

† STOMP

AUTUMN 2024 MAGAZINE

ISSUE 63



£1

THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

Taking up our cross	4
Migration and the Long Sweep of History	6
Mavis Cox	10
Parish Finances	13
God in the Sciences	14
St James the Least	16
A Prayer For Our Parish	17
St Paul's Morning Prayer	18
Random Smiles	19
Creatures Great and Small	20
God in the Arts	22
The Day You See I'm Getting Old	24
Minimum Rest Time for Clergy	26
Fewer Priests Ahead?	27
Concert for Ukrainian Refugees	28
Old Town Beer Festival	30
Art in the Nave	32
Langa Trust Christmas Card	35
Wild Flowers	36

Cover Picture:
The Earth seen from Apollo 17 (NASA)

Astronauts often describe a range of profound emotions when they see Earth from space. Here are some common feelings they report:

Awe and Wonder: The sheer beauty and scale of Earth can be overwhelming. The sight of the planet's vibrant colours and dynamic weather systems often leaves astronauts speechless.

Fragility: Many astronauts feel a deep sense of Earth's vulnerability. Seeing the thin atmosphere and the vastness of space highlights how delicate our planet is.

Unity and Connection: The "Overview Effect" often leads to a feeling of interconnection. Astronauts see no borders from space, which can foster a sense of global unity and a desire for peace.

Responsibility: Witnessing Earth's beauty and fragility can inspire a strong sense of responsibility to protect the planet. Many astronauts return to Earth with a renewed commitment to environmental stewardship.

Perspective: Viewing Earth from space can shift one's perspective on life and humanity's place in the universe. It often leads to a greater appreciation for the planet and a re-evaluation of personal priorities.

Perhaps the world's leaders should all take the trip! *Jeff W*

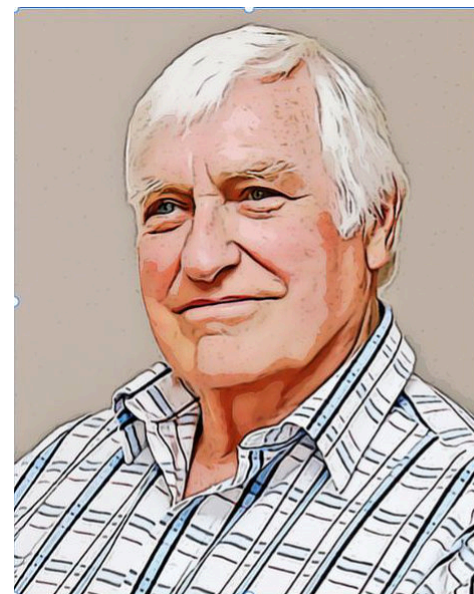
FROM THE EDITOR

On 18 October we will have the privilege of meeting and listening to Oksada Hermanchuk the brilliant Ukrainian pianist who fled from Kiev and who now lives with a friend in Kings Langley. On Tuesday afternoon 3 September Rosina introduced her to our grand piano. There was approval but also the comment, 'it needs tuning'.

Oksada played some Chopin her fingers racing and pounding across the keys and Rosina marvelled at this impromptu performance.

Then there was a moving transformation in mood and tempo as Oksada turned to the Beatles ballad, 'Yesterday' with its evocative words, starting 'yesterday all my troubles seemed so far away, now it looks as though they're here to stay'. This was a tearful moment a refugee from war, away from her war torn country, her brave city, and her husband and son. One can imagine what was going through her mind.

Now in and around Hertfordshire Oksana brings us her music and artistry, whilst raising money through initiatives such as the Ukraine Sunflower Project led by Luther Blisset and Lauren Fox.



Join us for what will be another memorable evening in St Mary's on 18 October, following the piano tuning scheduled for pm the previous day!

Please join us on 18 October (see pages 28/29).

TAKING UP OUR CROSS AT THE MID-POINT OF MARK'S GOSPEL

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' Mark 8: 31-33

Many of you will be aware that as a family we've been going through a variety of health issues recently. It might sound like stating the obvious to say that when you are having a tough time it sharpens your awareness of what is important in life and how faith can make a difference.

I likened this, in Church recently, to someone who climbs a hill or mountain and as the clouds clear, vision improves and the view is clarified. When that happens it is possible to see things that perhaps should have been obvious for some time. How often is our vision clouded by the nature of modern life and a need to be permanently busy, we put off things because we have so much on that the important things are obscured by the clutter all around us, when we finally make the time to complete a task which we delayed it is often simpler and more rewarding than we ever expected.

In this Year B of the lectionary cycle, Mark's year, we have just arrived at the mid-point of the gospel and finally the disciples realise just who Jesus is as he is proclaimed by Peter as the Messiah. The disciples have been on a long journey of discovery up until this point but there is an even harder journey to come. You will know if you have ever climbed a mountain – or even a big hill – that we head up to the top with energy and enthusiasm and although on the way down we have a sense of achievement, it is then that fatigue hits hard and something small like rain starting or the café on our route being closed can depress us easily.



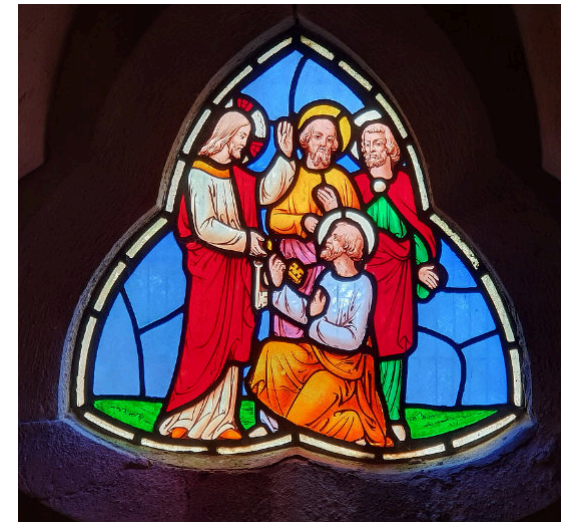
The disciples may know who Jesus is but they now have to join him on the way of the cross and that is far from easy or palatable. For Peter, Jesus going to the cross is too much to take in or understand, let alone his own need to carry the cross, and he rebukes the Lord; but Jesus reminds Peter, and us, that it is only in taking up our own cross and following him that we can be true disciples, if we lose our life for Jesus' sake then we will truly save it. Eventually Peter discovers this for himself and has his 'Quo Vardis' moment, although that will be a long way ahead of where he is now.

Suffering is never easy at the time but often, when we look back at it, we see that it is during periods of pain that we have a greater clarity and we grow closer to those whom we love and to God.

Canon John

*O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear
the prayers of your people who call upon you;
and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

Amen



Jesus giving St Peter the keys to heaven, stained-glass window,
St Mary's church, St Blazey Gate, Cornwall

MIGRATION AND THE



Referring to the editorial in the Autumn 2019 issue of STOMP, written in the context of the prevailing social media of facebook, twitter and the rest, I referred to Archbishop Welby who in a Sunday Times article stated 'it is extraordinarily dangerous to use careless comments'. I then added, 'this statement relates to the dangerous questions about what is truthful, untruthful and misrepresentational'.

The dreadful recent riots indicate where the social media, lies and misinterpretations can lead us. Yet what needs to be faced are the perceived causes, immigration and racism in our times. A useful historical perspective by Robert Winder, a historian, was printed in the Guardian in its Opinion column on 30th July. He instanced riots and repression in 1190, 1263 and 1290 when Jews suffered greatly in England; and in 1312 the riots against Flemish immigrants, in 1481 the wrecking of the Blackfriars homes of Scandinavian traders, in 1456-7 the anti- Italian uprisings, and 'on May Day 1517 in London a 1,000-strong mob attacked anyone who looked foreign'. He went on, 'there is no room here for the full list, but there have been riots ever since- against all comers from Cardiff to Notting Hill'.

LONG SWEEP OF HISTORY

The emphasis seems to be on immigration, but what about emigration. People from our islands have been travelling to and occupying, sometimes conquering, all parts of the world. Equally, people have come to our islands, have been welcomed and have made a great contribution.

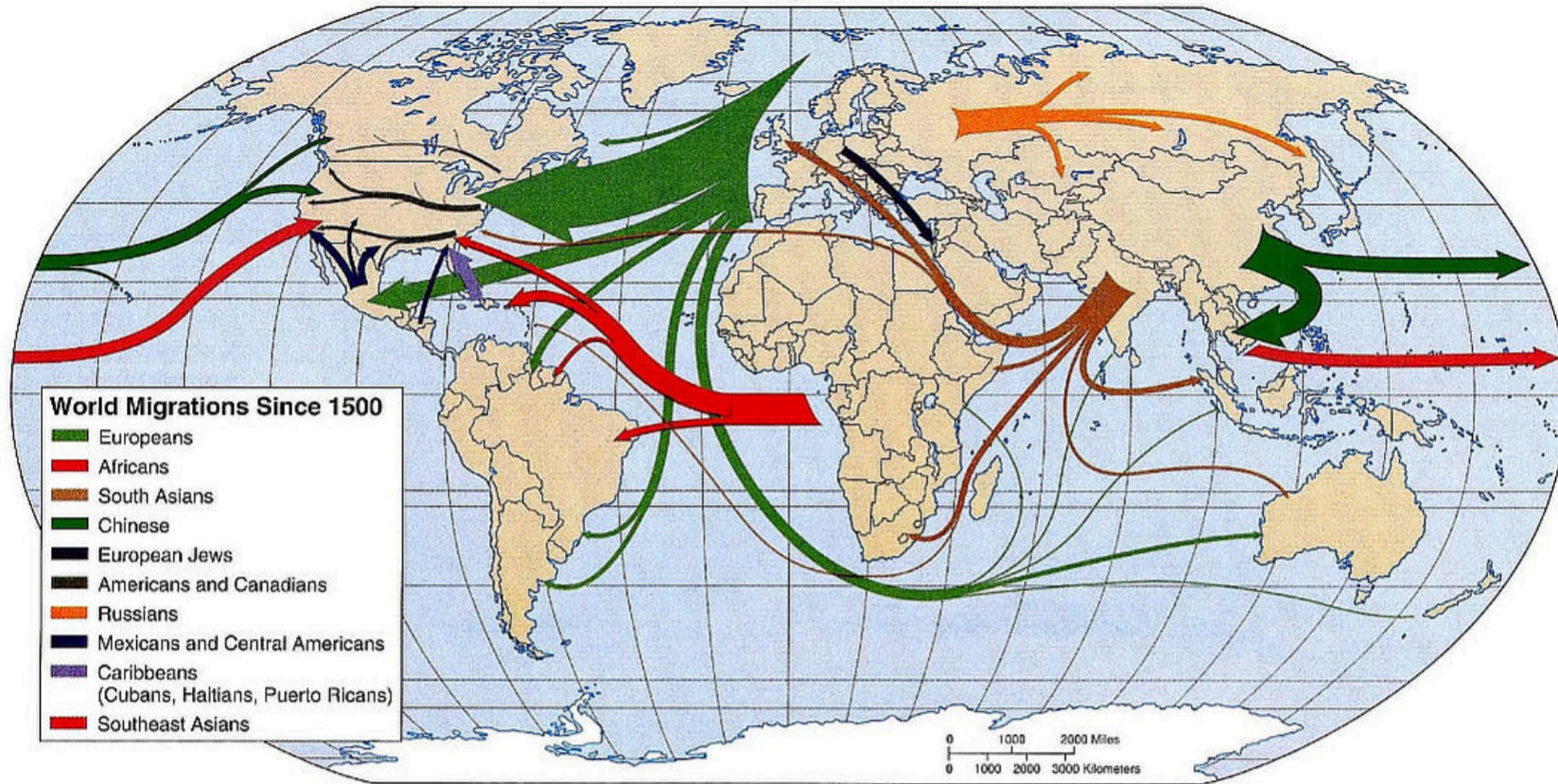
Two personal instances come to mind. First, in the early 1970's when Ugandan Asians in terror for their lives fled the vicious Idi Amin regime in Tanzania, our Borough Council set aside 24 houses for families, who settled down well here. I have no memory of local protests and racism when this happened. The sort of contribution of immigrants such as these is self-evident, in the corner shops, the pharmacies, the surgeries, the taxi ranks and the department stores.

Second, not too long ago wandering through a corridor in Hemel Hempstead Hospital I saw a large notice board covered with national flags and counted 83 of these. The West Herts Health Authority was acknowledging the great contribution being made by people coming here from all parts of the world.

We need to change the narrative. ▷



World Migrations



The broad sweep over 500 years

European Union migration omitted!

Quoting from my 2019 editorial, 'Our Archbishop sees careless comments which amplify things as creating a great danger in polarising opinion and confirming and increasing divisions in society at every level'. I continued, 'This leads to the question whether a leading cleric should speak in this way. Going back to a service in St George's Cathedral, Cape Town several years ago the Revd Frank English preached about the same issues: What is truthful. What is disseminated, and the danger of unverifiable opinion being sent out through the media all over the place. I think it the duty of Church people to do exactly what Archbishop Welby has done and is doing and it is good that the national press gives him space to express his views'.

An interesting final note is in the thought from the Guardian columnist Nesrine Malik in the 19th August issue, 'We are not just atomised individuals running our own public liability companies, but part of something bigger, part of a nation that miraculously expanded, absorbed and assimilated people from all over the world, one that has manifested the best and most natural human impulses - to get along and make a common home'.

Gordon Gaddes 20/08/2024

MAVIS ELIZABETH COX

From the Eulogy given at the Thanksgiving service for Mavis, a long-serving member of St Mary's congregation, on 10th September by her daughter Sally Braithwaite.

It has been really interesting exploring mum's long, rich and varied life and not, I have discovered been easy to sum up in just a few words, in a way that she would have wanted to be remembered. However, let's have a go

My grandfather was in the army and our Mum, Mavis, was born on 2nd May 1930 at the military hospital in Mhaw, India to proud parents Elsie and Seward Gilson (known as Sandy), who already had one daughter, Vera. Before the family returned home a younger sister Joyce was also born.

Like most military families stationed abroad at that time, beyond the social life for adults, facilities were few. I do remember my mum telling us how her dad cut the Rupert Bear stories from the Daily Express Newspaper which was available at the time and pasted them into a book until he had a complete story from which he taught her to read. This was why she always liked to read said Daily Express and we, on behalf of the family dog, always gave her a Rupert Bear Annual each Christmas.

The Gilson Family were eventually posted back home and initially lived at the army garrison in Colchester and finally moved to be stationed at the drill hall in Hemel Hempstead. By this time the 2nd World War was inevitable and being a regular soldier, even if he was strictly speaking too old to fight Sandy knew he would go to war again with his regiment, (he actually fought in and survived both world wars and mum was always extremely proud of him). With this in mind he went out and bought a house for his family – No 12 Fernville Lane not far from the drill hall and this house was to play a significant part in the whole of mum's life.

As a child she was often unwell and her schooling to say the least was patchy. Being the war and rationing, food was always an issue for the family but the lady next door kept chickens and always sent her an egg to help in her recovery.



She was in her own words, 'sentenced to learn the violin', which she said sounded like cats on the loose and was glad to give this up, although throughout her life she loved to listen to music but did not venture into anymore musical activities of her own, but enjoyed going to classical concerts and the theatre. The family dog at this time was a Kerry Blue call Tojo who was always protective of the girls and there are some lovely photos of him dressed up by them and being pushed in a dolls pram - he clearly adored them. Soon after the end of the war grandfather returned safely home and Vera married Ed a GI and returned with him to live in the States.

Mum was married in 1954 here in St Mary's Church to Dennis who had by this time been demobbed from the RAF and started working as an engineer. They initially had a small flat above a photographer's shop and next to the fire station, just around the corner from mum's family home. Whilst living here I came on the scene, born in 1956. Mum had trained as a nursery nurse, loved children and always wanted a large family. This was not to be, after me no more children were possible. Therefore, just after moving to a house nearby they adopted my brother Duncan late in 1958 and were then to give their time and love to a succession of foster children ending with Jeannie, who was to stay with our family all her life until she died a few years ago. Both our parents were loving and giving and taught us that this was very important in life. Mum's second sister also married and went to the States and this was to influence how things panned out in her story.



She filled her time travelling with her friends and to see her sisters in the States. She loved her garden and tending the plants and could always take a joke against herself. Jeannie's favourite garden story and the one that always made her laugh was the time that mum found a frog in her wellie, it jumped out and she jumped back stepping on to the rake which came up and hit her on the back of the head. All dad said was 'ah poor thing'. Mum thought he meant her but he picked up the frog and took it to the bottom of the garden out of harm's way.

She was, despite her poor schooling, very clever.

She went back to college in her 60's and gained A levels in English Literature and Greek Civilisation, quite a feat. She was artistic and as part of her art group had a friend who liked to draw the female form in all its glory. When asked where he found his model his reply was always 'it's Mavis' and she was always happy to go along with this but who really knows. Mum enjoyed spending time with her WI friends and for some time was president of said organisation. She liked to walk with the dog especially if her friend Jean and her dogs went along too.



As we grew up our parents were very supportive, especially mum she would always be the one to help sort out any problems in school if she could, in general she was a bit of a fixer. My grandfather died and gran was all on her own and quite frail. Mum and dad decided as Duncan and I had both moved on to our own lives and her sisters were not there to share the caring, that they would move back into the family home in Fernville Lane so mum could look after her and eventually Grandfather Cox also moved in when he could no longer manage alone. Mum could never stop caring. Dad died in 1992 leaving mum on her own for 32 years. She had many younger friends and was always ready to lend an ear and not being one to give direct advice, if she could would give them a bit of space to sort out their thoughts especially Heather whom she had known most of her life from when she had been in foster care as a young child.

Mum was very ill back in September last year and even with her friend Mario in the house could not really cope any more. Although I think the end for her really started when Jeannie died followed by her dog Poppy. Two or three years ago one of my nephews asked her what she had wanted for Christmas and the reply had been, "I'm past my sell-by date. I just want my wings. I feel lonely now without Dennis, all the old friends are no longer here and both of my sisters have gone". Mum came to live in my house for a short while and it was good to have time together before she moved into a small flat in Madeleine House Care Home shortly before celebrating her 94th birthday.

I would like to thank you all for being a part of mum's life however big or small and adding to its richness and variety. Her ashes have come back home to have a final resting place here in St Mary's churchyard with my dad, our sister Jeannie and both her parents which is right and fitting and something she had really wanted for the place she would finally be at peace.

PARISH FINANCES 2024

Following a PCC request this subject featured in the Summer issue of SToMP. It was based on end of April statistics and projections for the financial year 2024. Against an initial projection of a loss of around £13,000, the projection was a £1000 lower. However, a view had been expressed that, other things being equal, we might get this down to £8,000 or lower. So, now 8 months into the financial year, how do things look?

The budget for the whole year indicated an income of £103,841 and worryingly an expenditure of £116,929. But there is incredibly good news in the light of the somewhat gloomy May projection. Now at the end of 8 months we project income at the year - end to be £117,000, an increase on budget of 12% and the expenditure to be £118,916, an increase of 1.7%.

So how can things have changed so quickly since the end of May report? On the positive side, our projection shows St Paul's weekly envelopes and St Mary's boxes and standing orders together are up on budget by £3,500, and weddings and funerals are up by £2,200. Turning to lettings, including the Ordinate at St Paul's, the income is projected to be £32,000, against a budget of £28,000 (St Mary's circa £13,000, St Paul's circa £19,000). Also significant is the income breakthrough from the second Beer Festival at St Mary's, £3,000 up on budget, whilst the Art in the Nave contribution to Parish funds held steady at £4,100. An extra bonus has been the Vintage and Table Tops initiative which, an unbudgeted idea of John's, has yielded £1,400. On the expenditure side half of the extra spend of £1,800 is for printing and electrical inspection costs at St Mary's.

Other things being equal the end of year deficit could be £2,000 plus or minus, a major improvement on the forecast. This is down to us working together, watching costs, giving our money and our time, and using new and existing ways to raise money. This has enabled our buildings to give better returns and, gloriously, to see them used and appreciated by more people.

Gordon Gaddes, 12/09/2024

GOD IN THE SCIENCES

Faithful to Scripture, Faithful to Science: Alister McGrath on science and Christian faith

Alister McGrath is well-known as a theologian, but he started out as a scientist. After becoming a Christian as a student, he wanted to learn about his new faith, so he studied theology at the same time as completing his PhD in molecular biophysics. He has not lost touch with science, but has continued to write and speak about how science and Christian faith work together. In this extract from a recently released interview, he shares his experience of being a scientist and a Christian.



“I think my most vivid experience of wonder took place in the 1970s when I was on vacation in Iran. We were travelling on a bus in the middle of the night because it wasn't hot then, and the bus broke down. We found ourselves in the middle of this solemn black desert, and the night sky shone with a brilliance like I had never seen before. That just overwhelmed me, it made me think there is something really wonderful here.

“Now, I was a Christian by that time and I knew how Christianity could answer that but it just struck me, that sense of wonder has two possible outcomes. One is science - this universe is wonderful, what's it all about? But of course, it is also about religion, the deeper levels of things that science can't really engage. I think one of the things I have discovered over time is that maybe this sense of wonder

both opens the gateway to science and to faith, and that those two together are able to answer questions which on their own they simply couldn't. I think science is wonderful at asking questions. Some of those questions can be answered, but very often when you do answer them, they simply open up yet more questions. But of course, there are some more fundamental questions I think science simply cannot answer - they transcend its capacities to answer, and you might think of non-empirical questions like, ‘Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? What is good and how do I live a good life?’

“These are real questions and they're good questions but they're not scientific questions. And the psychologists tell us that we really need answers to those questions if we are to lead a fulfilled human existence. You find some scientists who say, ‘Well because science can't answer them there are no answers to be given’, but actually most realise that there are answers waiting to be discovered - it's just that science can't deliver them.

“Science fills in part of a big picture but there are parts of the picture you have to fill in from somewhere else. Science is part of the answer but only part, and faith supplements it, giving us a vision of life that is exciting and reliable, and also something that we can inhabit meaningfully.”

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

On why you should never replace your hymn books



The Rectory

St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

I am surprised you are considering buying a new set of hymn books for your church. I had assumed everything you sang would be projected on to one of those screens which are invariably placed to obscure the altar.

In my – fortunately limited – experience of such devices, they provide the projectionist with endless opportunities for showing the wrong hymn, or the right hymn but from another edition, which will contain either one verse too many or one too few. Should the hymn run to two pages, then the turnover always takes place some milliseconds after that verse has started, so that the congregation is faced with the snap decision of either trying to sing two lines at double time, or just to join in late, making a nonsense of the words.

When we decided to change hymn books some years ago, the reverberations made the consequences of that little event in Sarajevo seem insignificant. The proposal was to move from Hymns Ancient and More Ancient to the more recent version: Hymns Ancient and Slightly Less Ancient.

Colonel Wainwright said he would be happy so long as we continued fighting good fights and urging Christian soldiers onwards.

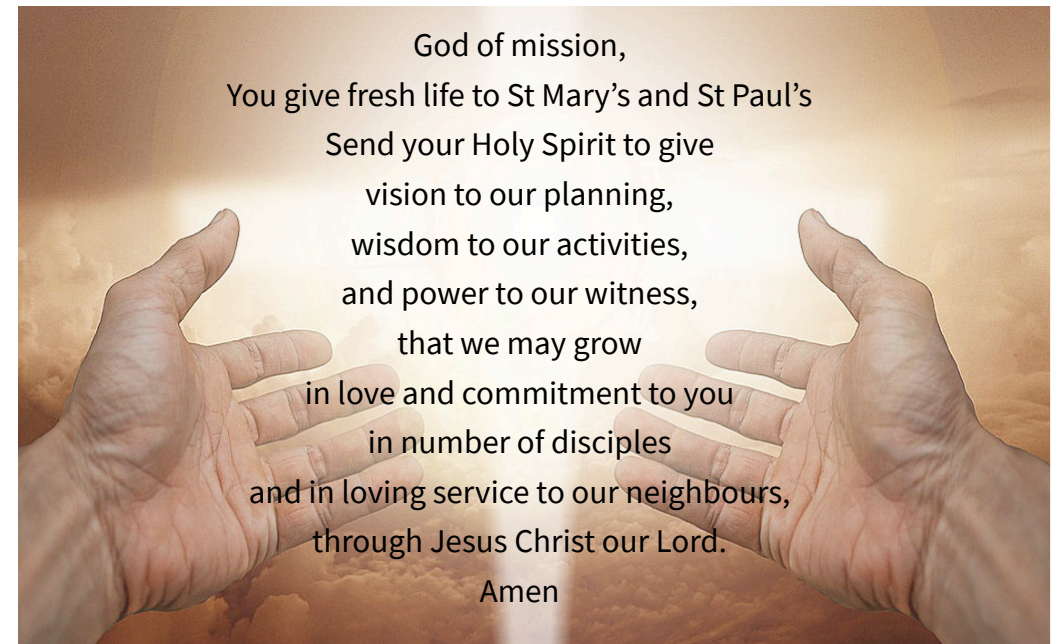
The men wanted the hymns they remembered from school, the ladies those they sang at their weddings, and no one would consider anything that dropped ‘thines’ or ‘wouldsts’. The basses in the choir wanted hymns they knew the tenors found difficult and those who couldn’t read music wanted more hymns sung in unison. When a rumour started that the books may contain hymns written in the last 50 years, timetables were consulted for bus services to the next village.

Eventually we reached a perfect compromise: doing something which made no change whatsoever. Miss Simpson was charged with buying yards of sticky backed plastic and repairing the current books. She put a note on the front of every copy that if the page for the hymn they wanted was missing, they should share with the person sitting next to them – an experience which will be almost as traumatic as being invited to pass the peace. Yet another decision has thereby been deferred for a Church Council to make some time next century. Harmony reigns once again.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

A PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH



ST PAUL'S MORNING PRAYER

Revd Luke returns to St Paul's

On Thursday mornings over the last year in St Paul's we have been having Morning Prayer, just half an hour of being together in prayer, bible readings and quiet reflection. What has interested me particularly overall during the year is the remarkable difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

This was illustrated very well on Revd Luke's welcome return to us on 21 July following his three - month sabbatical. The Old Testament Reading was Jeremiah 23. 1-6 and I quote, 'Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture says the Lord'; 'It is you who have scattered my flock and have driven them away'; 'So I will attend to you for your evil doings says the Lord'; 'In his (David's) days Judah will be saved and Israel will live safely'. One senses God as all powerful, interventionist, punitive and highly focussed on Judah as we find throughout the Old Testament.

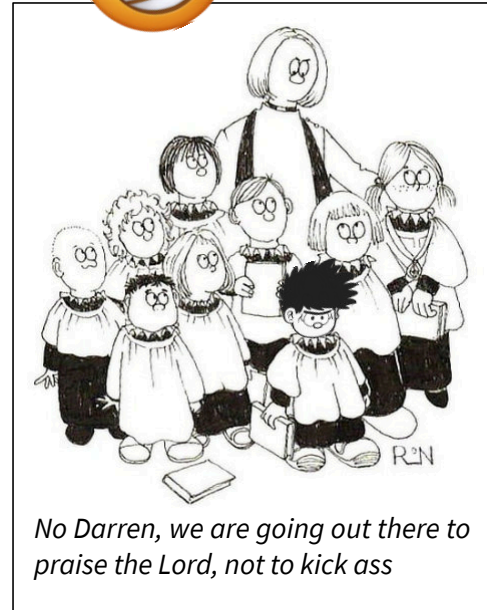
Referring to the second reading that day, Paul to the Ephesians 2 .11-22, Rev. Luke explained the four strata of Roman Society - the Emperor and his court, the Citizens of Rome, the 'hoi polloi', and the slaves. In that context, and to my mind in the context of paragraph two above, Paul reflects on two groups, the people of Israel and the Gentiles, the former alienated from the latter. The message of Jesus Christ was to bring both together within the household of God. Thinking about Luke's concluding words, 'we are all equal citizens in the Kingdom of God', and extending somewhat his list, we are all equal whatever the colour, the creed, the education, the occupation, the age, the sex, and the social and income standing.

The citizens of the Roman Empire were an elite with great privileges, the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven before God are all equal whoever they are. This is the revelation of Jesus Christ as shown to us through the New Testament.

Gordon Gaddes



RANDOM SMILES



Cucumber

A small boy asked his mother for a cucumber to take to Junior Church. A slightly puzzled mother complied. Later she asked what it had been used for. "Sorry, mum," he confessed. "I got it wrong. We were supposed to bring a newcomer."

Bible sense

Being married to a woman who reads her Bible can have its drawbacks. When a man protested to his wife that wiping dishes was not a man's job, his wife replied simply: "2 Kings 21:13", and handed him a tea towel. Later he looked it up: 'And I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.'

Church Notices that didn't quite make it...

A talk on drugs will be given at the next Mothers' Union meeting. This will be followed by a Bring and Buy Sale.

A sudden gust of wind took all who were at the ceremony by surprise. Hats were blown off and copies of the vicar's speech and other rubbish were scattered over the site.

The Rector is on holiday this month. Local clergy will be celebrating with us all the Sundays that he is away.

Don't allow anxiety to kill you. Let the church help.



CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

Our hedgehogs are in crisis

It is feared that there may be just one million hedgehogs left in Britain. This compares to about 36 million during the 1960s. About 150,000 hedgehogs are killed on our roads every year.

With this in mind, England's first 'hedgehog crossing' road signs have recently been launched in several Borough Councils around the country. The aim is to try and save the species from eventual extinction. The new sign features a hedgehog with white quills inside a red triangle above a message that reads 'hedgehogs crossing'.

The design has been approved by the Department for Transport and it is hoped that the signs will make a big difference in preserving the hedgehog population. The aim is to raise awareness among motorists, to get them to slow down, and also among people using a strimmer in their garden.



The post and the gastropods

You may worry that your letter will be lost in the post, but you probably don't worry that your letter may be eaten by snails.

But perhaps it is time to start.

Especially if your letter is being posted in rural Northumberland. It seems some hungry snails there have developed a taste for eating the post. They crawl through the flap of the post box and munch away.

Duncan Hutt, of Northumberland Wildlife Trust, explains that "Snails eat paper because most contains cellulose from the wood pulp, which they can digest and use for energy, and they also get calcium from paper and that's what they need to build their shells. Slugs and snails have a very varied diet."

And it might include your letter!



GOD IN THE ARTS

The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a wood engraving of *The Feast of Tabernacles*, one of several 'Illustrations of Jewish Customs' by Simeon Solomon.



Photo credit: Scanned by Simon Cooke. <https://victorianweb.org/art/illustration/ssolomon/24.html>

'Spread over us the tabernacle of your peace, O God'

For nine days at the end of September Jewish families will have gathered to celebrate the festival of Tabernacles. It is always a happy season as adults and children alike join for their Harvest feast. Many churches will be having their own Harvest Thanksgivings at the beginning of this month. We know this was a custom revived by Parson Hawker in the Victorian period, but its roots lie in that Jewish feast which Jesus Himself knew and celebrated.

Each family erects a tabernacle or tent in the garden or back yard. They will have their meals and spend time there, relaxing with one another. The roof of each tabernacle might have branches of trees covering it, hung with fruits and fragrant flowers. The children decorate the tent with drawings and pictures.

Because it is only a temporary building for that time of the year, and because the roof is fragile, it is a reminder of the journeying of the Israelites in the wilderness when their safety rested on the goodness of God. It was God who watched over the people then. It is God who watches over them now and watches over the earth, so that it is fruitful, providing food for their health and happiness.

This feast is the subject of this month's picture by Simeon Solomon. He was a Jewish artist, born in London in 1840 into a family of artists. He made his own reputation through meeting the Pre-Raphaelites and the poet, Swinburne. Solomon was a colourful character of that period, whose life sadly ended in poverty and alcoholism. But this wood engraving was made early on in his life in 1866. It is part of a series illustrating Jewish customs, which Solomon provided for 'Leisure Hour.'

We see an elderly person on the left making his way into the tent, and at the other side a mother leading her children. The walls outside are adorned with palm branches and inside the tent a feast of fruits and food await them. The young boy seems hesitant, wondering what he will find and clinging to the hand of his mother. But all is well, for inside other members of the family are there to welcome them.

Solomon conveys the domesticity of this feast, and the young boy outside reminds us that Jesus Himself would have celebrated this feast with Mary and Joseph. They would also have gone up to Jerusalem to join the thousands of pilgrims there, as Jesus was to do later in His adult ministry. Each pilgrim would carry a branch of myrtle, palm and willow in one hand and a citrus fruit in the other, symbols of the fruits of the promised land. The air would be full of hosannas and praises to God.

Like the Jewish families at the Feast of Tabernacles, we shall gather for our Harvest Thanksgivings. Like them, we shall thank God for His faithful goodness in the past. Like them, we shall look ahead to the coming of God's kingdom, where God who feeds us now in food and drink will nourish us eternally. Like them, we shall proclaim, 'O taste and see how gracious the Lord is: blessed is the one who trusts in Him.'

THE DAY YOU SEE I'M GETTING OLD

To My Dear Daughter:

I thought I should write to you and say the day you see I'm getting old, I ask you to please be patient, but most of all try to understand what I am going through. If, when we talk, I repeat the same things lots of times, don't interrupt to say, "You said that a minute ago". Just listen to me please.



Try to remember the times when you were little and you asked me to read you the same story night after night, until you fell asleep.

When I don't want to take a bath, don't be mad and don't embarrass me. Remember I had to run after you making excuses and trying to get you to take a shower when you were just a little girl. And when you see how ignorant I am when it comes to new technology, give me time to learn and don't look at me with eyebrows raised. Remember, how I patiently taught you to do many things, like eating properly, getting dressed, doing your hair and dealing with things like this every day.

So, the day you see I'm getting old, I ask you to please be patient, but most of all, try to understand. If I occasionally lose track of what you are talking about, give me time and don't be impatient or arrogant. Just know in your heart that the most important thing for me is to be with you. And when my old, tired legs don't let me move as quickly as before, give me your hand the same way as I offered mine to you when you first walked.

When those days come, don't feel sad, just be with me and understand me with love while I get to the end of my days. I'll cherish and thank you for the gift of time and the joy we shared. With a big smile and the love and hugs I've always had for you, I just want you to know how much I love you.

From your mum. X

(Author unknown)

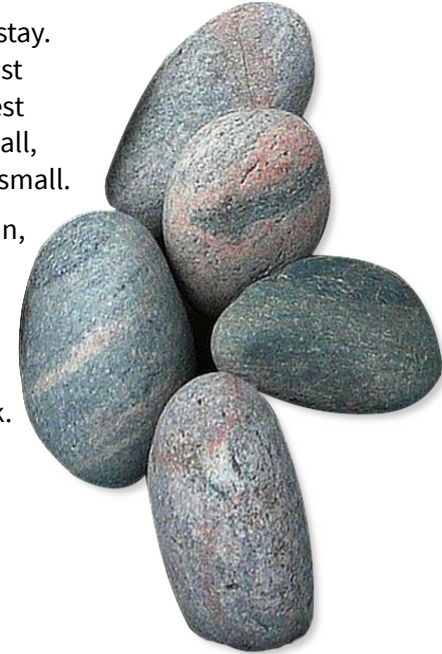
FIVE LITTLE PEBBLES

Five little pebbles lay in a brook
And nobody passing cast even a look.
"What are we good for?" said one to another;
"Little or nothing I think", said the other.
Wearing away, day after day,
It seemed that forever those pebbles must stay.
If they stood out in the crowd from the rest
Or if they were cherished like eggs in a nest
Or if they were big stones that built up a wall,
They'd feel more important, not useless and small.

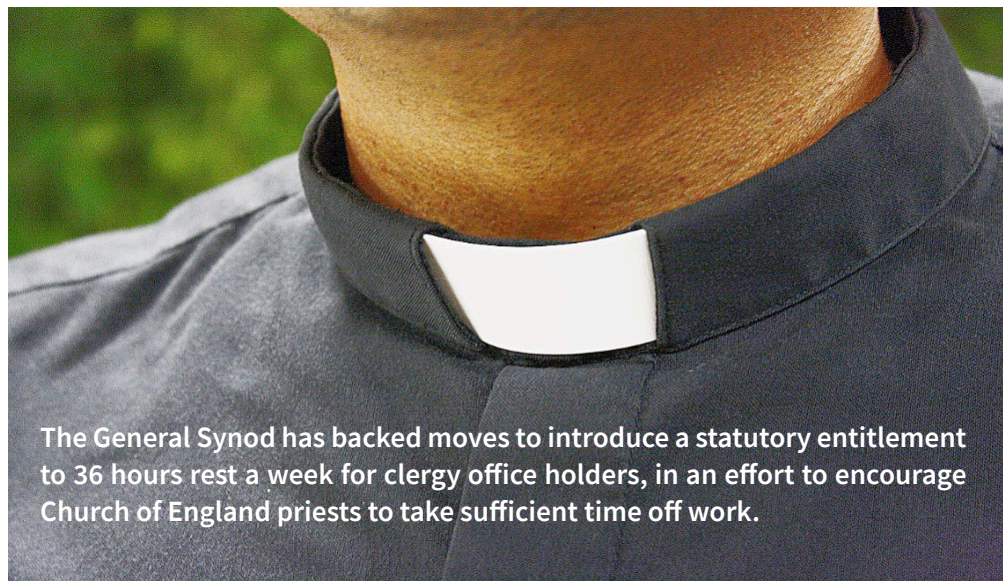
But wait, little pebbles, rounded and clean,
There in your loneliness, lying unseen,
God has a future especially for you;
Five little pebbles, sturdy and true.
The five little pebbles hid in the brook,
Then David came down and gave them a look.
He picked them up carefully out of the sand,
The five little pebbles lay in his hand.

Soon there was fighting not far away
And the five little pebbles entered the fray.
David put one of them into his sling,
In no time at all the pebble went 'Zing'.
Swift as an arrow, straight as a dart,
For all of that nation the stone played its part.
Striking a giant right on the head
And laying him low – a mighty man dead!

Those five little pebbles found in the brook
Are mentioned with honour in God's Holy Book.
Are you like those pebbles, lying quite low
With little to do and nowhere to go?
Then make sure you're ready when God comes to look,
He may want to use you, like the stones in the brook.



SYNOD BACKS INCREASE IN STATUTORY MINIMUM REST TIME FOR CLERGY



The General Synod has backed moves to introduce a statutory entitlement to 36 hours rest a week for clergy office holders, in an effort to encourage Church of England priests to take sufficient time off work.

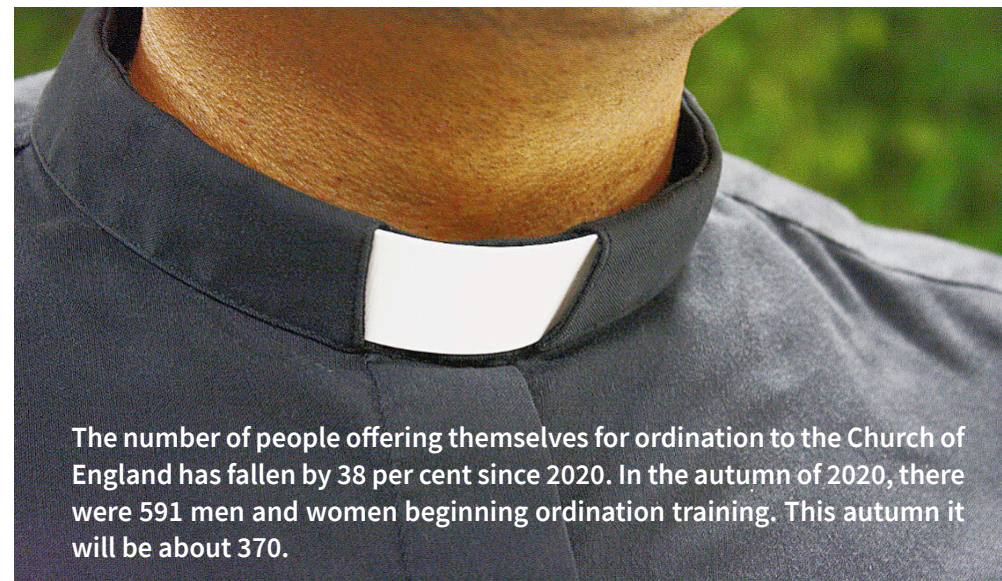
Members of the Synod meeting in York voted in favour of plans to amend church regulations to introduce a statutory right to a minimum of 36 hours rest - a day and a half a week - for clergy office holders, covering most clergy. The new right would include an uninterrupted rest period of 24 hours.

The Synod heard that as office holders, rather than employees, clergy already have the right to arrange their work to take time off to rest without seeking permission. In addition, the current regulations for most clergy specify a minimum of 24 hours uninterrupted rest a week.

But in practice they are not taking enough rest, Canon Alison Coulter, from the Diocese of Winchester, told the Synod. She called clergy "a precious resource" who "have given up much to serve us, so our priority needs to be to care for you."

Under the plans backed by the Synod, draft regulations to enact the changes will be brought before the General Synod for approval at a later date.

FEWER PRIESTS AHEAD?



The number of people offering themselves for ordination to the Church of England has fallen by 38 per cent since 2020. In the autumn of 2020, there were 591 men and women beginning ordination training. This autumn it will be about 370.

The Ministry Council has said the goal is to secure a "stable" number of 7,600 full-time clergy, factoring in their projected retirements. To achieve this, the Church needs about 630 newly ordained ministers a year.

The Bishop of Chester, who chairs the Ministry Council, recently told General Synod that some of the factors affecting people's decision have been identified. These include: local clergy wellbeing (or lack of it), demographic changes in society, lack of diocesan resources for vocations outreach work, suspicion of the CoFE as an institution, concern over the Living in Love and Faith initiative, and the size of the clergy stipend package (there is considerable financial anxiety among existing clergy).

But, as one Diocesan Director of Ordinands said recently on social media, "We can't really ask the missing candidates why they didn't come forward. We can only speculate..."

CONCERT IN ST MARY'S CHURCH FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES



St Mary's Church, Old Town Hemel Hempstead
Friday 18th October 2024

CONCERT

featuring the brilliant Ukrainian pianist
OKSANA HERMANCHUK

in support of the Hertfordshire work of
Watford's Sunflower Social Club
for Ukrainian Refugees

Doors open 7pm (Pay Bar) Performance 7.30pm
Ticket £10 in advance, £12 on the door

St Mary's Church, Hemel Hempstead Old Town will be the venue for an important 'Support Ukrainians' concert on Friday 18 October, doors opening from 19.00, and featuring Oksana Hermanchuk. The concert will include a mixture of classical, contemporary classics and traditional Ukrainian tunes. Works of Mozart, Chopin, Bach and Sati will feature and in the second set also there will be music from Carl Jenkins, Alexis Ffrench, Elton John and the Beatles.

The proceeds of the concert will be given to the Ukraine Sunflower Social Club, a very active charity set up by Lauren Fox with strong support from football legend Luther Blissett OBE, DL.

The aim is to help people arriving from Ukraine to meet in a welcoming and supportive environment. They meet every week at St Mary's Church Watford on Wednesdays from 11am to 1.30pm. The Club offers support with housing, companionship, jobs, language skills enhancement and therapy resources. In addition, there are regular music sessions.



Oksana Hermanchuk, is a certified Ukrainian pianist and accompanist came to the UK in 2022 after being forced to leave her native country. She received her musical education at the Kyiv Giler Music college and later at The State Conservatoire.

Since she arrived in England, she has taken part in fundraising concerts in support of Ukraine and has begun teaching piano and accompanying singers and violinists.

Tickets available from:

www.ticketsource.co.uk/stmaryssunflowerconcert

Box office phone: 0333 666 3366



OLD TOWN BEER FESTIVAL



Casks awaiting racking in St Mary's , Alex venting a beer cask, and Committee members celebrating their success.



This year, we were lucky that all three days were sunny, well mainly. In all, 1,085 people came along plus 34 children on the Sunday Family Day when, after preaching at the 9.30am service, the Festival was opened and the first pint of the day pulled by Bishop Rob Wickham – GROUP CEO of the Church Urban Fund. Visitors were invited to donate their unused beer tokens to this fund, raising £378.60.

The event itself, boosted by the good weather, was financially successful as well.

The amount raised was £8,600, half of which comes to the church, the other half to the Mid-Chilterns branch of CAMRA to help run festivals in future.

Trading statistics:

Initial stock - 34 cask beers, 2 keg beers, 10 cider pins. A further 5 cider pins and extra kegs were purchased during the event. A number of local businesses and other organisations were invited to sponsor a cask or cider pin. Over half were sponsored and this boosted the financial result.

The final success - every pub landlord's dream - we ran out of beer just before closing time!



Visitors enjoying their beer and food in the churchyard



St Anthony the Abbot's Snack Bar - run by volunteers from St Mary's and St Paul's

ART IN THE NAVE

Thank you to everyone who helped with Art in the Nave

Thank you for making Art in the Nave a great success this year. You have helped to make a very welcome contribution to the charities that we have supported this year and added an essential contribution to parish funds.

Your invaluable help enabled our artists to create a first class exhibition. This has received wonderfully positive responses from our visitors and artists. The inclusion for the first time this year of the Dacorum Young Artists paintings and drawings was also greatly appreciated and I hope to repeat this next year.



A response from one of our artists:

“Just to say a HUGE and heartfelt Thank You to you and the great team! What a magnificent effort by you all, AGAIN!. Please thank the team for all they did to bring the 6th Art in the Nave together. Wonderful indeed! I hope you make a great deal of money for your charities- you deserve it! and a rest!”

Mary Casserley

In reviewing the exhibition I can see that this year there were relatively fewer sales at the preview evening compared to last year, despite a very good turnout. The wet weather on Saturday Impeded our potential for art sales. However, Sunday and Monday were much brighter and busier.

The fact is however, that between you all, you were able to raise an impressive £6,000 to be distributed between our nominated charities and our parish funds.

I hope that you personally will have enjoyed your involvement with Art in the Nave - chatting with our visitors and artists and your fellow volunteers. It seems to me, that there is always a great sense of camaraderie and fun between our

helpers and our artists and warm appreciation for our sales, refreshments and stewarding team and those working behind the scenes who kept everything flowing nicely. The dates for next year are 23rd to 25th (August Bank Holiday weekend). If you would like to help again or indeed, help for the first time please note the dates.

Looking towards 2026, Art in the Nave will move to the earlier of the two Bank Holiday Weekends in May i.e. 2nd - 4th May. This will coincide with The Hemel Hempstead Old Town Sunday Market on May 3rd. And I think that there will be fewer people away on holiday compared with the August Bank Holiday. ▷





I want to take steps to secure the longer term future of Art in the Nave. (I can't do this forever) So, I am hoping to establish a project planning team. If you would like to be involved in any of the following areas, do please let me know.

Training will be given where necessary.

- Artist contacts
- Database maintenance
- Electronic mailing systems e.g. Mailchimp
- Publicity material design and production skills
- Marketing and advertising and social media skills
- Exhibition design and layout
- Setting up and dismantling the exhibition stands

Brian Doran

LANGA TRUST CHRISTMAS CARD 2024



Inside cover:

Wood carving in Chapel of Holy Spirit, St Mary's Church Hemel Hempstead.

Inside back cover:

Christmas and New Year Greetings in English, Xhosa and Afrikaans

Back cover:

Aims of UK Langa Township Pre-School Trust

Price: Pack of 10 £3.50; UK postage free.

WILD FLOWERS



Did you see the spectacular explosion of wild flowers which bordered the driveway down to the Rectory during July/August? No photo could do it justice - but this one covering just a small part of it might give you an idea of what it looked like. Jeff W

The Parish of St Mary & St Paul

The Clergy

The Revd Canon John Williams 07522 504087:

vicar@stmaryandstpaul.org.uk

The Revd Dr. Luke Geoghegan

Parish Office

Norma Howie 07901 359117

admin@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Church Wardens - St Mary's

Rosamund Russell Tel: 01442 217754

stmarychurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Emmeline Lambert Tel: 01442 268705

stmarychurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Church Wardens - St Paul's

Gordon Gaddes Tel: 01442 257920

stpaulchurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Rosina Gaddes Tel 07720 897037

stpaulchurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Hall Bookings:

For St Mary's and St Paul's Halls:

Norma Howie 07901 359117

admin@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

SToMP Magazine

Editor: Gordon Gaddes

Design: Jeff Wallis

hello@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

www.stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Reg. Charity no 1130644

