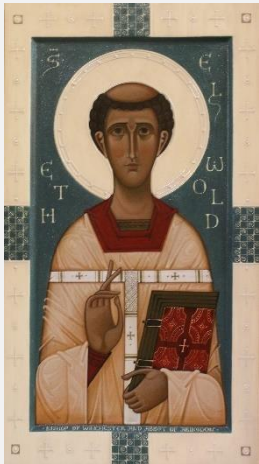


Issue 8:
October 2024



A candle in...

THE *W*INDOW
News and Views from the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames

Abundance!

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This picture, The Sower at Sunset by Vincent Van Gogh is from [here](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).
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Perhaps it is odd to include a picture of sowing just after we have celebrated harvest but it was mentioned in Bishop Richard Harries' 'Thought for the Day' on 18th September 2024. Bishop Richard drew our attention to the exhibition of works by Van Gogh at the National Gallery. Van Gogh is in some ways a tragic figure – he painted over 2000 pictures but sold only one in his lifetime and yet now he is perhaps one of the best loved of painters. He was deeply religious in his early life and it's not surprising that his later paintings have a religious intensity. Like his exact contemporary Gerard Manley Hopkins, Van Gogh wants to convey the extraordinary fact that something actually exists.

The Parable of the Sower was of particular interest to Van Gogh. Richard Harries spoke of the abundance that results when seed falls on good ground and how he sees it in this painting in particular. To him it speaks of the joyful, optimistic possibility of an abundant harvest – from all that we strive to do.

Find the full talk for a few days here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0jr867v>

25 years of Ministry

Ruth Pyke

Though I have forgotten the date and year I clearly remember being asked to speak in favour of the Ordination of Women as part of the discernment process of the Church of England. Both main speakers were lay women, one against and one (me) in favour. "I have no desire to be ordained myself", I said categorically. And I believed that at the time - having pushed aside an experience aged 15 which should have told me otherwise!

But God knew better! And with the support and encouragement of family and friends I can fast forward to September 1999. After three years part time training on the then St Albans and Oxford Ministry Course and a year serving as a deacon, I knelt in St Albans Cathedral and Abbey Church. The bishop and other priests laid hands on me and ordained me a priest. That moment, and the moment when my diaconal stole was untied and placed priest-wise were the two most memorable and Spirit filled moments of the service. With the untying of that stole the knots that I had been tied up in over ministry, priesthood and vocation seemed to unfold along with it. *(Other knots came and went as the years rolled by!)*



Photo: David Bevington

25 years have passed since that September and it is a privilege to celebrate that anniversary here in Abingdon as one of the retired clergy who find a place here. During those years, spent largely in parish ministry, meeting so many different people with so many different needs - all of that, week by week, lifted up in the celebration of Holy Communion. At the altar a priest holds his or her people on their heart and in their prayers. Conscious of their hurts, their needs, their joys and their worries - all are brought to the altar. Conscious of her own needs and joys, anxieties and hopes - those too are lifted to God. In the earthy, wholesome, everyday bread our daily lives are lifted and shared; in the rich, matured wine the depth and breadth of love, sacrifice, joy and pain are shared.

Unseen, day by day prayers are offered for the work of the church, for the world and for those individuals on our hearts and minds.

My diary, like anyone's was also full of innumerable meetings with individuals, with couples, with church groups and in the wider church. In many places in which I ministered there were also those who still found the ministry of women difficult - and week by week I carried their pain.

But it was at the Eucharist that in some mysterious way it all found meaning, as with the community of the parish we met together to re-member, to continue the command of Jesus to "do this in remembrance of me". It has been my privilege to stand at the altar and preside - through 25 years - in many different churches and regularly in 4 different parishes, and now here in Abingdon. My privilege to train a curate in the strange Covid times when so much had to change and yet retain the holiness and sanctity of Holy Communion. To watch her grow and move to a parish of her own and to watch from a distance as she now exercises her priestly ministry has been a huge gift. All this has been a wonderful gift from God, an unexpected life and yet in so many ways the only way it could have been.

As I celebrate and give thanks, I ask you to pray for young women and men to answer that same nudging, knotty call that I heard years ago. To pray that they may have the courage to offer themselves for ministry and to discover for themselves and with others the enormous, joy, confidence and pain that the life of the priest can bring, lived in God's grace.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. Brothers and sisters, pray for us. 1 Thessalonians 23-25.

Tributes to Charles Miller September 22nd 2024

Susan Scott

Well Charles, here we are! I was one of the church wardens who appointed you, along with Jane Duce, Malcolm Harvey, sadly no longer with us, and the then wardens from St Michael's, St Nicolas' and Christchurch, Northcourt - as we were still one parish then. My first memory of you, is you advancing across the sanctuary platform at St Helen's where everyone was gathering to start the proceedings with prayer led by Tim Hewes. Charles Miller, you said holding out your hand in greeting. A trim figure all in clerical black with a full head of curly hair! A busy day being interviewed by different panels and meeting members of the parish. Before you left you asked Malcolm to let you see inside St Helen's again then appearing satisfied you bade farewell and headed back to Somerset.



It was a sensitive time as there were already cracks appearing in the relationship with Christchurch and reservations about the viability of team ministries. It was difficult to put this into words to prospective candidates, but it seemed to me you were like a hot knife going through butter as you picked up the unsaid issues!

Once the decision to appoint you had been made, and you had accepted, I went online to see if there was anything more to learn about you and was very disturbed to find you called Father Charles. Oh gosh what had we done!!! I had been strongly lobbied not to appoint a liberal and we had gone and appointed an Anglo Catholic, and, I was told by another member of the congregation a liturgist. When you came on a second visit, I think you picked up on some of my nervousness because when I dropped you off at Didcot station you leaned in the car window looked me in the eye and said "It will be alright!" And so it has been. It shows it is important to select the right person not the label!

As the Diocese had let the Rectory, reckoning I guess on a long vacancy, and Charles was able to start at once, the diocese had to put him in an empty vicarage in Didcot, and Malcolm and I were charged with getting enough furniture, cooking utensils etc to enable him and Michael, then 12 to move in and live, more or less comfortably, until they could move into the Abingdon Rectory. Thankfully Rod Hunt let us have all the furniture, china etc from his recently deceased mother's flat. So, with a man and a van everything was moved from Abingdon to Didcot and Malcolm, Jean and I sorted everything out even making the beds.

You inherited the reordered building at St Helen's but with still much to do including I think the toilets and servery. You sensed the congregation was tired from fund raising and some of the controversies the reordering had raised, so decided to not to change anything for the first year, except as I have written in today's newsletter sorting out the tatty upper room in the parish centre, into the welcoming lounge it now is, and creating an office in an underused room. Michael Goode had been expected to use what is now your dining room as his office. No computers or printers then!

Then slowly and surely changes and innovations were introduced. The laminated service cards, Marriage Prep' and the Wedding Fair, Baptism Prep', Desiring Life book group, Faith Forum, the Great Jesse Tree, the Epiphany Tea, three church holidays, The Hope within Us weeks with an opportunity to learn how to paint an icon, notable speakers and a visit from Rowan Williams, Amahl and the Night Visitors, the purchase of Enoch House and appointment of our house for duty priests, becoming a British Citizen, the division of the parish into two parishes, etc. Too long a list for now. I know you recognise the help and support you have had from so many members of the congregation to achieve all this.

And of course, developing worship with rigour, imagination and integrity celebrating the church's cycle from the beautiful Advent Carol Service, Christmas services, Lent, Easter, Saints Days and so

on back to Advent. Changes introduced subtly, carefully and even sneakily! Charles I love you dearlybut I don't think I will ever become enamoured of the Great Litany, and in fact am struggling with the purpose of the Gospel Acclamation. Still, you can't have everything your own way can you? On the personal front you had to come to terms with the fact that Judith would not be joining you in Abingdon, and being a father to a young teenager. Then the dreadful shock of learning you had collapsed not once but twice with a cardiac arrest while cycling to Radley Station, to catch a train ironically to attend a funeral. Thanks to the swift action of passersby the Air Ambulance Service and the John Radcliffe, you survived this momentous event, although at what cost to your physical and spiritual wellbeing only you know. Clearly the Lord still had work for you, or thought you still had a lot to learn, as the gates to paradise were kept firmly shut. You have also suffered the loss of Beth that nervous Jack Russell you brought with you from New York.

It is said most political careers end in failure, but how do clergy judge their careers? Thankless and lonely job in some ways, especially for you living on your own, but I hope you will reflect on what you have achieved, which is so much, and not dwell too much on what you have not, for example completing the reordering of St Helens. I am personally very sorry not to see how you would have used the new lighting scheme that we are about to fund raise for.

The Church of England has always changed and adapted to the secular world and pressures and today we seem to be going through a particularly turbulent time regarding the future of parishes, declining numbers, and social changes. I know you are not wholly in sympathy or in step with much of these and feel you are not leaving the church you signed up for so many years ago. If it is any consolation, I think many of us have felt that on retiring from for example medicine, the armed forces, teaching, the police or fire and rescue services etc,

But I know you have tested all things, examined everything carefully and held fast to that which is good, genuine, and true. So, when we say our final goodbye in November we can say with much love "Go in peace Charles to love and serve the Lord!". Amen

Father Paul Smith

Words beginning with 'P' spring to mind! First, **Paul and Palpable**. Not Paul, the apostle, but yours truly, of course, who was licensed as your Team Vicar fourteen years ago this week. When I first thought of the possibility of coming to Abingdon I hesitated because I'm no academic, how would I fit in? You kindly reassured me, insisting this was not an issue. With trepidation, I put in an application promptly and the rest is history.

But why **Paul and Palpable**. Palpable because it was the word you used in the written announcement to the parish of my appointment. *'Paul has a palpable love for people'*, you said. Do you remember? It really stood out for me. *I don't think you know just how you bowled me over with those words*; how you identified, if I may say so, one of my strengths: my desire to be a faithful pastor and priest. But you said it in a way no one else has ever done. I hope I have lived up to that generous way in which you sought to sell me to my congregations and the parish. I want to thank you from my heart for that unforgettable phrase. You won't know how many times I have returned to it, especially when I have doubted my abilities or become frustrated in the daily round of ministry.



Posture is for me, well yes, almost a dirty word. You'll all know why. From the word go I have been told to sit up straight, stand up straight, walk straight, and do so even more as the years pass. **Posture (with an American accent)** is a word which I have observed you using a great deal over the years. But you have used it in the context of how we conduct ourselves, lay or ordained – the posture we adopt in our relationships with one another and in the way we live for Christ. That the church is more than an organisation and that its future is dependent only on the **providence & purposes** of God. It is

this way of being and living which you have sought to embody (and which has sometimes sadly gone unnoticed) for us all. Thank you.

Gwen Bevington

I'm speaking for people who've come into the parish during the last half of Charles's ministry. I didn't aim for Ps but some seem to have crept in.

My favourite chapter in my favourite book - CS Lewis's autobiography... He writes about the tutor who oversaw his education. This man took seriously what the young Lewis said, argued with him, had no truck with patting youngsters on the head. Lewis loved that Kirk was interested primarily in truth. He comments, "Some boys would not have liked it; to me it was red meat and strong beer." I think not every LLM transferring to a new church would like the Abingdon assessment process, copyright C Miller. I was put through my paces leading now-defunct Morning Praise, where I could do the least harm; I still have and treasure the email Charles sent me afterwards. A ten-point email: nine points about things I got wrong, one affirmation. I loved it. Here was someone who cared about getting things right and wasn't just going to pat me on the head. Someone who thought we were doing something serious and needed to do it well, to our utmost. I'm not greatly into beef or beer, but to me it was a tasty chick pea curry and a cream tea. I'm speaking with **Passion**.



Remembering a conversation with a very charismatic evangelical friend... Telling her about the church we're attending in retirement. Being asked the inevitable question: "What's the vicar like?" Where to start? I choose just one thing to say: "I think his biggest nightmare would be of dumbing down." Seeing ENVY all over her face. I don't think we realise how lucky we've been.

Charles and I have had our differences – we are still profoundly disagreed on two issues, which of course means he's wrong about those (!) - but Charles has always been gracious, never taking umbrage if I put up a fight.

Some reflections from the last few years when I've been baptism coordinator. Here's a **Phenomenon**: not unique to Charles - it happens with Fr Paul too, and it even used to happen a bit with my husband. But it's very marked in Charles's case. Any couple Charles has married wants him to baptise their baby (or the reverse order). Any couple whose first child Charles has baptised wants him to baptise subsequent children. And on occasions Charles has met the needs of families with great thought, care and even sacrificial kindness. What I do feel bad about and must apologise for, is that whenever Charles has done something really saintly, I've never managed to hide my astonishment. I'm reminded of a conversation with a good friend of the parish who sees less of us now. I was filling her in on aspects of parish life, and after describing one new feature, I remarked, "And Charles has been really good." She replied, "Oh yes, Charles can surprise you sometimes."

So after being surprised for 18 years, why are we still surprised?

I think we take for granted that from Charles we will get huge clarity and speed of thinking, fine judgement, an amazing memory, knowledge and understanding that he will generously share, strong leadership, humour and charm by the spade that can transform a gathering or lift a meeting. And we maybe forget that many people have also received from him a listening ear, and real kindness and goodness.

I don't want to overstate this, in case Charles thinks I'm talking about the wrong person. He has always been upfront with us – he is very much our **Priest**, but also our fellow-**Pilgrim**. A saint in the making, God's work in **Progress**. CS Lewis makes it clear that his tutor did have a number of, shall we say, idiosyncrasies. But he ends the chapter with these words: "My debt to him is very great, my reverence to this day undiminished." I'm not sure I want to use the word reverence (although Susan

does tend to refer to Charles as “his reverence”). But I believe that our debt to you, Charles, is immeasurable. And although I suppose I can speak only for myself, I do believe I speak for many in saying that our gratitude, our affection and our respect are undiminished, and will remain so.

Father Paul Smith part 2

Perichoresis – what? That is a word I had not seen in a parish profile before but it was in the one for my post in 2010. Perichoresis is of course a term which refers to the relationship of the three persons of the triune God to one another. Your inclusion of that word was to emphasise your desire for the three churches of this parish to reflect the relationship of the Trinity – as far as that is humanly possible. It was a place for us to start. You have worked hard to create that and our annual Corporate Communion each Trinity Sunday. You have done the priestly work of ensuring we are rooted in intentional prayer and worship to that end. In recent years I have observed the fruits of that labour as the parish has started to become ‘three-in-one and one-in-three’. We have a way to go, but we have more than begun. I say thank you for that on behalf of us all. It must continue, and we must see that it does.

Princess, Promise, Presentation are the last three words I want to share and with some haste. Charles, when you called me to one side in late 2013 to tell me that the following year you would be taking a sabbatical, I was apprehensive. But all went well. Just as you arrived home, waiting to recommence parish duties, a visit from **HRH The Princess Royal** to present medals to servicemen returning from Afghanistan took place. You timed your arrival so I could have this privilege and somehow you sensed I would revel in it. Everyone knows you were right! And what’s more, when I nervously gave her the formal welcome into St Helen’s, and looked at her with a smile, she smiled back but added a cheeky wink! My wheels nearly spun off the dais in the Nave. I recall telling my mother that part of the story saying I felt like I had scored with the Queen’s daughter! For that very memorable day, thank you, Charles!

Many people here today know about retirement. I know some of the things you certainly won’t miss, but I can only guess at what it is you will miss, and what the transition will mean for you. What I believe I am certain about is the promise of God-in-Christ that he shall be your constant guide and companion through every season. Like Matisse whose Spiritual Adventure you have recently uncovered, with surely the pinnacle of your writing thus far, I pray retirement may be a rich adventure for you. May what is already planned and known be richly blessed. May what is yet unknown and to be revealed surprise you with joy.



Photographs: Thanks to David Bevington

‘Arise and eat.’

Louise Heffernan

And [Elijah] lay down and slept under a broom tree; and behold, an angel touched him, and said to him, “Arise and eat.” And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came again a second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you.” And he arose, and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. (1 Kings 19 v5 – 8)

Sometimes in life we all need a little help. Without adequate sustenance, ‘the journey will be too great.’ It is in recognition of that need that food banks were founded to support those who could not afford to eat sufficiently well to go forward in life.

There have always been various forms of food charity, but foodbanks came formally into being only 30 years ago. Following on from the establishment of FareShare in 1994, the Christian organisation, the Trussell Trust, opened its first foodbank in 2001. There are now about 422 Trussell Trust Foodbanks nationally which between them distributed approximately 3 million food parcels in 2023. And demand has risen and continues to do so¹.

According to the Commons Library report², 3% of the population used a foodbank at least once in 2022/23. Of those, disabled people, those living in rental accommodation or social housing and those on means-tested benefits make up the greatest number. The past winter saw an increase in referrals and this coming winter is likely to create another spike with energy costs set to rise again.

The **Trussell Trust**, to which the **Abingdon Foodbank** is affiliated, established a *modus operandi* aiming to provide three days emergency food for people in short-term crisis. Food is donated by individuals, churches, groups and through industrial over-production. Food can be also purchased, as the Trussell Trust has many regular cash donors.

There are two affiliated Foodbank centres in Abingdon: North and South. South Abingdon runs on Wednesdays (1pm – 2.30pm) at Preston Road Community Centre while the North operates from Christchurch, Northcourt Road, on Tuesdays and Fridays (11am to 1pm). Food is offered to those with a referral from an agency such as social services, a doctor or school. But in an emergency, no one goes away hungry. The aim is to make foodbank assistance redundant in their lives and support should be short-term, but it is not always easy for people to cope if their lives are turned upside down by illness, unemployment, rent rises, higher childcare costs, spiralling energy prices and sometimes homelessness. They find friendly non-judgemental faces at the foodbank and a chance to talk to someone who knows where they might find help to improve their current circumstances. They are signposted to support organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau for advice about how to change their lives for the better.

Many of you already support the Abingdon Foodbank and have been extremely generous in donating goods over the summer to support families during the holiday season. Soon we shall be putting together Christmas parcels so that everyone who needs help can have a few Christmas treats and traditional foods as well as the regular food parcels. Look out for the lists which will include things like mince pies, tins of ham, extra vegetables and of course a few chocolates for the children. Thank you for your help which is gratefully received by all those who visit us.

The **Abingdon Community Larder** also feeds those in need in the community, but it works in a different way as it is a membership scheme. For a small payment each week people can take 10 items

¹ https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/wp-assets/trussell_trust_annual_report_2022-23.pdf

² <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8585/>

of packaged or tinned food and as much fruit and vegetables as they wish. There is no referral system and it is open to anyone. Supermarkets support the Larder by donating surplus goods which helps avoid waste. The larder is affiliated with SOFEA, a charity which aims to help young people who have fallen through the school system, helping them to achieve their potential through education, training, coaching and work experience.³

Abingdon Community Larder is open every Friday morning (10am to 10.45pm) at the Conduit Centre, Trinity Church, Conduit Road.

A third organisation is **Abingdon Community Fridge** which is different again. As explained by Tom Kyffin: ‘The main aim of the Abingdon Community Fridge is to reduce food waste by collecting surplus from local shops and supermarkets and redistributing it to the community. As the aim is to minimise food waste, the Fridge is open to everyone and is not means tested. It is open: Monday 4pm-4:30pm, Thursdays 1pm-2pm & Saturday 13:30am-11:30am at Hadland Road Community Centre. Occasionally, if there is a large surplus, extra pop-up sessions are run – these are announced on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/abingdoncommunityfridge/>.’



Some of the harvest gifts brought for the Abingdon Food Bank. Photo: David Bevington

³ <https://www.sofea.uk.com/about/our-mission/>

Bishop Olivia

The Bishop of Reading, the Rt Revd Olivia Graham, retired on Sunday 29th September in a farewell service at Reading Minster. In a poignant moment she approached the altar alone and laid down her crozier, mitre and cope before kneeling and praying.

Hundreds gathered to wish Bishop Olivia well and celebrate her five years as Bishop and further 22 years of ordained service in our diocese. They were joined by many civic dignitaries. The service included readings from two teenagers who had joined Bishop Olivia on a recent pilgrimage to Taizé in France.

Fr Paul, in a recent newsletter, reminded the congregation at St Nicolas' that:

Bishop Olivia was previously Archdeacon of Berkshire before becoming Bishop of Reading in 2019, and was pivotal, indeed 'a mover and shaker' in supporting us and making possible our new entrance at the West End for equal access to our building. We give thanks for her notable support at that time.

Our Parish moved into the Dorchester Archdeaconry in 2014 and thus it was that both Judy, Archdeacon of Dorchester and Olivia, Archdeacon of Berkshire were present at the St Nicolas Festival Evensong in December 2014, when Bishop Colin consecrated the Nave Altar and Blessed the new west doors.



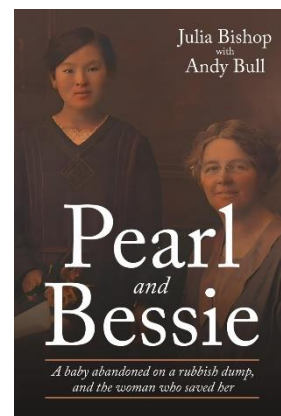
Big priorities for Bishop Olivia have been the climate crisis and the challenges facing young people, in particular the scourge of knife crime. She attended the COP26 conference in Glasgow and she has been one of three bishops who lead the national Church of England work on the environment. Bishop Olivia is passionate about social justice and the interface the Church has with the wider world. She chaired the diocesan Partnership in World Mission Council overseeing the relationships with our three link dioceses, Kimberley and Kuruman, Nandyal and Växjö. She has also led the work on Flourishing in Ministry, a set of resources and a leadership approach that supports clergy to develop a healthy rhythm of prayer, work and rest. She also trained as an Ignatian spiritual director.

Thank you +Olivia

Pearl and Bessie, by Julia Bishop with Andy Bull

Reviewed by Sue Holligan

The cover of this fascinating book carries a photograph of a younger Chinese woman and an older British woman, Pearl and Bessie, but it is about a great deal more than the lives of these two women. Bessie was Julia Bishop's great aunt, one she never met and about whom she knew very little until her father challenged her to find out more. Bessie was the eldest of ten children born in Southampton to Jabez and Alice Bull. The family worshipped at the Bible Christian Chapel (a radical off shoot of the Methodist Church) where Jabez was a lay preacher and where Bessie also preached sermons of great 'passion'. Full of commitment to her faith and inspired to work with the missionaries in China, Bessie applied for selection. She was accepted in 1902, when she was 27. By this time Bessie had become engaged to a young man, Alfred Evans, who shared her dream of working in China, and they had agreed they would marry in China after he was accepted.



Bessie was sent to join a mission in the province of Yunnan in south western China. Using a variety of sources (carefully catalogued), Julia gives wonderful descriptions of Bessie's five month journey to her new home, the voyage to China, the river passage up the Yangtze to Yunnan and the crossing of a steep mountain range to the plain of Chaotung (now Zhaotong). One day when Bessie was travelling in accordance with her work, she found a baby girl lying naked on a rubbish tip. Birds had started attacking the infant, so Bessie collected her up, took her to safety and eventually adopted her. One of the first difficult things that Bessie had had to learn in her new country was about the treatment of unwanted babies.

The photograph of Bessie and Pearl on the front cover continues on to the back and shows us Alfred. After a few years he was able to join the mission and Alf and Bessie were married in 1908. A number of years later they adopted a second Han Chinese child, John. The book continues with this family's life together through a turbulent period in the history of China over the next 50 years. Initially the area they were working in was very large; it included villages high up in the mountains as well as in the valleys or on the high plains. This meant a lot of travelling for Alf and Bessie, occasionally together but often alone. The missionary work included medical help, education, and in the case of Alfred, building houses and physical structures, doing everything they could to express God's love in caring for the people they were serving.

The province of Yunnan contains a variety of ethnic minority tribes, each with their own language, traditions and styles of dress and buildings. The area around Chaotung was home to the Miao people. Some of their leaders had come to the mission saying that they heard they were teaching about a God of Love. Wonderful work was done with this community who were among the poorest groups in the area, acting as serfs to the Chinese and another ethnic group, the Nosu; as the story develops it becomes easy to see how Christ's message of love transformed this society.

Bessie and Alf together with Pearl and later John, withstood revolution in China, civil war, a period of famine, the takeover by the Warlords, Japanese occupation, the Second World War, more civil war, the coming of the Communist government and the Cultural Revolution. The impacts are described in short chapters and at the end of each one I was desperate to read what happened next! Apart from all the historical information, the book also describes how Julia learned more about her great aunt, finding out about her character and the characters of the rest of this extraordinary family as well as the lives of their fellow missionaries. How exciting it would have been to have met the lively dynamo that was Bessie as well as Alf with his serious face but lively sense of humour. Pearl had a difficult life, particularly hard after the communist takeover, but like her parents served the community working as a nurse. John's life was changed by the Second World War, he ended up in America teaching mandarin and working to improve China/America relations.

Julia's father would have liked a film to have been made about Bessie's life in China. The name of Gladys Aylward, another missionary in China, is well known partly because of the film 'The Inn of the 6th Happiness'. A film of Bessie's life would require a film a lot longer than that one and I am afraid that to recount it all would probably lead to a lot of criticism from China. The answer is to read this book! I am sure that reading of their commitment to Christ, the loving care they took of the people they came to live among and the build-up of the church within the Maio community would lift your spirits. Julia's description of her visit to Kunming (capital of Yunnan) and to Zhaotong is quite emotional, but the Maio's determination to maintain their faith gives us all something to pray for.

Julia Bishop is a member of the St Nicolas' congregation.

The book costs £9.99 from Amazon [here](#);, or we can pass on a message to Julia via contact@stnicolasabingdon.org.uk

Christmas cards for prisoners

Elizabeth Dawson

Every year in the early autumn, Mothers' Union groups in Oxford Diocese make Christmas cards which are given to prisoners as part of our concern for families whose lives have met with adversity. The cards are sent to the chaplain at Bullingdon prison (mostly male prisoners on remand), and then handed out to individual prisoners. From the response we have had in previous years, this is often the only Christmas card many prisoners will receive, so they are greatly appreciated. No personal greeting is sent, only seasonal good wishes and a simple message to say that the card is from a Mothers' Union member in Oxford Diocese.

This year, Bullingdon prison have requested 800 unsigned cards for the prisoners themselves to send to family and friends. Abingdon branch had a session making cards at the end of September. We had an enjoyable afternoon with tea and cake, and managed to make over 150 cards. Last year's overall Diocesan response was so good, that 2 women's prisons were also given Christmas cards, so this may well be repeated this year.



Photos: Elizabeth Dawson and Gillian Watson

October Quiz

Rob Rutherford

Unpick the fruit and vegetables. Some are singular, some plural. Six answers are two-word phrases.

1. PANEL PIPE
2. KEELS
3. RE NUS BANNER
4. TAO PESTO
5. WE BARRISTERS
6. ANIMAL LEGO
7. RICH TEA OK
8. POOR INNINGS
9. ASCOT RHEOMETRY
10. SUCCUMBER
11. UBI GENERA
12. OCTET URGE
13. USA MASTS
14. BRUISE REBEL
15. CHER ELLIS ROMERO
16. BASQUE NUT TRUTHS
17. EEL CRY
18. AWFUL RECOIL
19. AN' CHIPS
20. MOM'S HOURS
21. BET OR TOE
22. AC GIRL
23. INPUT R



*Apples in Oxford Botanic Garden.
Photo: David Bevington*

Autumn Events

Compiled by Eluned Hallas

St HELEN'S CHURCH

**AGNOSTICS
ANONYMOUS**

Meeting for Open Discussion

**Do Christians
believe in 3 gods?**

Led by Keith Ward with John Barton & John Kerr,
who have all lectured for Oxford University.

Tuesday 15th October 2024

6 pm to 7.30 pm

In Parish Centre (opposite main door of St Helen's Church,
Abingdon)

FREE **Everyone Welcome**

Contact for more Information: Jill Gant 01235 528929

Music at St Michael's

HUW RHYS JAMES

PIANO RECITAL

Sunday 6 October 3 pm

Viennese pianist returns with
Music by Haydn, Chopin, Brahms

Tickets £12/ £10 Under 16 free
Available from
<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/DTWT>
or at the door

PAVLOVA WINDS

Sunday 20 October 3 pm

Back by popular demand with
Music by Holst & Hindemith

Tickets £12/ £10 Under 16 free
Available from
<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/DTWT>
or at the door

Proceeds to church funds
Refreshments available
Free parking

Sponsored by
Creative Drives Oxford Ltd
<https://www.creativedrivesoxfordltd.co.uk/>

St Michael & All Angels' Church, Park Road,
Abingdon OX14 3DS

**St Michael's
Church
Christmas Fair**

Saturday 9th November 2024

10 am – 2 pm

Gift Stalls Games
Tombola Books
Cakes Plants Paintings
Jewellery Bric-a-Brac
Prize Raffle Refreshments

Proceeds in aid of church funds and Plescare (Oxford &
Abingdon)

Enquiries to buff@stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk

St Michael & All Angels' Church, Park Road
Abingdon OX14 1DS

Sponsored by:
Breckon & Breckon

**Sadly, cancelled
Due to wet weather risks**

**A Celebration of Pilgrimage
at Christ Church Cathedral
Saturday 19 October**



Join the Pilgrim Route from Abingdon to Oxford (9 miles)
Starting from St Nicolas, Abingdon at 9:00am

You are cordially invited to join

The Revd Dr Charles Miller

when he presides and preaches at his final service

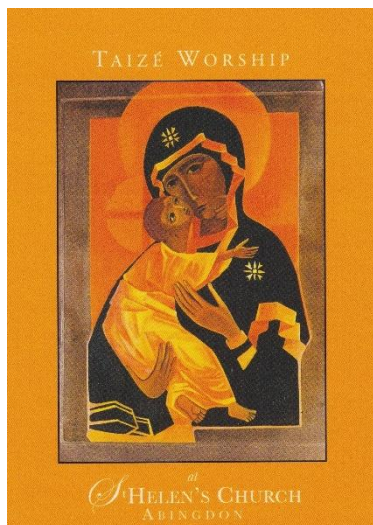
as Vicar of St Helen's Church & Team Rector of Abingdon-on-Thames

on All Saints' Sunday, November 3rd 2024

in St Helen's Church at 3 pm

+

Simple refreshments will follow the service

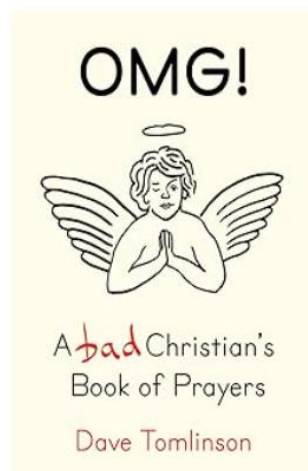


Join us for Taizé Prayer at
St Helen's Church at
5.30pm on October 13th

Talk: OMG! A Bad Christian's Book of Prayers.
Rev Dave Tomlinson

All Saints Methodist Church.
Tuesday October 8th 7.30pm

Organised by the local PCN Network



in
**St Michael and All Angels
Church, Park Road, Abingdon**

**The 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the
month 11am – noon**

*Please join us in this wonderful place for some gentle
dancing to beautiful music from around the world.*

This is an informal group and new dancers are always
welcome; no experience or partner needed. All dances
are demonstrated and walked through first.

£3 a session

For further information contact Elizabeth Mitchell at
emwym@hotmail.co.uk or Sue Sheppy on 07786736226

Faith Forum

On the first Sunday of each month in
the Parish Centre at 12.30 for a
buffet lunch followed by talk and
discussion at 12.45.

Focus this series:

Different ways of understanding
Scripture

Circle Dancing to Taizé
music: 1st Thursday of each
month
9.45 – 10.45 before regular
circle dancing session



Quiz Answers!

October Quiz Answers:
Don't peek!

1. Pineapple
2. Leeks
3. Runner beans
4. Potatoes
5. Strawberries
6. Galia Melon
7. Artichoke
8. Spring Onion
9. Cherry tomatoes
10. Cucumbers
11. Aubergine
12. Courgette
13. Satsumas
14. Blueberries
15. Morello Cherries
16. Butternut Squash
17. Celery
18. Cauliflower
19. Spinach
20. Mushrooms
21. Beetroot
22. Garlic
23. Turnip

Light Relief

From Rob Rutherford's Facebook feed



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 CHURCH KITCHEN

CartoonChurch.com

Thanks to all contributors and to you, the readers.

The next issue will be published on November 10th - ideas and contributions to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk