

Issue 1:
February 2025



Jesus, Simeon and
Anna.
Rembrandt

A candle in....

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

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Snowdrops in Swyncombe churchyard January 2025:
Photo - David Bevington

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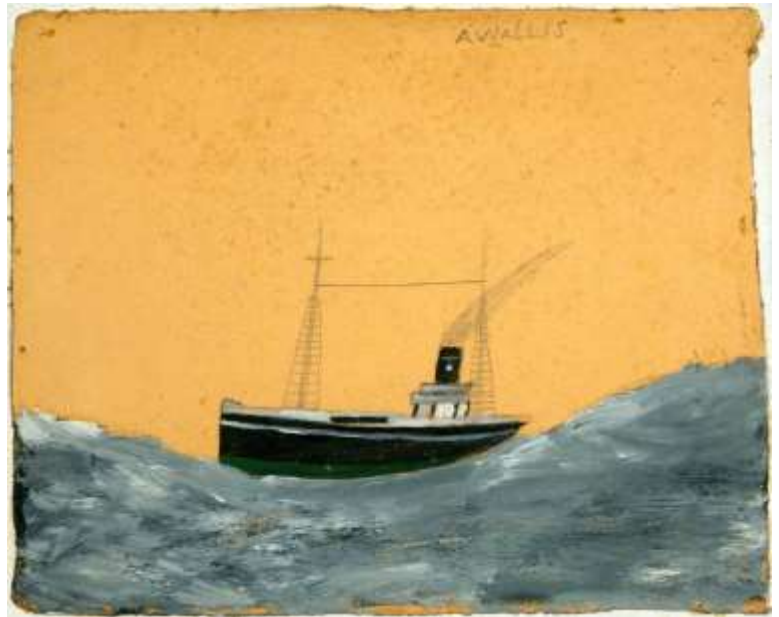
Pictures

Alfred Wallis – painter

David Bevington

I recently visited Museum and Art Swindon, a new gallery in Swindon's council offices, which among much else exhibits some of Swindon's collection of modern British art. A jewel in their collection – although not on show when I visited – is *Ship Amid Tall Waves*, a painting of a steamship at sea by Cornish painter Alfred Wallis.

Alfred Wallis (1855 – 1942) went to sea as a cabin boy at the age of nine. He was described as 'semi-literate'. Later he became a deep-sea fisherman before settling in St Ives with his family and eking out a living in businesses and shops in the town.



He didn't begin painting until he was 70 years old. He said that he was very lonely after his wife died, and painting gave him comfort. He painted ships he remembered seeing when he was at sea. He had no training in art, and couldn't afford to buy artists' materials. So this painting was typical in being painted on a sheet of cardboard from a box or packaging. The paints were leftovers from a ships' chandlers. This painting is in oil and pencil, but the orange sky is just the cardboard left bare.

St Ives was a mecca for artists, and two well-known artists – Ben Nicolson and Christopher Wood – happened to see Alfred painting in the kitchen of his tiny cottage in Back End Alley, and were very struck by the directness and authenticity of his paintings. They promoted his work in London, and it has become much loved. Sadly Alfred's paintings didn't sell for large sums in his lifetime, and he struggled to look after himself as he aged and had finally to be cared for in the Poorhouse.

I wonder whether there could be a parable for us in the way Alfred Wallis used such ordinary household materials for his striking pictures – cardboard and tins of paint – rather than expensive, specialist artist's canvas and paints? Perhaps we are like very ordinary, unprepossessing everyday materials which God is gradually turning into unique, beautiful new creations? He works with who we are – our torn, scrumpled edges, weathered and aged by life; the limitations of our characters and abilities, like the given-ness of the cardboard and paints Alfred Wallis had to hand. And God creates in each of us what St Paul calls a 'new creation' – someone reflecting his glory and character in a unique, fresh way. Of course, we are more than inanimate card and paint: God needs our 'Yes!', our active trust and co-operation, to work with.

Our Sunday gospel reading recently was Jesus' first miracle and sign at the wedding feast in Cana (*John 2 verses 1-11*). He saved a young couple from the humiliation of a 'dry' reception by turning water into wine of superlative quality. If any of us feel that we haven't made what we could of our lives, we can take heart from the superior wine Christ provided for the second part of the feast. God can use the ordinary 'water' of our lives, the cheap everyday packaging materials and paints, to create new and beautiful gifts we can offer to other people to bless them and to enrich our world.

Adapted from a homily at an 8 a.m. Communion service.

Ship Amid Tall Waves is reproduced by kind permission.

Museum and Art Swindon is in the Town Council Offices in Euclid Street – full details on its [website](#). A changing selection of paintings from the permanent collection is on display along with temporary exhibitions.

Alfred Wallis' painting will be on show 25 Feb to 13 Sept this year.

A Painting

Louise Heffernan

You've been painting again, Lord.
Was it for me that you planted these six poplars
To stand silhouetted against the sky?
Was it for me you used that particular shade of porcelain yellow
To contrast with the indigo grey of the clouds -
And framed it with the sculpted black branches of two alder trees?

The last sunlight sinks below the horizon,
The small February half-moon a tiny splash of silver,
The sky as watery as the damp ground;
the river high, lapping the path,
The last ducks leave for the banks; moorhens splash for home,
The play park deserted now as light fades and fails.

There is no-one else here, standing and looking
At this precise moment
From this exact spot of ground
So it must have been for me you painted this scene.

I am the lone spectator of the light show,
Tonight, the sole viewer in the gallery of your art.

Thank you.

I looked for an image to illustrate this poem but your imagination can do a better job.

I did discover that Monet painted poplar trees. In the link below you will find this:

In 1891 the owners of a group of poplars near Monet's home in Giverny decided to auction off the fully-grown trees. They had been planted in the first place for commercial rather than aesthetic reasons, and had always been destined to be turned into matchsticks or scaffolding. But the trees had captured Monet's imagination and at the sale he came to an arrangement with their buyer, to ensure that they would not be felled before he had had a chance to paint them at his leisure. Between spring and autumn of 1891 he worked on twenty-three canvases of the poplars, fifteen of which eventually formed a successful exhibition at the gallery of the dealer Paul Durand-Ruel in Paris the following year.

<https://fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/explore-our-collection/highlights/PD9-1966>

RAR

The Doctrine of Creation Out of Nothing

Margaret B. Adam: A summary of Faith Forum 2 Feb 2025

‘We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen’.

We, with Christians all over the world, recite this together, every Sunday, in the Nicene Creed. This claim that God is the maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen, is one way of expressing the doctrine of creation out of nothing. The doctrine of creation out of nothing is the church’s teaching that God creates everything-that-is out of nothing, out of no pre-existing material, not stuff called ‘nothing’, but no thing at all.

1) Christian Doctrine

Christian doctrine is a teaching, something agreed, learned, taught and important to the identity of the church. Christians are Christians in part because they embrace and remain in conversation with Christian teaching since the early church. Doctrine is a way of making sense of the stories and claims that Christians, as the church, have been making and continue to make.

Language about God is tricky. The words or images of any creature, of any human, can only approximate who and how God is. Whole ranges of artistic expressions also attempt to illustrate aspects of God. Often praise is the best way we know to speak to or of God, as in the Gloria, the Sanctus, hymns, and psalms.

Doctrines and praise speak of God in complementary ways. Doctrine provides a context for conversations, and it connects Christian faith claims to/with each other.

2. The Specific Doctrine of Creation out of Nothing

The doctrine of creation out of nothing is a long-standing doctrine of the church. Basically: God is one. God is Creator of all that is, the universe and beyond. God is not part of creation. There is nothing else besides God and God’s creation. God did not create all there is out of something that pre-existed God or existed along with God. There are no opposing forces, no additional substances to God and what God creates. There is no power that could compete with God or threaten God. All-that-is-besides-God is that which is created by God. God is the greatest ever, God is the greatest of greatness. God cannot be diminished. God, the creator of all is not just good, but goodness itself, not a being, but beingness, not a being who loves, but love itself. God is and God acts, inseparably. Who God is and what God does are one and the same. God is Creator/God creates—everything.

Creation-out-of-nothing resonates with presuppositions throughout the Old Testament and New Testament. Christianity and Judaism take this position in distinction from, in contrast to, philosophical and pagan religions of the day, in which God is necessarily tied up with and in the world. Instead, God the One God, the creator of all out of nothing is independent of the world. Creation out of nothing marks all of creation as contingent on God, God is Lord of all.

Some examples of what creation out of nothing looks like in scripture include: Jeremiah 32:17, Isaiah 44:24, Psalm 148, Lamentations 3, Hebrews 11:3, and Revelation 4:11.

In Psalm 148, the psalmist exhorts all of creation to praise the Lord who commanded and they were created. The creation called to praise includes celestial orbs, angels, sea monsters, all sorts of weather, mountains and trees, wild and domestic animals, rulers and their peoples, people of all ages. The Lord’s name alone is exalted, his glory is above earth and heaven.

The early church theologian, Tertullian, spells it out this way: ‘

“The object of our worship is the one God, who, by the Word of his command, by the reason of his plan, and by the strength of his power, has brought forth from nothing for the glory of his majesty this

whole construction of elements, bodies, and spirits'. Apology 17:1 [A.D. 197].

To sum up: God creates all. All is gift. All is entirely dependent on God, always. There is no other thing to threaten or compete with God.

3. Ramifications of the Doctrine of Creation out of Nothing

- a. God's creating and creaturely creating are very different.
- b. The one true distinction is between God and creation.

The one true distinction is that between God and creation. Creation out of nothing means that there is an unbridgeable difference between Creator and creation. This means that a) God is free to be nearer creatures than creatures themselves. God knows creation in every detail, and God can be immediately present without any blurred lines of identity between creator and created. It also means that b) creatures share more with other creatures than with God. This recognition of identity can—should—motivate Christians to increase care for their fellow creatures/creations, and it should remind Christians that they are not primarily alone and separated from other humans and other animals, and the rest of creation. Where there is division or conflict, use and abuse, it is still possible to reconsider these divisions in light of shared creatureliness, with shared habitats, resources, and possibilities. Conflict among creatures is not permanent, eternal, or irresistible.

- c. Science and doctrine address different questions and are not necessarily in conflict.
- d. God's creative power is not oppressive power, as God is not in competition with any of creation. God's power is not like creaturely perversions of power.
- e. The primary purpose of creatures is to give Glory to God, to flourish in praise of God. Humans who diminish the possibility for other humans or animals to flourish in praise are themselves diminished—we see this especially with farmed animals, habitats, climate damage, poverty.
- f. Creation out of nothing grounds Christian hope. Creation out of nothing affirms that hope in the reassurance of God's omnipotent generosity of new life, to the glory of God



We wanted to choose an image that in some way spoke of the creation. This image of the Milky Way over the Rhodope mountains in Bulgaria is made available (CC0 Public Domain Free for personal and commercial use) by Nikolay Kondev. https://pxhere.com/en/photo/1607217?utm_content=shareClip&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=pxhere

Through a glass darkly

Below the early morning sky
slowly lightening from the east,
mist hangs above the meadow
in a band of hazy whiteness.
It blurs the shapes of distant
trees, draining them of colour
and extinguishing the fire of autumn.
People loom out of the mist,
insubstantial as shadows; dogs
scamper soundlessly.

We too are people wrapped in
mist, wandering through life,
unsure of where the path we
have chosen will lead. Doubts
lurk at the edge of our certainties,
confidence is tinged with un-named
fears as plans and predictions are
derailed by the unforeseen, life
mocking our efforts to control
the future.

We wait for the mist to lift,
we long to see clearly, we yearn
to know as we are known,
to fathom the deepest mysteries
which are always just out of reach.

Susan Gee



For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but
then we will see face to face. Now I
know only in part; then I will know
fully, even as I have been fully known.

1 Corinthians 13.12

St Helen's Wharf January 2025
Picture: David Bevington

Agnostics Anonymous meeting, 28 January: Is Christian language too male?

Summarised by Gwen Bevington

This month John Barton and John Kerr were joined by Jen Brown, Keith Ward having decided to become an audience member rather than out-front brain. John Barton spoke to the subject and after a brief break, pertinent questions followed. I attempt an account below [with my own thoughts in square brackets].

John noted some questions that lie behind the title question, such as: What are the implications for how we speak of God – does sexist talk encourage sexist belief ? [yes] Is the Church lagging behind the rest of society? [yes] Are all religions inherently sexist? [they can sound that way] If the language of religion is too male [yes it is] what can be done?

John's underlying premise is that men and women are equal. The focus of the talk was, however, language: how we talk about human beings; how we talk about God.

How we talk about human beings. John began by recalling the deliberate choice, by a woman, of what sounded excluding language for an important service. Her argument would have been that when the texts were written, “man” and even “men” definitely included all humankind, and not in a patronising way. Most people would feel that times have changed, that people understand words in a different way today and that we need to avoid crass use of very male-sounding language. (This can be done by using “humanity” or “the human race” or by pluralising. But not all passages are straightforward.) Comparisons can be made between languages (such as Greek and Latin) which clearly have two different words (one for a male human, one for humanity in general) and current English usage. Even if one enjoys the archaic meanings of words, there is an onus to communicate in English as currently used.

The CofE's booklet *Making Women Visible* (1989) addressed the need to reduce sexist language. Against this, there is the view that since the Bible and traditional prayers are essentially male-dominated, this should be allowed to stand and be a scandal.

How we talk about God. Christians have never believed that God is gendered. Jews, by the time of Jesus, had come to believe that God is a spiritual being. English lacks a personal pronoun of both genders. That is the nub of the matter and is in some ways intractable. [I have sometimes mixed pronouns, referring to God as both *he* and *she* in the same paragraph. This doesn't seem to go down well.]

The talk produced a number of questions:

- 1) Should we think in terms of the sentient soul equating to matriarchy, the conscious soul to patriarchy? This would imply that both are needed for completeness. Jen said there is a growing understanding that there is not much difference in the brains of men and women.
- 2) How much are gender pronouns used in the original languages? Genders are really a way of organising language. So the fact that *ruach* (“Spirit” in Hebrew) and *sophia* (“Wisdom” in Greek) are feminine nouns was probably less significant to the original users than we are tempted to make it seem.

- 3) Milton: “He for God only, she for God in him” - that's difficult for us to hear. Jen said excessive zeal to make language inclusive can obscure a radical biblical inclusivity: eg we can ALL become sons of God.
- 4) Literature shapes attitudes. Christians know that God is not a human being – BUT Michelangelo painted God as an old man. John B: we need to see that as a metaphor, a way of conveying non-pictorial truths. (But people may think it's what we believe, just as in days of Empire it was thought that God is an Englishman.) Historical texts may surprise us, eg RSV speaks of the “sons of Israel”, the KJV of the “children of Israel”.
- 5) Many biblical images are male – eg King, Lord, Father.

John B: true. Progress has been made in writing modern prayers which are more inclusive – see the work of Janet Morley. There are passages which use maternal images for God – such as Isaiah 49.15, “Can a woman forget her nursing-child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.” Or Jesus's longing to protect Jerusalem as a mother hen protects her chicks. But we have to be honest and admit that such images are very rare in comparison with the male ones.

- 6) The Anglican Church in Canada begins all services by acknowledging the claims of first-nation people. In the same way, the Church could be much more explicit that language which seems offensive is based on historical accident and the vagaries of English, not on God's reality.
- 7) Neil Armstrong used “a man” and “mankind” to mean different things! “Humankind” might be better, but it's a good illustration of subtle differences in words.
- 8) But Jesus kept referring to God as Father!

John B: yes, I notice a lot of people these days opening extempore prayer with “Father God” - to me that's restrictive.

Jen: Jesus's use of “Father” conveys the intimacy of the relationship. There's also the element of “God is Father, Church (or nation) is Mother.”

John K: Remember that for some people, “father” can be a very hard word.

We all thanked our speakers for a thought-provoking evening - even if it did not produce definitive solutions to the conundrum under discussion.

Forgive us our trespasses

Rob Rutherford

Spoiler Alert: I'm going to start by discussing the play 'The Inspector Calls' by J.B.Priestley. Come back in a paragraph or two if you are about to see the play for the first time.

The play takes place at the home of Mr Birley, a self-satisfied, self-made business man, his wife and family. An evening dinner party has taken place to celebrate the engagement of their daughter Sheila to Mr Gerald Croft, son of another local industrialist. Also present is Eric, the younger son. There is a knock at the door. It is Inspector Goole – a policeman calling unexpectedly, who has returned from the hospital with the distressing news that a young woman has committed suicide seemingly out of desperation. A diary she kept has suggested that he ought to pay the house a visit.

At first it seems that there is no connection between the girl and the Birley family but gradually the Inspector's questioning reveals that each person in the house played a part in the girl's downfall. Read the play [here](#) if you want to find out how. No one person could be entirely blamed for the suicide but everyone was, in a sense, guilty.

I was reminded of the play when the report into the Grenfell Tower fire disaster was published on 4th September 2024. The fire happened in the small hours of 14th June 2017. 72 people died. The report spared no-one. Here are some quotes from it:

"We conclude that the fire at Grenfell Tower was the culmination of decades of failure by central government and other bodies in positions of responsibility in the construction industry to look carefully into the danger of incorporating combustible materials into the external walls of high-rise residential buildings and to act on the information available to them."

"The Buildings Research Establishment held a trusted position within the construction industry and was recognised both nationally and internationally as a leader in fire safety. However, from 1991 much of the work it carried out in relation to testing the fire safety of external walls was marred by unprofessional conduct, inadequate practices, a lack of effective oversight, poor reporting and a lack of scientific rigour."

"One very significant reason why Grenfell Tower came to be clad in combustible materials was systematic dishonesty on the part of those who made and sold the rainscreen cladding panels and insulation products."

The report also criticises the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the Tenant Management Organisation for failing to treat residents with respect and a serious failure on its part to observe its basic responsibilities. "The demands of managing fire safety were viewed by the TMO as an inconvenience rather than an essential aspect of its duty to manage its property carefully."

Whose fault? Everyone's. Voters don't like paying tax; important regulatory work is cut because it is expensive and seen as 'red tape'. Vulnerable communities are seen as unimportant and ignored and policies are implemented because they are cheaper than the (better) alternative. I'm sure you can add to this list.

When we ask forgiveness for our sins, we probably think of our own individual failures but there are also structural sins that our society commits and which we fail to prevent and for which we are all, ultimately responsible.

How do we avoid despair in such circumstances, particularly where it isn't clear what we could have done? We need to 'look out for each other' is the message of the play. Perhaps we would add that we can take our concerns to God in prayer.

Sudan needs help and prayers

Tony Richmond

Sudan is a wonderful country. Its people are warm and friendly and Sudani Christians claim deep Biblical roots. In the Bible it is called Nubia or Kush. Philip's "Ethiopian" Eunuch from Acts 8.26-39 is believed to have been Nubian, most likely from the African Jewish communities living around Aswan along the lower reaches of the Nile at the time. Christian civilisation held sway in Nubia for 700 years. (The term Ethiopia was used in ancient geography as the equivalent of Nubia, today's Sudan, rather than modern Ethiopia.)

Today, tragically, Sudan is the scene of the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The fabric of Sudanese society has been ripped apart by the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. According to the United Nations at least 12 million Sudanese have been forced from their homes, and 25.6 million people face food insecurity, with 800,000 on the brink of famine. Cholera outbreaks have killed over 1,000, and thousands more are at risk.

The war has devastated livelihoods, destroyed infrastructure and cut off food and aid supplies. The UN warns that famine will spread without urgent intervention – it is the only place in the world at this level of hunger. Thousands of children have been killed or injured and sexual violence is rife. The refugees face dire conditions, without access to sufficient clean water or food. Disease and droughts caused by climate change make matters even worse.

Yet Sudan is largely ignored by the global news media. So often in church we are urged to pray for peace in Ukraine and Gaza and Syria but Sudan is forgotten.

There are charities doing their best to help, their front-line workers often facing severe danger themselves. They are always in desperate need of finance. For example, Practical Action (<https://practicalaction.org/news-stories/sudan-an-update/>) works alongside people in Sudan to instal solar powered water systems that provide water for more than 70,000 people. They also provide seeds and equipment to help farmers adjust to the changing climate, and run workshops helping farmers grow and store crops like sweet potatoes, and to market them, helping to rebuild the social and economic fabric of communities in the midst of fighting.

Christian Aid (<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/sudan-crisis-appeal>) is also bravely working on the ground, especially helping the million people who have fled across the border to South Sudan. But here, more than 1.4 million people are affected by the worst floods in decades, wiping out crops and homes.

The Episcopal Church of South Sudan & Sudan University Partnership, ECSSSUP for short (<https://www.ecsssup.org>), is the UK charity that supports The Episcopal University (TEU) in South Sudan, a new Christian university, to educate leaders for a peaceful and prosperous nation. The Episcopal Church of South Sudan has the vision and mission to establish a Christian foundation university with campuses in different parts of the country. They hope to transform the lives and livelihoods of the people of South Sudan through the power of higher education.

In 2023 Dr Eeva John, founder of ECSSSUP, was made Vice Chancellor of TEU by Archbishop Justin Badi. The School of Law opened and TEU received its first cohort of law students and the Bishop Gwynne School of Theology admitted its first fully accredited cohort of theology students. So in the long term there is hope for Sudan and South Sudan, but in the meantime they desperately need help – and prayers.

Putting one's house in order

As we get older, we worry about what to keep and how to deal with 'stuff'. We also find ourselves helping to clear the houses of relatives. As I write I am confronted by a non-functioning aneroid barometer with a cracked glass that came some years ago from my Aunt's house who, in turn, had got it when her elderly cousin, who wasn't the best at looking after things, died. How do we make sensitive decisions about de-cluttering?

RR

Susan Scott was faced recently with a dilemma which she decided to share:

While unpacking a large box of goods donated by our son for the Christmas Market, I found several Bibles and Prayer Books which had once belonged to members of his paternal family. It was very salutary to see books which had been given as confirmation and baptism gifts to his great grandparents and grandparents together with biblical texts and other memorabilia of past services etc. He clearly didn't want to keep them and neither did his sister, so what to do? I too didn't want them only to bequeath them back to him in the not-too-distant future. It was highly unlikely they would sell, or that charity shops would want them. So was the tip the answer? This felt an awful prospect but in the event there was no need to make that decision as a member of the congregation phoned an artist friend who was very happy to have them.

However, this left me wondering what is the most appropriate and respectful way to dispose of Holy Texts. St Helen's already has several old Family Bibles "gifted" to us. Apparently, it is not at all uncommon for Vicars to be asked to dispose of such heirlooms.

Susan asked several people for their views about what to do. What follows is a selection of some of the points raised:

Really old historic books may have records of ancestry. One might hope that someone in the family would be the custodian of those and should be encouraged to keep them, rather than gift them to a church.

Books2Africa <https://books2africa.org/donate-books-and-computers/> take Bibles and religious books. They sort them in Canterbury as to their suitability (they also take certain other books) and then send the ones which would be useful to Africa.

Remember, though, that the charity 'Wycliffe Bible Translators' works to translate the bible into many languages so that as many people as possible can read the bible in their 'mother tongue'.

Theology students sometimes feel a bit diffident when it's suggested they write on pages of the Bible, or even use a cheap paperback edition – these are expressions of this same concern.

Protestant believers (as I understand things) place a very high value on the Bible but a strictly Protestant theology will refuse to assign spiritual qualities to material things. Thus any religious book is just paper, and to treat it otherwise skates too closely to the 'superstitious' ascription of holiness to inert objects. The Church of England does not adjudicate so long as the believer acts in accordance with conscience, and they should not be criticised.

It should also be noted that historic items held by churches cannot be disposed of without a faculty and plenty of guidance is available – [here](#) for example.

“You shall go out with Joy . . .”

Mary Anderson

When the idea of a barn dance was first mooted, I confess I was dubious: “This is not what we do in our church”, I thought. But our warden said it had done before, albeit some years ago, so I went along with the idea.

How wrong I was. The space was transformed, the food was good, the conversation and the wine flowed freely, and people – many young, some infirm, many new - visibly enjoyed themselves. The evening was full of laughter and joy.

In fact, when I entered St Helen’s in its new manifestation, I was reminded of an Easter service at an Anglican church in Cornwall a few years ago. The vicar had brought his kitchen table into the central space, and that is where Communion and the Resurrection were celebrated. The divine had entered everyday life, everyday life was part of the divine.

And so it was at St Helen’s on Saturday, 1st February. Moreover, the church was open to one and all, and they came in considerable numbers.

At our parish open meeting on 26th January at St Michael’s, our table group reflected on the qualities we’d like to see in our new Rector, and a wise former warden introduced the concept of ‘Joy’, which we duly – and joyfully – added to our list. I feel that what we experienced at the barn dance enhanced my sense of what being part of a Christian community is about: welcome, celebration and joy. My only regret is that we did not make verbal acknowledgement, with a word of thanksgiving, that we were in a holy space. That is a lesson for next time.

So, adapting the words of Steffi Karen Rubin (based on Isaiah 55:12):

We went out with joy
And were led forth with peace:
The mountains and the hills
Broke forth before us.
There were shouts of joy
And all the trees of the field
Clapped and clapped their hands.



Photograph taken and processed by
Norman Dawson

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – Serving our Community

Eluned Hallas

Over the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18-25 January), St Nicolas was open daily, hosting the Church in Abingdon Lunchtime Prayers.

The meetings, led by a different member of the Abingdon Ecumenical Clergy team each day, started with a time of prayer and reflection on a bible passage followed by a talk by some of the many charities and support groups working in Abingdon, and ended with a further time of prayer. Conversations continued over a light lunch.

Each day we heard about, and prayed for, projects showing God's love to our neighbours here in Abingdon. It was inspiring to hear about the work of the food and clothing bank; the Welcome Café and Host Abingdon; support offered to Foster Carers and struggling families; Archway's support for the lonely; and places offering companionship, warmth and acceptance to all, such as Open Doors at St Edmunds, Abingdon Compassionate Café and 35 Ock Street.

Many of these projects are hosted in church buildings, and members from all denominations, and none, support the initiatives through practical volunteering or financial support. It was good to be able to share time and fellowship with our many guests from all denominations and to hear about, and give thanks for all that is being done to show God's love in action, and for the opportunities we have to share in this work through prayer, action and donations.

Abingdon Foodbank: <https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/>

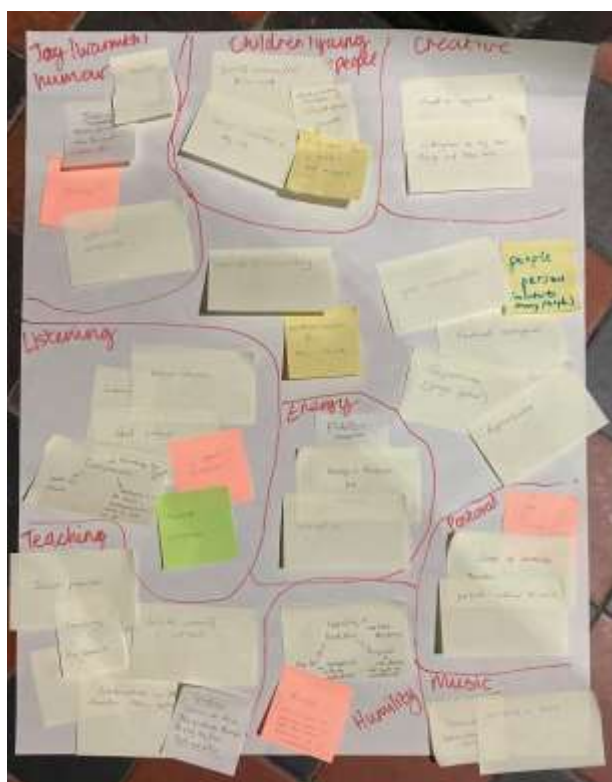
Host Abingdon: <https://hostabingdon.org/news>

Home for Good: <https://homeforgood.org.uk/>

Archway: <https://www.archwayfoundation.org.uk/>

Open Doors: <https://www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk/>

Abingdon Compassionate Café: <https://www.abingdon.gov.uk/event/abingdon-compassionate-cafe>



Some of the many post-it notes generated by the Parish meeting at St Michael's on Sunday 26th January

The Parish Carbon Footprint

Rob Rutherford

I'm sure that you know this:

Our Nation is committed to being Net-Zero by 2050.

The Anglican Church has challenged us to be carbon neutral by 2030 or at the very latest 2035.

If the world does not succeed in limiting global warming, our very existence is threatened. It is what is called an existential threat. The Candle in the Window has published the carbon footprint of our churches every year since the October 2020 edition published the 2019 figures. Here is the data for 2024. It only includes the gas and electricity used by the church buildings so it does not include the hidden carbon dioxide generated as a consequence of the things we buy. Nor does it include petrol used in getting to church etc.

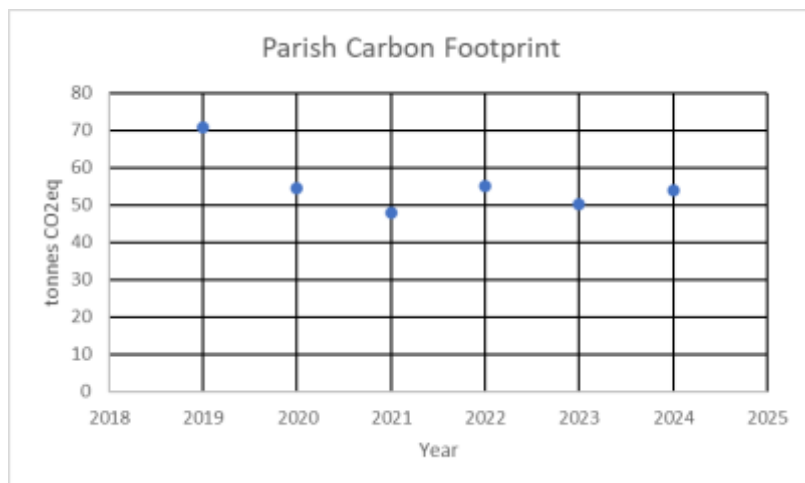
The calculation is based on this data:

184g of Carbon Dioxide are released for each kWh of gas energy used.

207g of Carbon Dioxide are released for each kWh of electrical energy used.

This latter figure is that recommended by the government for businesses to use in their reporting. It represents the average for the grid rather than an area specific figure. It does not take into account any 'green supplier' we may happen to use. It was calculated mid-year. The source <https://www.carbonbrief.org/> suggests that a more optimistic annual average for 2024 might be 124g.

Building	kWh gas	kWh elec	kg CO ₂	tonnes CO ₂
St Helen's Church	135,000	14,300	27,800	27.8
Parish Centre	16,300	4,400	3,910	3.9
St Michael's Church	75,702	4,567	14,874	14.9
St Nicolas' Church	34,674	5,089	7,433	7.4
total	261,676	28,356	54,018	54.0



The graph shows progress or the lack of it.

To be honest, we are still 'treading water'. It isn't surprising that there is no consistent fall. Most of the energy we use is for heating and that is largely from burning gas. Every kWh of gas releases 184g of carbon dioxide, just as it did in 2019 and our consumption has remained roughly constant. In fact all the churches in our Parish are reporting increased use of gas in 2024.

When should we abandon gas? We still need to think it through. And do some planning. Labour hopes to decarbonise the grid by 2030. Some regard this as optimistic but as the carbon intensity of the electricity grid reduces, the argument for electrical heating grows. In 2014 the figure was 419 gCO₂/kWhr. What we don't want is to go over to electricity too early when the consequence will be that Didcot power station burns more gas – not exactly the aim!

BUT we still need to prepare – if the gas boilers need replacing, what will we do?

If this seems similar to last year's article, that is because it is.

World Day of Prayer – March 7th

Alexandra Green

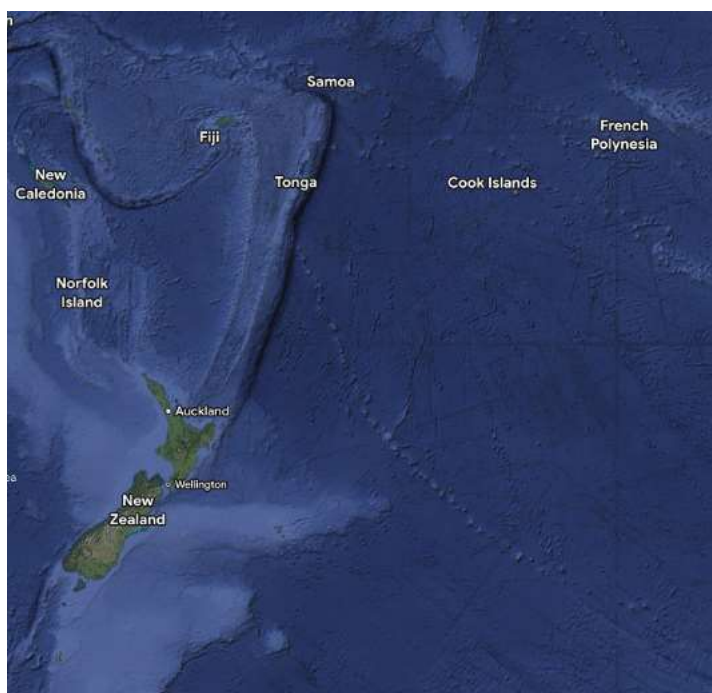
Originally known as the Women's World of Prayer, the reach of this day of celebration held in March has been extended and it is now known as the World Day of Prayer. First held in 1971 on the Island of Rarotonga, a service is prepared by a group of Christian women in different parts of the world, this year by women of the Cook Islands, a group of 15 islands spread over 800,000 square miles in the Pacific Ocean. Several denominations are represented there, including the Cook Islands Christian Church.

The islands lie between the Tonga and Samoa Islands to the east, in the centre of the Polynesian Triangle, thought to have first been inhabited between 500 – 800 A.D. by people from neighbouring islands. The British explorer, Captain James Cook, came to the islands in his expeditions of 1773 and 1777. The first Christian missionaries arrived in 1821, led by the Revd John Williams and members of the London Missionary Society. They sought to suppress what they saw as carnal desires, and wanted to impose western values on the islanders. Christianity is now the religion most prevalent in the Cook Islands, with approximately 85% of the population identifying with one of the main Christian denominations.

The main industry was agriculture until the opening of the airport at Rarotonga in 1973, and now tourism provides most of the islands' wealth and employment opportunities. There is an interesting mix of traditional roadside markets, selling local products including food, arts and crafts items, and employment supporting the ever-burgeoning tourism industry. A high level of literacy enables many Cook Islanders to go onto one of the two tertiary level institutions, the University of the South Pacific, and the Cook Island Tertiary Training Institute, which aims to meet the needs of the skills required for the tourism industry.

St Helen's is privileged to host this year's WDP service for the Church in Abingdon. The service is written by women of the Cook Islands and includes some traditional Māori greetings and music. There are also testimonials from Māori women giving an account of their different experiences growing up and living in the islands, and how their faith in God has sustained and strengthened them. The service will be led by the Revd Ruth Pyke, assisted by the Revd Richard Pyke and other members of the CiA governing body.

Following the service, there will be traditional Cook Island refreshments, including banana poke, Cook Island sweet coconut buns and fresh fruit native to the islands. Everyone is very welcome to come - Friday 7th March at 2.30pm.



Events: February and March 2025

Compiled by Louise Heffernan

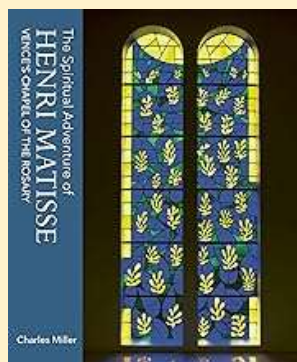
The Spiritual Adventure of Henry Matisse: Vence's Chapel of the Rosary

A talk by **Charles Miller** for Abingdon and District National Trust Association

Tuesday 18 Feb 2025

**Trinity Church
Hall, Conduit
Road, Abingdon at
2.30pm**

Free but donation of
£4 appreciated



St HELEN'S CHURCH

**AGNOSTICS
ANONYMOUS**

Meeting for Open Discussion

**Does being religious
make you a better
person?**

Led by Jennifer Brown with John Barton and
John Kerr

**Tuesday 25th February 2025
6pm to 7.30pm**

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

FREE Everyone Welcome

Contact for more Information: Jill Gant 01235 528929

Abingdon & District
Musical Society

**SAT 8TH MARCH 2025
7.30PM**

BEETHOVEN - Leonora no 3 Overture
DVOŘÁK - Violin Romance in F Minor
SUK - Praga, Symphonic Poem
BRAHMS - Symphony 4 in E minor

Alexander Walker - Conductor
Kate Bailey - Leader and Soloist

St Helen's Church
St Helen's Court
Abingdon
OX14 5BS

Tickets: www.wegotickets.com/ADMS
www.adms.org.uk

Taizé Services

9th February
9th March
St Helen's Church

13th April
St Michael's Church
All at 5.30pm

Taizé Circle Dancing

St Michael's Church at 9.45am
6th March
9th April

Ash Wednesday Parish Wide Service

March 5th
St Michael's Church
7pm

CiA - World Day of Prayer

This will be taking place on Friday 7 March 2025 at 2.30 pm at St Helen's Church. This year the service is prepared by the women of The Cook Islands.

Faith Forum, Spring 2025

Parish Centre at 12.45 preceded by a light lunch at 12.30

March 2: Incarnation, The Revd Dr AKM Adam

'The Word became flesh...' What does the incarnation mean for our faith and understanding of God?

April 6: Redemption, The Revd Dr Jen Brown

What does it mean to be redeemed? What is the relationship between redemption and renewal/recreation?

May 4: Salvation, Dr Tobias Tanton

*How are we saved? What does it mean to be saved?
What is the relationship between sin and salvation?*



Signs of Spring – Catkins in the Chilterns. Photo – David Bevington

Spring is coming...

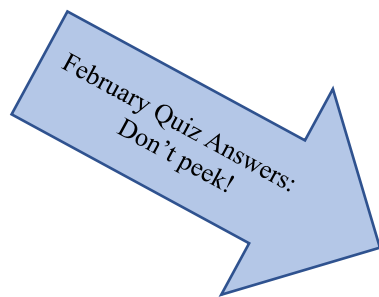
Eluned Hallas

...and gardeners' thoughts tend to planting, but your vegetable seed labels have somehow got all mixed up. Can you find what you want to plant?
The pictures may (or may not) help!



1	Thick areo
2	Aura gasps
3	Beanie rug
4	Cool crib
5	Pursers lost bus
6	Can door
7	Volcano ore
8	Clear ice
9	Ego cutter
10	His hoarders
11	No peep apple jar
12	Hi lo bark
13	Oat nutmeg
14	Oat pot
15	Chic radio
16	Marsh pie
17	Zero acorns
18	Two poets tea
29	Wet crones
20	Sewers cart

Pictures (not to scale) from:
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/
 File:Adolphe_Millot_legume_et_plante_potageres.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Adolphe_Millot_legume_et_plante_potageres.jpg)



- 20: Watercress
- 19: Sweetcorn;
- 18: Sweet potato;
- 17: Scorzoneria ;
- 16: Samphire;
- 15: Radicchio;
- 14: Potato;
- 13: Mangetout;
- 12: Kohl Rabi;
- 11: Jalapeno pepper;
- 10: Horseradish;
- 9: Courgette;
- 8: Celeriac;
- 7: Cavolo nero;
- 6: Cardoon;
- 5: Brussel Sprouts;
- 4: Broccoli;
- 3: Aubergine;
- 2: Asparagus;
- 1: Artichoke;



Signs of Spring – Witch Hazel in the Botanic Gardens, Oxford. January 2025. Photo – Rob Rutherford

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.

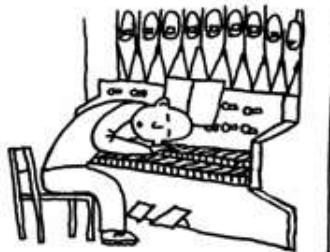
Finally, from Dave Walker:

THE LITURGICAL PAUSE

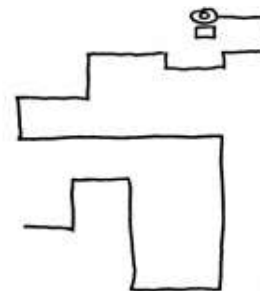
THIS IS ONE OF THE CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF A CHURCH SERVICE.
WE OBSERVE A LITURGICAL PAUSE AT THE FOLLOWING POINTS:



AT MOMENTS WHEN
PONDERING IS EXPECTED



WHEN THE ORGANIST
HASN'T COME IN



WHEN THE READER HAS
A PARTICULARLY GRUELLING
JOURNEY TO THE LECTERN



WHEN AN EASTER FIRE
OR ADVENT CANDLE
REFUSES TO LIGHT



WHEN NO-ONE WILL ADMIT TO
BEING THE PERSON DOWN
TO LEAD THE INTERCESSIONS



WHEN NOBODY HAS A
CLUE WHAT IS SUPPOSED
TO HAPPEN NEXT

CartoonChurch.com

Thanks to all contributors and to you, the readers.

The next issue will be published on March 9th - ideas and contributions to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk