

+ STOMP

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THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

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ISSUE 55 SUMMER 2022

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Cover photo: *Image credit NASA/JPL*

On September 5 1977 Voyager 1 space probe was launched by NASA. Its mission was to photograph the planets in our solar system before travelling on into deep space beyond the Sun's heliosphere. 45 years since its launch and as at September 2022 some 15 billion miles from Earth, it is still sending data back and is the most distant artificial object.

On Valentine's Day 1990 when Voyager was around 4 billion miles away and about to shut down its cameras and depart our planetary neighbourhood for the very edges of the solar system, it turned to take a last look at its home planet and captured this portrait of our world. Caught in the centre of scattered light rays (a result of taking the picture so close to the Sun), Earth appears as a tiny point of light, a mere dot.

"Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us – a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam" - (US Astronomer Carl Sagan)

That dot is where ice ages came and went, where dinosaurs roamed, where the whole panoply of human history, its triumphs and its tragedies, has been enacted.

We need to take care of it - we have nowhere else to go.

And that dot too is where shepherds and wise men greeted the Christ child, sent by God to live and die for us so that one day we might share the joys of eternal life in his heaven.

"When I consider thy heavens, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained - what is man that thou art mindful of him?"

Psalm 8.3-4

Jeff W

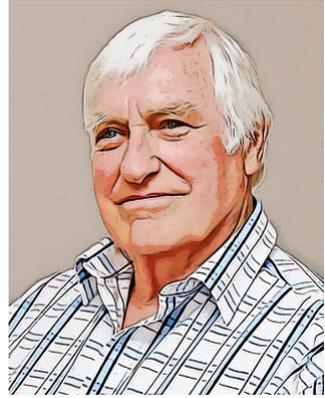
FROM THE EDITOR

Reading and reflections on religion and philosophy introduced me to several prominent contemporary thinkers. A bookshelf in our study holds three books by Karen Armstrong (see note page 9).

In this issue of STOMP my piece on 'Compassion' reflects Karen's thinking, but who is she?

British, of Anglo-Irish descent, aged 77 she describes herself as 'a freelance monotheist'. Aged 17 she became a member and a nun in The Sisters of The Holy Child Jesus, a teaching congregation. She left the Order after seven years, during which she achieved a laudatory first - class honours degree in English at Oxford University. These were tough yet enlightening times for her. Vanessa Thorpe, in the Guardian 2 October 2010 wrote, 'Armstrong was required to mortify her flesh with whips and to wear a spiked chain around her arm'.

For 13 years she left religion after leaving the convent. She regards her career to have been a disaster until the age of 50, but her studies, travels, writing and lecturing over the years have led to her being regarded as one of the world's leading commentators on religious affairs and in recognition she has received many awards.



Wikipedia carries a good summary about Karen's life and it is worth getting to know her better by watching her YouTube lecture on the theme, 'The Case for God', in St Paul's Cathedral on 19 Oct 2012.

Revd Diana Spink

Our treasured and beloved priest and friend Revd Diana Spink passed away on 30th August.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

WALSINGHAM

The Final Part 3/3 - Canon John

For 300 years after the desecration of the mediaeval shrine of our Lady of Walsingham by Henry VIII's commissioners, the area lay barren and without pilgrims. Pilgrimage was a distant memory and Walsingham became like any other other farm town in North Norfolk.

With the Anglo-Catholic revival in the Church of England at the end of the 19th century, Walsingham and the history of pilgrimage came once again to the fore.

It was at that time that an Anglican laywoman called Charlotte Boyd decided to try and purchase the old disused slipper chapel in Houghton St Giles, about a mile out of Walsingham, for the use of the church. It was then little more than a cow shed but had once been the byway chapel at which pilgrims - including Henry VIII - removed their shoes before walking the holy mile to the shrine.

By the time the purchase had been completed Charlotte had converted and become a Roman Catholic and was to give the chapel to the Roman Catholic Church as a place for pilgrimage. It would eventually become the RC National Shrine of our Lady of Walsingham.



With the Curé d'Ars

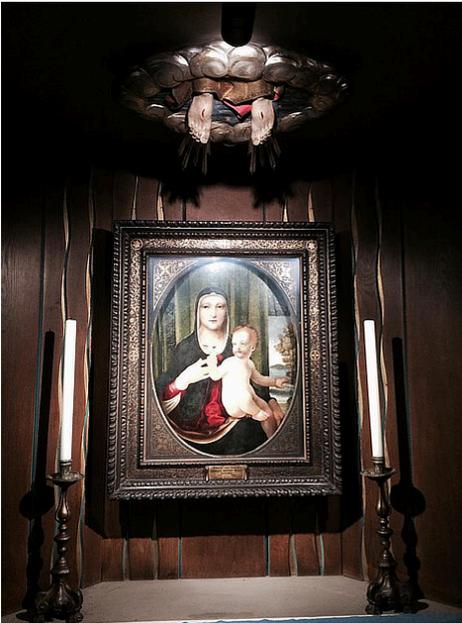
Not long after, in 1926, the new Anglican parish priest of Walsingham was Alfred Hope Patten. He was keen to refound pilgrimage to Walsingham and had a replica of the medieval statue of Mary set up in the parish church. Although his efforts were soon popular within the Anglo-Catholic wing of the church and many Anglican pilgrims were soon coming along, the then Bishop of Norwich sought to suppress it causing Fr Hope Patten to acquire land for an independent shrine to be established. Run by a college of guardians the local leadership of the Church of England could not close it down.

ST MARY'S PEW REMOVAL PLANS!

Over the next nearly hundred years pilgrimage grew and developed so that Walsingham once again became England's Nazareth.

Today there is a presence in the village of Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists (John Wesley once preached there) and the Orthodox. Many church activities have an ecumenical aspect and the Blessed Virgin Mary is seen as someone who brings Christians together in that place.

It's hoped that soon we can take a group from Hemel Hempstead to experience the joy of pilgrimage to Walsingham for themselves and perhaps you can be a part of that?



The Chapel of the Ascension - note the feet!

The PCC is currently consulting with the diocese and various heritage bodies about removing pews in the north aisle of the church and at the front, to enable more flexibility to be brought into the building.

Since the installation of the kitchen and toilet facilities, in the top of the north aisle, space for tea & coffee and other activities has been somewhat limited; removal of the pews and establishing an area for seating and displays in the under-utilised north aisle will allow us to creatively expand the use of the building. Whilst doing this we intend to remove a few rows at the front of the nave to open things up for better access and to allow work with children, families and young people to develop.

This work has kindly been financed by a generous donation from Jenny Bowes and we are most grateful to her for this gift which will benefit us and future generations. Plans will be available for viewing once the diocesan body responsible allows us to proceed to the next stage. As always with listed buildings this will not be a fast process!

Canon John

TIME TO REVIVE OLD FRIENDS

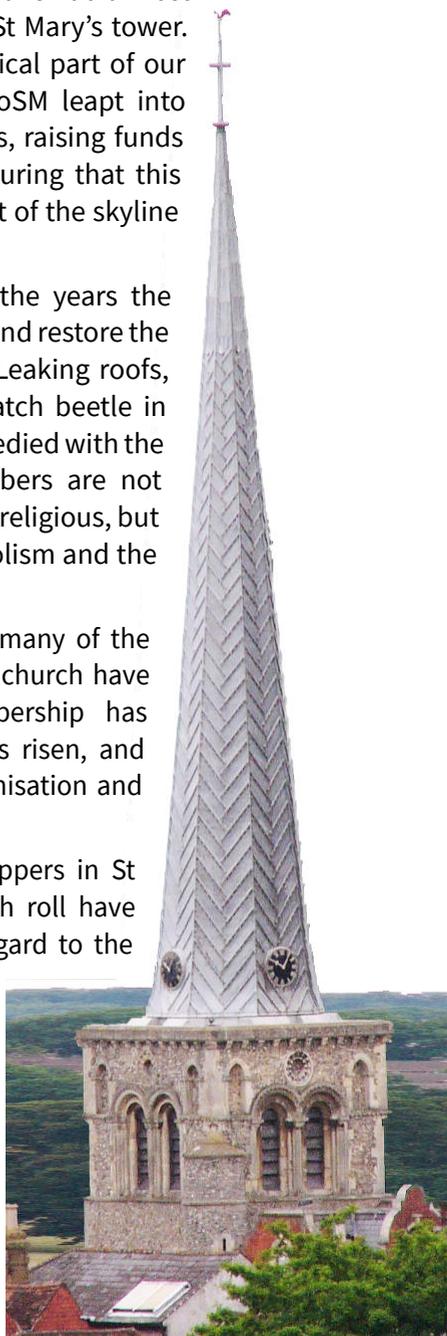
The Friends of St Mary's (or FoSM for short) have had a most impressive history, not least with regard to St Mary's tower. When it seemed that this unique and historical part of our church was nigh on impossible to save, FoSM leapt into action, recruiting large numbers of members, raising funds and negotiating loans – and eventually ensuring that this wonderful mediaeval construction is still part of the skyline of Hemel Hempstead.

But their efforts did not stop there. Over the years the Friends continued to raise funds to preserve and restore the fabric of our beautiful and ancient church. Leaking roofs, damp walls, crumbling stonework, deathwatch beetle in beams – all of these and more have been remedied with the help of funds raised by the Friends. Members are not necessarily parishioners, or even particularly religious, but all of them care about the history, the symbolism and the beauty of our building.

Times change, however, and over the years many of the Friends who worked so hard to preserve the church have passed away or moved elsewhere. Membership has dwindled as the age profile of members has risen, and eventually it has become clear that the organisation and purpose of FoSM needs to be re-visited.

At the same time, the age profile of worshippers in St Mary's has risen, and numbers on the parish roll have fallen. Were another great challenge with regard to the church's fabric to arise, it is difficult to see how we would cope.

Our stewardship moneys cannot be guaranteed to cover even the daily running costs of the church – the heating, lighting, insurance, printing, cleaning, parish share and so on. In one way, the fabric of where we meet does not matter. After all, 'Where ever two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be also.'



But the lovely building of St Mary's, hallowed by nearly a thousand years of prayer and worship, needs to be lovingly preserved, I think, so that for the next thousand years (or at any rate the next century or two!) there will be a sanctuary where the people of our community can come to find refuge. The important moments in people's lives have been marked here by baptisms, weddings and funerals. It offers peace and serenity in busy lives, even to people of different beliefs and none. The current congregations cannot on their own afford to keep the building of St Mary's running in a fit state for the generations to come.

Therefore, FoSM must be revived and the whole wider community of Hemel Hempstead become involved in preserving this beautiful church.

So what has been done already? The constitution has been revised, the membership list updated. Contacts have been made with the Borough Council and the businesses and residents of the Old High Street. Permission has been obtained to erect a banner in the churchyard facing the park, so that people in the park can see news of appeals and events, as well as what is going on in the church and the High Street. Planning is going on for acquiring publicity material for the Friends, to appear in the church and possibly events in the town. An art

competition for senior students in local secondary schools will be organised encouraging these young people to come down and explore the church and represent its beauty, atmosphere and importance in their artwork. Through these actions, we hope to get people of our community to join us as members and/or support our fundraising activities.

What can parishioners – the congregations of St Paul's, St Mary's and the wider team – do? If you haven't already, please join the Friends. Annual fees are £20, and for that there will be regular bulletins and the chance to be involved in social and fundraising events. Please also encourage friends and relatives to consider joining. Members of FoSM do not have to have any religious affiliation, only a wish to help preserve the fabric of the building for future generations. The more members we have, the more hands and minds there are to plan and organise fundraising and the more fun we can have at social events. Please speak either to me or to Lynne Sygrave if you want to be involved in reviving old Friends!

Norma Podmore

COMPASSION



Featured in this issue's editorial is Karen Armstrong who launched her Charter for Compassion in May 2011. She states, 'we urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarised world'. She sees this thought as expressing the Golden Rule which binds together all the major religions, and in the words of Confucius, 'never treat others as you would not like to be treated yourself'. She writes about the clash between three parts of the human brain. First, the part inherited from our reptilian past: to feed, to fight, to flee, to reproduce – all about ego and survival. Second, a key part developed within the human being: social bonding, thinking about others and caring for them. Third, there is the neocortex, the part of the brain concerned with the rational, with sight, hearing and systematic thinking. She sees a conflict between the ego and care for others, between self and the giving of self.

Speaking in on 4 June 2013 at an Action for Happiness event in in the Ethical Society's London Conway Hall Karen Armstrong indicated that the answers to this conflict are already with us in the thinking, writing and practices of the traditional religions. There is the recognition that pain and suffering are the inevitable part of

human existence, experienced by everyone of us. Honest recognition of one's own pain is the step to recognising the pain of others. That realisation is the basis for compassion towards others and for giving to others. She first realised this during the struggle and trauma of writing her first book, *The Story of God*. She needed to understand the key reference texts is the context of the times they were written. Daily for six hours she had to put her ego and, in her words, 'the overeducated Karen on the back burner'.

'Theology is poetry' and its texts cannot be approached and understood on the basis of post enlightenment rationalism. Be they from Buddha, Leviticus, the Gospels reflecting Jesus Christ, or Mohammed they need to be understood in the contemporary context when they were written,▷

the context of political, geographic and economic reality at the time and the customs and way of thinking then. Bringing this thinking into our own time helps us better to understand other societies and cultures. Yet the one unifying fundamental is the sanctity of each individual, from wherever, and the need to see holiness, or the potential for holiness, in others. In this way we can reach out to the other with understanding, compassion and kindness.

Footnote on the charity, Action for Happiness

Formed in 2010 the mission of this UK based global movement is, 'to promote a happier world, through a culture that prioritises kindness and happiness'. The first of its ten keys to happiness is Giving: do kind things for others. The fascinating lecture referred to above very much identifies with such a mission, it is wide ranging in content and is available on YouTube. Better to look at it than to rely on my interpretive summary!

Gordon Gaddes 29 July 2022

*Photo credit: Muradlatifli,
Creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>
via Wikimedia Commons*

READING OFFERS

The three Karen Armstrong books I have are:

A History of God, 1993

Archbishop Robert Runcie Daily Telegraph:

'Armstrong shows a reverent curiosity and generosity of spirit, refreshing and understanding of what one knows and providing a clear introduction to the unfamiliar.'

Rabbi Julia Neuberger:

'An enormously intellectually challenging book. A fascinating way of approaching the subject'.

The Great Transformation, The World in the Time of Buddha, Socrates, Confucius and Jeremiah, 2006

Bryan Appleyard, Sunday Times:

'This book is an absolute refutation of the current wave of disreputable and intellectually trivial attempts to banish religion from human affairs. It deserves nothing but praise.'

Julie Wheelwright, Independent:

Remarkable ... Armstrong has just written a fascinating and highly readable history, but one which makes these ancient philosophies profoundly relevant'.

The Bible, 2007

Hugh MacDonald, Glasgow Herald:

'An extraordinary book...This is not an obituary for the Bible, but a biography of a book that still lives, breathes and can preach the most essential of messages.'

Peter Stanford, Independent:

'Armstrong's great achievement is that, as well as leaving you with a clearly more historically accurate picture of what precisely the bible is (and isn't), she also makes you want to go back and read it again with fresh eyes.'

A Message

These books are idling in my study; should anyone want to borrow a copy for a few weeks please let me know. GG

ST JAMES THE LEAST

The Revd Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace', an elderly Anglo-Catholic vicar to Darren his nephew, a low-church curate, recently ordained.

Beware all donations!



The Rectory
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

This has been an unusual month; we have moved from hysterical excitement to deep disappointment within the space of days.

For many years, our vestry has displayed an oil painting generously donated by the Dowager Duchess of Stansby - given to us, I suspect, because her son, the tenth Duke, would not allow it in his house. It was supposed to depict Daniel in the lions' den, although I always thought it looked more like a prospective adopter visiting a dog rescue centre. The Dowager was less than pleased when it wasn't made the centrepiece in the sanctuary, but we managed to persuade her that her exceptional work of art would be safer from theft if locked away.

Then - our cleaner happened to knock it off the wall. If it had landed in her bucket of disinfectant and been totally destroyed, it would have been a sadness I suspect I could have learned to bear. But something more interesting happened. Some of the Dowager's oil was chipped off - to reveal a painting underneath of what looked like a cherub.

The cleaner told the churchwarden, who instructed her not to tell anyone about the find. This inevitably meant that, within the hour, the entire parish knew of the discovery of what had already been transformed into a priceless pre-Raphaelite treasure. Our churchwarden has yet to learn the fact that if you tell someone something in complete confidence, they assume it means they can only tell one other person at a time.

By evening, mutually opposed camps had already formed. Miss Timmins wanted the treasure to be placed in a side chapel, as a shrine, preferably with candles permanently burning beside it. She envisaged St James the Least of All becoming a place of pilgrimage, and that this yet-to-be revealed cherub may work miracles of healing. She was already asking for opinions about where the car park should be built to cater for the thousands of tourists who would soon be flocking here. Another group wanted to sell it as soon as possible and use the money to repair our church tower. A third group insisted the fortune it would raise be given to African missionaries. Meanwhile, the tenth Duke was consulting his solicitors to see how he might get the canvas back to his castle.

We compromised by getting the thing X-rayed, to see what work of art lay underneath. It turned out to be by a local artist who had painted an advert for the village pharmacist to sell his own brand of gripe water.

Shrines, towers and good deeds were quietly forgotten and the last we heard of the tenth Duke was that he was consulting a second set of solicitors to see if he can get out of paying the first set for the work that they had done to retrieve the painting.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

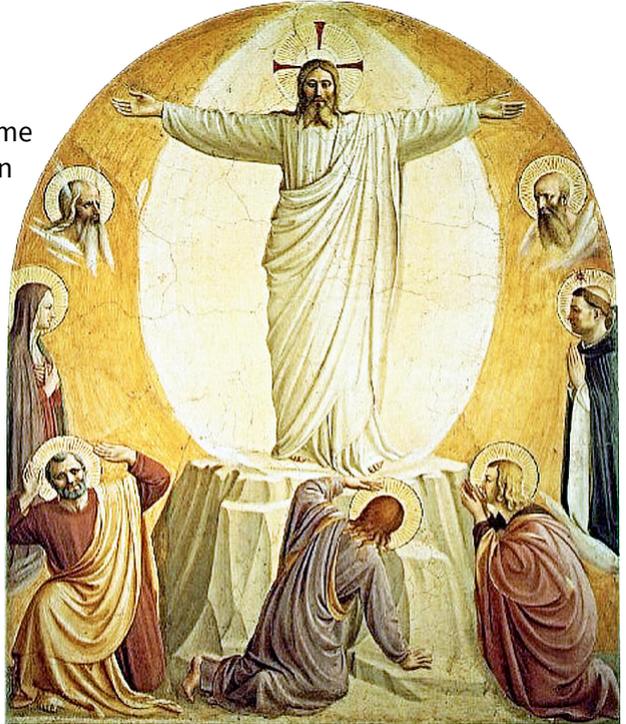
GOD IN THE ARTS

The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a look at 'The Transfiguration' by Fra Angelico. It is found in the Dominican convent of San Marco in Florence.

We behold the glory

TQ – Tingle Quotient – is the name given to those things that can produce a tingle down the spine or a frisson of excitement. It could be a piece of music or the sight of an evening sunset at sea or a newborn babe. We look, we hear, and what we look at or hear evokes a sense of wonder and amazement that has an almost physical effect on us. Something sublime unfolds before us producing delight and awe: a hint of glory that leads us to wonder and even to worship.

The monk who lived in cell number 6 at the Dominican convent of San Marco in Florence must have felt that when he entered his room and saw for the first time the fresco of the Transfiguration that Fra Angelico had painted. I am sure the sight would have stopped him in his tracks, just as Peter, James and John were stopped in their tracks as they beheld their Lord transfigured before them on the mount.



From 1436 Fra Angelico painted a whole series of frescoes for the convent from the High Altar to the Chapter House to the cells of the monks. Here in cell number 6 there is a restrained simplicity and directness about the Transfiguration. One of the three disciples looks out towards us, while the other two are caught up in wonder and awe as they look on Jesus with the faces of Moses and Elijah on either side.

GOD SAVE THE KING

Here Fra Angelico is not seeking to impress a wealthy patron: he is providing a focus for devotion and prayer for the monks of his community. The scene speaks to us of that sense of awe and reverence. On 6th August the church celebrated the feast of the Transfiguration. The Gospel accounts relate that special moment of revelation to the inner group of disciples. The glory shown to them evoked a sense of wonder and marvel, but also a sense of loss. For the glory proved elusive and just out of human reach. The moment of revelation passed, and the disciples had to go down the mount again to meet the crying needs of the world, all but forgotten when they were with their Lord on the mountain top.

The monk in his cell would ponder the glory of Fra Angelico's fresco, knowing that he would be called from his cell to take up his monastic duties. But the painting would go with him to sustain and nurture his life. It is the same with us: we have moments of glory. But they pass, and we must return to our daily lives. As we look on this painting, we sense that glory and wonder which can sustain us through life. As Thomas Jones says in his poem on this episode:

*Like a pearl we hold
Close to our hearts
what we have heard and seen.*

We were in St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh at the end of a few days' holiday. People were walking thoughtfully around taking in the splendid architecture and amazing stained glass windows and observing the place where HM The Queen had lain in State earlier in the week.

At noon there was an announcement that people were free to continue walking or they could sit for the short service that was to follow. The majority sat as the 23rd Psalm was read followed by a Gospel reading. Then there were prayers for her late Majesty and for the King and the Royal Family.

I tried to remember the unusual phrase which came next, something like. . . 'uncertainty snapping at our heels . . .'.

'Uncertainty' I could relate to as the nation mourned the sudden death of a beloved monarch who had served our country with unfailing duty. 'Snapping at our heels' made me consider how I could prevent this.

Then it dawned on me that, as part of the grieving nation, it was partly my responsibility to pray for King Charles III to fulfil his duty too. He needs our help.

Catherine Lindsay

Mission Action Plan

In the Winter 2022 (Issue 53) of StoMP Magazine there were details of the first post-pandemic update of our Mission Action Plan (MAP).

The summary below details the latest updates to the Plan carried out in July 2022

Website and Signage: Targets – 1 Year

1. Significantly improve the warmth and welcome of our notice boards, especially at St Mary's. (e.g. put the legally required information on a new board in the South Porch and focus on words and images which engage passers-by.)
Action – Churchwardens Ongoing and via FOSM.
2. Review the possibility of making the Home Page (and other heavily used pages) of the website still more welcoming and interactive by using more images, questions, animations, etc.
Action – Website Team More pics on homepage. Review prominent donation button.
3. Obtain the right and resources to put up banners facing the park with news of events in the church and the High Street.
Action – contact Fraser and Cllr Rob.

Community Links: Targets – 1 Year

1. Run the Nativity Trail for children to increase engagement and footfall for local churches and businesses. After evaluation decide how to take this forward.
Action – Won't be taken forward.
2. Provide regular and sustained giving to Highfield Fridge over the year.
Action – Ongoing, also DENS.
3. Run Art in the Nave again. Also Extravaganza '22
Action – in progress.
4. Revive Friends of St Mary's and develop membership and aims to improve the engagement between the wider community with the church.
Action – In progress.

Service Offerings: Targets – 1 Year

1. Further develop Café/messy church offerings at both churches.
Action – How screen can be used at StM to enhance offering to be considered.
Action – StP morph 11.30 in to new 11.15 shorter Communion?
2. Provide well-publicised and engaging Lent courses (to include Lay leadership) exploring different aspects of faith (similar in style to the art based course of 2021).
Action – Ongoing.
3. Explore the possibility of providing a regular non-Eucharistic service for non-church people in the community, see point 4 below.
Action – Ongoing.
Open Question Time ‘At Home’ to be explored (RS and JKW to take forward at StM) ? StP.
4. Provide flip charts and/or survey forms in both churches (and possibly on the website and taken out into the community?) to invite people to say what they would like our churches to provide for them.
Action – replaced by initiative in 3 above.

Climate Crisis Projects: Targets – 1Year

1. Carry out an echo audit of all buildings.
Action – BC/Churchwardens happening BC.
2. Decide on a specific project for the parish to support which either helps to reduce the impact of climate change or improves health for people in the wider world (possibly linked to the Langa Trust?)
Action – invite volunteers to form an Action Group. Dependent upon 1, above.
3. Investigate the possibility and costs of installing solar panels on St Paul’s roof.
Action – St Paul’s churchwardens. See 1, above.

Longer Term aims to be achieved by the end of 2024

Many of our 1 year targets are a form of preparation to achieve a longer term aim. Our 3 year targets will therefore arise from the success or otherwise of our preparation. However, we will aim for:

- Friends of St Mary's becoming a lively group of local people who feel an affinity with the church, and who will develop projects (and not just fundraising) to enable the people of Dacorum to feel that the church is there for them.
Action – Happening.
- Thoughtful and decisive action to be taken as a result of surveys, questions and discussions about the services we offer. This may include new forms of worship, education opportunities or different outreach projects.
Replaced by 'At Home' initiative, above.
- The Climate and Health Action Group to have found a project and be well on the way to completion and review
Action – See above.
- Following up the echo survey with action and funding, e.g. Solar panels on St Paul's.
Action – as above.

In addition there are other longer term aims which the PCC discussed and which we should like to achieve:

- A clear plan to achieve financial viability both as a parish and as part of the wider Team
Action – Wider Team changes now in play.
- Improved educational and discussion opportunities for existing members of the congregations and for any who might be seeking spiritual sustenance and support
Action – New Team Vicar Adult Education role?
- More pilgrimage opportunities for members of the parish.
Action – Walsingham 23 with RD being considered.
- Have at least four people trained in Lay Leadership.
Action – Ongoing and to include Team churches.

NP/RG/JKW revised July 2022

THE HAPPIEST OF DAYS

Saturday 23rd July saw a joyous time at St Paul's Church in Highfield, the wedding of Joanna Hunt and David Raeburn, officiated by Canon John. Joanna is the daughter of Roger and Vivienne Hunt, residents in Highfield since the early 1960's but now sadly passed away. 'Viv', as known to us, had been a mainstay of St Paul's for decades and had two spells as Church Warden over 15 years. She and Roger must be thrilled by this union even if they could not be with us.

The church was full, a count of 105, and the service was to warm the hearts of those who long to be at a fully - fledged Anglican wedding with everything thought out and in proper sequence, with hymns, readings and John's tribute and prayers. The hymnal worked perfectly, some people looking round startled to try to find where such resounding organ music came from.

It was a hot day, windows and doors open to catch a breeze, service programmes being waved as fans. The usual short delay, mounting suspense, and announcement by John, then the bridal march, with two flower girls spreading petals, and three bridesmaids ahead of Joanna, lovely and radiant, accompanied by her brother Matthew who was to give her away and son Jake as the usher.

The key moment in the ceremony, the announcement of the union was greeted with a shout of joy and approval. What a relief as this was the third effort, the wedding had been put off twice over two years because of COVID. It was good to hear later that somebody attending had



said to John that this was the best wedding he had ever attended and indeed John seemed to be enjoying it himself.

David and Joanna left walking up the ramp with people applauding on both sides, showered with confetti, off for the wedding reception at Harpenden Golf Club. Later they were to honeymoon in Kenya starting with a safari in Masamara then onto Zanzibar for a week. Those of us who were there from St Paul's were left with our memories of Viv and Roger and, as happily we cleared up the confetti, we were pleased that we had the privilege to be there on such a special day. GG

GOD IN THE SCIENCES

Editor: Dr Ruth Bancewicz is based at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.



Keeping Calm in the Storm

One of the most famous stories about Jesus is the calming of the storm (Luke 8:22-25). Of course, anyone could say that the wind stopped suddenly of its own accord, but the disciples were not fooled. They had seen a number of these ‘coincidences’ in Jesus’ ministry, and they weren’t about to ignore this one. Jesus had calmed the waves with only His words. Wasn’t this an act of God? Who else could be in complete control of creation?

Jesus dealt graciously with the very pressing and practical issue of the raging storm before He did a bit of teaching, asking His followers “Where is your faith?”

It's not surprising that they were scared, given the circumstances, but clearly Jesus expected better of them. He had already been teaching them for some time, and clearly knew they were ready to trust Him.

In similar circumstances, Christians often do several things in quick succession. We start by panicking and being afraid. After a while we might remember what we know about God's character and pray for help, trusting that whatever happens He will help us to handle it. Most often, we don't get the storm-calming effect when we ask for it, but battling on with faith and God's help is much easier than trying to keep going in a panic.

'Peace' in this kind of situation is a very active holding on to what we know about God. The difference between trusting and not trusting can be like night and day in terms of stress levels. I have found that it can make the difference between unmanageable stress and something that stretches me and teaches me something new.

Knowing some science can help us to trust God. A Being who created the whole universe, sustaining the wonderfully creative processes that produced diverse life on earth, must be both extremely powerful and extremely wise. The God who can both calm the waves and walk on them must be in complete control of the things He made. When this knowledge goes hand in hand with experience of God's intimate love for us and care for us in every situation that we find ourselves in, I am reassured that He's got things in hand. I will always need help from others to pray faithfully in stormy situations, but hopefully I've seen enough now not to panic for too long.

Rise up...

To come to Thee is to come home from exile, to come to land out of the raging storm, to come to rest after long labour, to come to the goal of my desires and the summit of my wishes...O raise me, draw me. Thy grace can do it.

Send forth thy Holy Spirit to kindle sacred flames of love in my heart, and I will continue to rise until I leave life and time behind me, and indeed come away....

From a prayer by Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892, well-known Baptist preacher)

EDITOR'S INTERVIEW

JENNY BOWES

This is an insight into the life of Jenny. The delightful photo taken in March 1965 shows 24 year - old David Bowes walking down the aisle of St Mary's Church with his lovely young bride Jennifer (née Lawrence), then to honeymoon in Jersey.

Born in Alexandra Road in May 1947, with a Hemel father and Liverpool mother, Jenny has lived all her life in Hemel Hempstead.

As a girl living within a very happy family, Jenny later was to spend several happy decades with David, the brother of a school friend, who was also 'a local'. Her family moving to Abel Close in Adeyfield, Jenny went to the Maylands Primary School and to Sunday School classes at St Barnabas.



Roaming around, aged 10 and with her friend Linda, Jenny brings an interesting insight into changes in the town and in our times. She writes, 'My friend Linda and I were wandering around the town that day, as we often did. Children could often wander without an adult because hardly any families had cars'. Her proudly-used birthday present was a Kodak brownie camera with which the picture of her friend Linda in front of the old St Paul's Church was taken.

Passing the eleven plus she transferred to Apsley Grammar School.



Old St Paul's Church taken by Jenny with a birthday present Kodak-brownie

After 'O' Levels she attended Dacorum College of Further Education in 1963-64 taking a one year RSA business course after which she was awarded the College Economics Prize and the RSA Bronze medal. This prepared her in 1964 for going into a number of local solicitor's offices in 1964, in succession Lovell Smeathman and Son, Brechers and AJ Harry, before transferring to a firm in northern Surrey. Studying and legal work must have suited her because later, aged 26, she enrolled with the Law Society as an articled clerk and qualified as a solicitor five years later.

Jenny's longest legal service was with BP for 23 years until her retirement at 57.

She worked in the Legal Department of BP Oil Limited, and after several years was invited by Judith Hanratty, the Company Secretary of BP plc, to a post in the Company Secretary's Office at the company's headquarters at 1 St James Square.

The biggest highlight of that whole period was a call by Sir John Browne, the Chief Executive, for the whole staff to assemble in the atrium. Trepidation turned to pleasure and interest when they were introduced to Nelson Mandela who had been invited by the company to give an Inaugural BP Annual Lecture at the British Museum. He kindly gave the assembled staff an interesting presentation of his life.



Seen here sitting alongside Sir Peter Sutherland at a BP dinner it would be interesting for Jenny to recall what was discussed! This famous politician and businessman successively was a member of the Irish parliament, Attorney General, Competition Commissioner at the European Union, and Director General of the World Trade Organisation. Over the final twenty years of his career he was Chairman of both BP and Goldman Sachs, whilst remaining active in EU and UN affairs, especially relating to migration issues.



A few of Jenny's holiday memories

This must have been a happy time for Jenny at work as demonstrated since then by the annual lunch with four of her BP colleagues. Held in Central London the four women and one man, 'he's very nice', meet and reminisce. Such a thing does not happen if there is agnosticism about your work when you look back.

Jenny's period at a solicitor's office in North Surrey took her daily through Heathrow Airport and her vivid memory is of the BEA plane crash there in 1972 when all on board died. This put Jenny off flying for ever, something reinforced in 2000 when she was going from Paris to Nice with the BP Event Team to make sure all was ready for a week of BP annual strategy meetings at Chateau St Martin in Venice.

This was the day before Concorde 4590 caught fire, crashed with all on board dying. However, travel by other means has certainly been in the blood, both with David and later by herself.

Cruises of various lengths, generally on small liners with Saga, took her to the Caribbean, the North American East coast and New York, the Mediterranean, the Baltic and the North Sea, round Norway to Murmansk in Russia and a cruise up the Rhine.

Sometimes there were three cruises a year. Jenny said that on one of the cruises she had attended a lunch for single persons and sat down at the table allocated to her, looked at the name of the person next to her and found it was to be Esther Rantzen so she quickly went back to her cabin to get her phone to take a photo of Esther, who didn't mind at all.

Other presenters seen on various ships included Benedict Allen, John Sergeant, Edwina Curry, Michael Buerk and Tony Blackburn. Latterly these cruises have been disrupted by COVID, fewer being possible and the last one earlier this year to the Caribbean was dreadful; out of 21 days, 9 were spent in isolation and to boot there were fewer ports to visit.

Yet, still not put off, by the time this issue is published Jenny will have been on another Saga cruise, to Guernsey and the Bay of Biscay! There are many memories and photos but none better than the one captured of the Northern Lights in Alta, Norway in February 2017. Not to be outdone, train journeys also have featured, an Orient Simplon Express from Paris to Venice in 1986 and a sleeper to the Scottish Highlands in 2000 are special memories.

These interviews often are punctuated by a look at photos. One of Jenny's photos shows her jumping a fence on 'Toby'. Liking to ride she bought the four year - old in 1974. Living to the ripe old age of 29, 'Toby' was stabled at a friend's farm in Frithsden, where he is buried in a meadow. Jenny rode him for a quarter



Jenny competing on 'Toby' at Potten End Horse Trials in 1982

of a century until the last week of his life, competing in local shows and roaming down the local lanes to Nettleden for example, along the Golden Valley and over into the woods and commons of Ashridge.

'How many falls did you have' I questioned. One was the reply but, on further reflection, it was two! For my own part thrown from a bucking horse during my first ride in Hong Kong in 1950 was my last ride and since when I've always admired horse riders. ▷

Christened and married in St Mary's, over the years Jenny would attend the main church festivals. The change to her current deep involvement there came at the devastating time of bereavement when she lost David after nearly 50 years of marriage. Diabetic and with heart problems, David had been ill for two years, getting worse and finally transferring to a care home. Out for some fresh air in the car with Jenny in 2014 David died of a heart attack. Revd Jenny Hill was very kind and helpful at this time and when she came to Jenny's house to discuss the funeral, she said to Jenny, 'come to St Mary's for the 9.30 tomorrow'. Jenny has attended regularly ever since and is a valued member of the congregation at both churches in the parish. She was confirmed in 2016 and consistently gives her secretariat time and financial support to the parish.

It is a privilege to interview people about their lives and what is written is my recording and interpretation of what they say and what they approve for publication in SToMP.

The life and being of each person are precious and each story is different. Jenny's story is one sustained over a long period by her background, her marriage, her interesting and demanding profession, by 'Toby', her love of travel and in later years her faith and her church.

Gordon Gaddes

ART IN THE NAVE

Our August bank holiday weekend saw over the three days another highly successful festival, the 'Art in The Nave' exhibition in St Mary's Church. It was preceded by a preview reception on Friday evening with an attendance approaching 100.



The exhibition was an opportunity for artists to show their work and for viewers to buy.

Brian Doran, the enterprising and highly successful organiser of Art in The Nave over several years, had invited exhibitors to cover a wide and interesting field, including paintings,

sculptures, textiles, glass, ceramics, silverware and handmade jewellery. Brian's success this year was there for all to see, 30 stands filling most of the available space. During a beautiful period of weather, with the nearby Gadebridge Park full of activity, with excellent signage, and with bunting and tables and chairs for refreshments at the West Door overlooking the park, it was not surprising that there was a continuous flow of people with several hundred wanting to look round the exhibition over the three days.

Turnover was just over £10,000, mainly from sales of art at £5,797, artist exhibiting fees £2,071, donations £539, the Grand Draw £1,103 and refreshments £341. Relating to the Friday evening reception a bonus this year was that through voluntary payments the Bar raised £156, making a profit of £82. There were two interesting payment features illustrating the decline in cash payments. 83% of the art sales were paid for by card. Also, the Sumup card payment system, introduced earlier in St Mary's by Brian, proved its worth again especially at the bar where 30% of the take was from people without cash or who preferred to pay through Sumup rather than to use their cash.

Overall the Festival made a profit of £5,042. This was a magnificent result for Brian, who had put in a great effort to organise this and for the exhibitors

who had decided to join the festival. Additionally, this sort of event can never be possible without the time given by a couple of dozen helpers, and by donors for the Grand Draw which, after covering printing and leaflet costs, made a profit of £903.



The Festival demonstrated great teamwork by volunteers who have a real belief in what St Mary's can bring to the community through these sorts of events.

As in 2021 part of the profit from Art in the Nave will be donated to three charities, Hospice of St Francis (£500), Hope for Children (£500) and UK Langa Township Pre-School Trust, (£750), whilst the rest will support Parish finances. GG



QUEEN ELIZABETH II

1926 - 2022



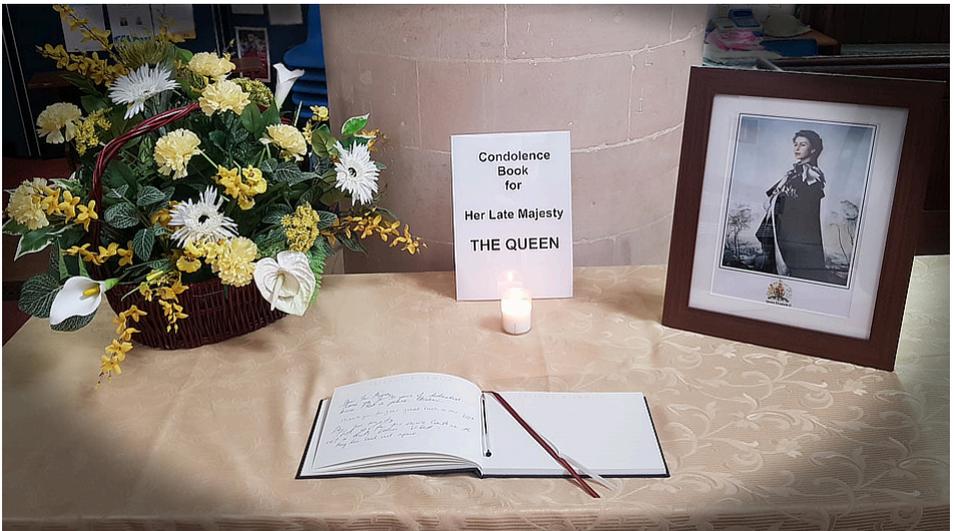
Photo Credit: NASA/Bill Ingalls



During the period of official mourning following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, both St Mary's and St Paul's Churches provided Books of Condolence for visitors to sign.

Many visitors came into our church to light candles, offer prayers and to express their thoughts in the books.

At the 9.30am services on Sunday 18th October both parish churches celebrated a Requiem Mass for Her Late Majesty. God save the King!





Introducing:

UK LANGA TOWNSHIP PRE-SCHOOL TRUST



SUCCOUR • HOPE • OPTIMISM • PROGRESS

LTPT'S Two Year 'Shop' Project 2022 – 2024

Succour: to bring help and support to the deprived and suffering in Langa Township

Hope: to engender hope that important help is possible for families with small children

Optimism: to encourage people to be optimistic through the work of LTPT and to see that hopelessness can be beaten

Progress: to achieve 'SHOP' through visible and permanent activities showing real progress

The next big challenge for LTPT is to fulfil the SHOP project above by helping the Langa Early Child Development Forum.

Covering 39 pre-schools and crèches and 5,000 children, the aim of the Forum is to develop Langa into a community of ECD excellence by providing training in ECD, leadership

and management, relevant equipment, and infrastructure to ensure improved health and safety conditions.

A special target is the ongoing empowerment of the dedicated women who work, manage and teach in the ECD centres.

Quoting from a recent study by Platform, in collaboration with the Newlands Rotary Club, the Forum and Breadline Africa, 'Many of the community-based facilities are at best informal, and unregistered, ranging from single shacks or converted containers with open yards, to adopted houses'. Most are non-compliant with local laws and building standards and not accredited so they 'are unable to access funding from government, private sector or NGOs'.

How can LTPT help?

The Forum has no permanent home to work on its important mission. The LTPT Trustees have decided to establish a fund to help provide such a home, hopefully by the end of 2024 and linking with other sponsors such as the Newlands Rotary Club, with its links to Rotary Clubs in Germany, Holland, USA and Taipei.

The target is to raise £45,000 for this project by September 2024 and currently the Cheltenham College Humanitarian Fund is committed to provide £25,000 by that date and other sponsorship is planned to arise through LTPT. Also, arising from Art in the Nave the two annual donations of £750 each are to be devoted to this project in the name of The Parish of St Mary and St Paul, Hemel Hempstead.

Gordon Gaddes

Graduation day at Nomonde Pre-School



Dear Mr. G. and Rosina

This afternoon we are well, hoping that you are the same. Nomonde will soon be graduating 65 Children. I'm requesting donations from the local shops to make their last day of happiness successful, we'll see to their response, the last graduation was long ago before the Pandemic.

Yolisa Gqirana

Secretary & Administrator



MONEY, MONEY, MONEY 7



THE GOOD NEWS AND THE BAD

Well you will all know how fickle the world can be as the weather or Russia or someone/thing else changes away from the usual pattern or sadly dies. We have seen so many sudden scene changes recently, and now almost expect things, or people, we used to take for granted to be in short supply and at a higher price or no longer part of our lives.

Energy is a particularly upsetting concern, as we know that most primary energy producers are not having significant extra costs, and so don't need to charge such inflated prices. We know that the energy price rise is due to the world price being set by users out bidding each other to make sure that they get the amount they want. Hence energy producers are recording enormous profits about which they are almost embarrassed, and us users pay inflated prices to give them those profits. So I, for one, think it quite reasonable for Government to step in and take back some of the profits to subsidise users costs. I had hoped they would continue to do it, but that doesn't look likely now.

At the Parish level we have good news and bad news on energy. The good news is that our gas price was fixed in June 2019 on a 5 year arrangement so we continue to pay for gas until 2024 at 2019 prices – a lucky break!

The bad news is that our electricity fixed price arrangement ends in October this year. We have fixed a new rate for the next 2 years, but - without a reduction in use - this will take the annual bill for the two churches and halls from around £4500 to around £8,100ish - depending on the details of the newly announced price cap - an extra £3600ish to find, and starting sadly this winter.

But of course life is never a matter of one element, so there is more good and bad news.

Starting with the good news again: many of the people who signed up with the Parish Giving Scheme also signed up to allow their pledge to increase each year in line with inflation. They have been tested this year and so far all have agreed to a very generous 7.8% increase in their pledge.

This will bring in at least £1,800 and maybe as much as £2,100 in a full year, plus around £500 more with tax recovery - (if you haven't increased your pledge and feel moved to do so, please say!).

Diverting slightly - It seems to me that there is a 'giving ladder' with rungs, starting at the bottom:

- 1) Cash in plate
- 2) Weekly Envelope without a pledge
- 3) Fixed pledge via envelope or Standing Order
- 4) Pledge that increases when need is shown

and top:

- 5) Parish Giving Scheme inflation linked pledge.

You might like to think where you are on the ladder and whether it might be possible or appropriate to climb a rung higher.

But getting back to the good news, the Card Reading machine in St Mary's seems to be increasingly productive which also reflects the increasing discovery and use of the church by the community - sadly out of service hours!

And there is more: the Roman Catholics are negotiating a return to sharing the use of St Paul's Church, and so will hopefully be making a contribution of around £3,000 per year to its upkeep. Very welcome and encouraging news on every front.

Then, thanks to Brian Doran, we have been able to hold another successful Art in the Nave, with the very welcome income and good will that this generates.

The sadder news is that income from weddings has dropped off again and our hall rental income, while substantial, could be more certain. There is still plenty of unbooked time, so if you know of any organisation or person who might rent one of our halls do tell and encourage them!

Last year's good news from the increase in the capital value of our reserves held in a CCLA Fund has largely been eroded by the falling Market, so the PCC decision not to spend or give away this money - in case! - seems vindicated.

Both church buildings are having their Quinquennial (five yearly) surveys done this year, so we wait to see what comments will emerge, but with reasonable confidence that there are unlikely to be significant 'unknown unknowns' in the words of Donald Rumsfeld.

So a mixed picture is emerging which is probably inevitable in a very uncertain world, so thank you for being constant, thank you for your care and for all your faithful giving of time and money and prayers and please keep it up!

Robin Woodd



New perils

A child was trying to memorise the Lord's Prayer: "...and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from email..."

Everything is wonderful

My face in the mirror isn't wrinkled or drawn,
My house isn't dirty, the cobwebs are gone,
My garden looks lovely and so does my lawn,
I think I might never put my glasses back on.



It was bad enough your mobile ringing half-way through the sermon, without the ring-tone being 'Christians Awake'.

Divine illustration....

A teacher was observing her classroom of young children while they drew. As she came to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was. The girl replied, "I'm drawing God."

The teacher said gently, "But no one knows what God looks like."

Without missing a beat, the girl replied with perfect composure: "They will in a minute."

THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL

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The Revd Richard Leslie

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