlying themes are –

‘What is your relationship with God?’ and,

‘What are you doing about it?’

These questions take a long time to think about and even longer to answer.

If you go to Taizé, for a small daily contribution, you will be given everything you need – a place to sleep; three meals and a snack each day; people to teach you and to help you to pray; a chance to meet amazing people. But you will also learn the difference between want and need - a few home comforts along may help you enjoy the week. E.g. there are no cushions at all anywhere in Taizé, the only pillows are those taken by visitors. Life in Taizé is very simple, it enables you to prepare your life for the next stage of your journey when you go home.

What have I got out of Taizé over the years?

I have discovered the amazing difference a personal relationship with God makes.

I have appreciated the benefits of a regular spiritual stocktake.

I have learned how to listen for God's word and to hear him speak.

I have learned that Ecumenism is possible if we focus on our similarities and not our differences.

Actually, the list is endless

In the summer, parties of young people travel from all over Europe to Taizé. This summer a group, led by Bishop Olivia will go from this Diocese. The dates are August 17th – 25th. Do encourage young people to go. It can be life-changing.



Details [here](#):

A leaflet is available [here](#):



April Events

Compiled by Louise Heffernan

‘The Spiritual Adventure of Henri Matisse’

Discussion and talk by Rector Charles at 7.30 pm in the South Aisle, Wednesday 10 April. All are welcome, no need to book. Please submit questions for discussion to Charles by email beforehand if possible. Entry for FoSH and Rotary members is free, donations invited from non-members.

Agnostics Anonymous

On Tuesday 23 April 2024 at 6 pm at St Helen's Parish Centre, John Kerr will give a talk about miracles, entitled ‘Six impossible things before breakfast’, followed by a chance for questions and discussion.

For more information, please contact Jill Gant on 01235 528929



*Music at St Helen's Church
Abingdon*

**Saturday 13th April
at 7pm**

ORGAN RECITAL

Simon Lawford

of Notre Dame de France, London

FRANCK - Choral no. 3
DUPRÉ - Prelude & Fugue in G minor
BOËLLMANN - Suite Gothique

Tickets £12 (*under 16s free*) at the door or from Ticketsource

*Refreshments available after the recital
All proceeds to St. Helen's Church*



 HELEN'S CHURCH
ABINGDON-ON-THAMES



HARMONY InSpires

Harmony in SPRINGTIME

St MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS CHURCH

Park Road, Abingdon OX14 1DS

Saturday 20th April 2024
5.00–7.00pm
(doors open to the public at 4.45pm)

Tickets £12
Accompanied children under 16 free
available from: <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/DCXA>
or at the door – proceeds to church funds

Sponsored by  Refreshments & raffle on the day with proceeds to Harmony InSpires 
www.harmonyinspires.org



 MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS CHURCH

Cream Teas

St Michael & All Angels' Church,
Park Road



Saturday 27th April
2.30 – 4.30 pm

Tea/coffee with scone/cake £5
Proceeds to church funds
All welcome

Faith Forum :The Sacraments

Sunday, 5 May 12:30 – 1:30pm
Parish Centre

Date for your diary:

22th June 2024 in the Abbey Grounds
12.00pm and 17.00pm
Abingdon Passion Play



April Quiz - April Apps

The Hallas Family

Can you solve these Ap conundrums?

One p or two? Matches are on sound not spelling

Eg Placate green vegetables = Appease (Ap peas)

- 1 Get closer with a fish
- 2 Howzat from a slippery creature
- 3 Peak of an old flame
- 4 Relevant lollipop
- 5 Request some more wool or wood
- 6 Relate to a headless hanging
- 7 Separate works by Turner or Constable
- 8 Worried about chicken mesh
- 9 Small insect concealed
- 10 Flat component intended
- 11 Yes, leave the dough to rise
- 12 Distant short sibling
- 13 Add to the finish
- 14 Install a Cardinal
- 15 Value a lift
- 16 Last word, write 509
- 17 Allocate the left charged atom
- 18 Fruit to yank
- 19 Learner to hire solid water
- 20 Horrify an Apostle?



As bikinis get itsy-er and bitsy-er
And chocolatey eggs become glitzier,
An Easter that pleases
Sees the rising of Jesus
Portrayed in a glorious strelizia.

For some in South Africa, the Strelizia
symbolises the resurrection.

Anon
(to protect the author's reputation!)

A Good Friday Treat

Eileen Duckett

When my sisters and I were young our Mum got up early on Good Friday, made a pot of tea and warmed up some hot cross buns. She would then bring tea and buns upstairs singing as she came up

Hot cross buns, hot cross buns
 One a penny, two a penny
 Hot cross buns.

If you have no daughters, give them to your sons
 One a penny, two a penny
 Hot cross buns.

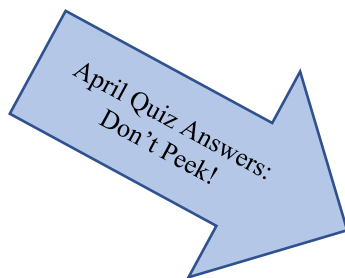
It was a real treat having breakfast in bed. However, one Good Friday I had mumps and couldn't eat the buns. By Easter Sunday I was feeling better and was able to eat some chocolate but by then Mum had caught the mumps and couldn't eat any chocolate which she loved. I am not sure she ever forgave me for that!



Photo: Elisabeth Sutcliffe (née Rutherford)

When I got married we continued the tradition but as I am not an early riser it has always been my husband who brings tea and buns upstairs singing the song and since lockdown when he really got into bread-making he now makes the buns as well.

Quiz Answers!



Approach (App roach)	1
Appeal (App eel)	2
Apex (Ap ex)	3
Applicable (App llicable)	4
Apply (Ap ply)	5
Appertain (App (c)ertain)	6
Apert (Ap art)	7
Apprehensive (App re hen sieve)	8
Aphid (Ap hid)	9
Apparment (Ap part mean)	10
Approve (Ap prove)	11
Apis (Ap sis(ter))	12
Append (App end)	13
Apport (App port ion)	14
Appraise (App raise)	15
Appendix (App en dix)	16
Apportion (Ap port ion)	17
Apple (A pull – sorry)	18
Apprentice (App rent ice)	19
Appal (Ap Paul)	20

Useful Weblinks:

Services: for the latest news see the Parish Website:

<https://abingdonparish.org.uk>

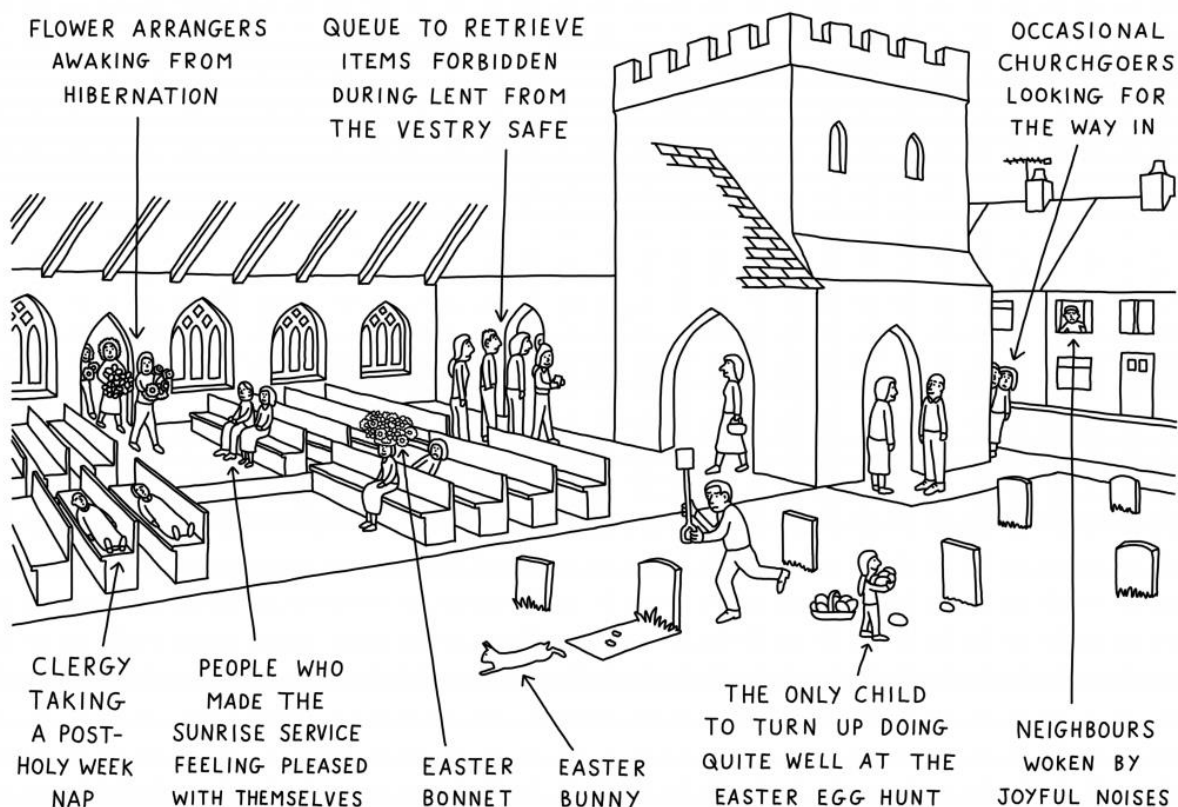
for Church of England links: services, daily readings etc

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

FOOD BANK. The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support. Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm. The foodbank also operates from Preston Road Community Centre. Donations are welcome there too between 12.00 and 2.30pm on Wednesdays. You can also donate money by sending a cheque made out to North Abingdon PCC Christ Church, clearly marked 'for Food Bank' or via the Foodbank website <https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/> or the Parish office has details if you want to donate via online banking.

Finally, from Dave Walker

THE EASTER SERVICE



Thanks to all contributors and to you, the readers.

The next issue will be published on May 5th - ideas and contributions to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk