

# Witney Congregational Church

## R CROSS A D S

*Witney Congregational Church is a crossroads where we:*

*meet God in worship*

*meet one another in friendship*

*meet our community and world with the love of Jesus*



# WHAT'S ON GUIDE

Witney Congregational Church offer a whole range of activities through which we seek to Worship, Work and Witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this community today.

Further information can be obtained from the Church Administrator, Minister, Church Secretary or the leaders of the particular activities who are listed at the back of this magazine.

## WORSHIP

|                 |          |                                       |                                  |
|-----------------|----------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Daily Worship   | 9.30 am  | Mon-Fri                               | Short time of Prayer and Reading |
| Saturday Praise | 11.00 am | 1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month |                                  |
| Sunday Services | 10.30 am |                                       |                                  |
|                 | 6.00 pm  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month   |                                  |

Communion is held twice during the month at the first Sunday evening and third Sunday morning services

## PRAYER

The Church is open each morning for Prayer

## STUDY & FELLOWSHIP

Thursday 2.30pm Homes (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month)

## YOUTH ACTIVITIES

|        |          |                                                              |
|--------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sunday | 10.30 am | Crèche, Noah's Ark & The K.I.C.K. on Sundays                 |
| Monday | 10.00 am | Noah's Ark – Infant Group for babies and pre-school children |
| Friday | 6.00pm   | www. – Twice a month                                         |
|        | 7.00 pm  | Y4J – Twice a month                                          |

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

|          |            |                                    |
|----------|------------|------------------------------------|
| Tuesday  | Monthly    | Deacon's Meeting                   |
|          | Bi-Monthly | Church Meeting                     |
| Thursday | 10.00 am   | Rest & Chat (Coffee/Tea available) |
| Saturday | 10.30 am   | Coffee Morning                     |

## SUNDAY LINK

Weekly bulletin for all Christians providing stimulating thought along with news and notices concerning our Church

## WITNEY ECUMENICAL YOUTH TRUST (BASE 33)

4 Welch Way (Entrance – High Street) ☎ 01993 774402  
01993 864853 (Office)

## St ANDREW'S BOOKSHOP

☎ 01993 709429  
Opening Hours: Monday – Saturday 09.00 am – 5.00 pm

## CHURCH WEBSITE

For further information, please visit our website:

[www.witneycongregational.org.uk](http://www.witneycongregational.org.uk)



Welcome back! As the last magazine was a double-issue, and, notwithstanding that I have seen most from within the church, this is the first edition of 2015; so may I take this opportunity of wishing you all a belated Happy New Year. I hope that the festive period was not too stressful and that 2015 will be a good year for you.

Being retired it meant that I didn't have to travel into work, because when I had to, the hardest part after the break was going back to work, and was most pleased when it was time to come home on that first day. Isn't it strange, that whenever there is a break in routine it is very hard, and sometimes very stressful, to get back into it. The paradox being that breaks are supposed to make you feel better and refreshed for the new start; when in reality, the reverse is often the case.

Turning now to those who have contributed to this edition; alongside the standard pages, there are the two concluding articles from Canon David Winter giving an insight into the Great War; Lesley Barter once again is Mission orientated; as we look forward to Lent, there is an article on fasting; there is an article reflecting on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fairtrade, to name but a few.

Many thanks for those who have contributed for this edition, but would encourage anyone to consider submitting article(s) for the next edition by either:  
E-mail:

terrypowlesland@uwclub.net  
jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net

Just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up

The next double-edition, covering April & May, is due on **Easter Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April**

Your Editor



**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March**

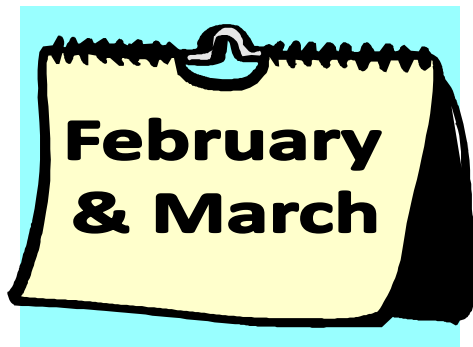
### **Traffic Lights**

It fills me with dread  
It makes me irate  
That lights are all red  
When I'm running late!

But when I'm on time  
(You'll know what I mean)  
The journey is fine!  
The lights are all green!

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True Fasting
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12. The Great War Pt 12



### Daily Prayer Time:

Mon-Fri 9.30 am

### Services

10.30 am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month and will normally be led by Rev Jason Boyd unless advised below

#### Feb

|                  |    |                       |           |
|------------------|----|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup>  | am | Morning Worship       |           |
|                  | pm | Evening Worship       | Communion |
| 7 <sup>th</sup>  |    | Saturday praise       | 11.15am   |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>  | am | Morning Worship       |           |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> | am | Morning Worship       | Communion |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> | pm | Ash Wednesday Service | 7.30pm    |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> | am | Rev Judi Holloway     |           |

#### March

|                  |    |                                    |                                |
|------------------|----|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup>  | am | Morning Worship                    |                                |
|                  | pm | Evening Worship                    | Street Pastors Praise & Prayer |
| 6 <sup>th</sup>  | pm | Womens World Day of Prayer Service | 7.00pm                         |
| 7 <sup>th</sup>  |    | Messy Church                       |                                |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>  | am | Café Church                        |                                |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> | am | Morning Worship                    | Communion                      |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> | am | tbc                                |                                |
| 29 <sup>th</sup> | am | Morning Worship                    |                                |
|                  | pm | Madley Park Residential Home       | 6.00pm                         |

#### April

|                 |       |                              |                 |
|-----------------|-------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | pm    | Maundy Supper Worship        | 6.30 for 7.00pm |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | am    | Good Friday Service          | 10.00am         |
|                 |       | Walk of Silent Witness       | 10.45am         |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> |       | Saturday praise              | 11.00am         |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> | am    | Dawn Service at the Paddocks |                 |
|                 | 8.00  | Communion                    |                 |
|                 | 8.45  | Breakfast                    |                 |
|                 | 10.30 | All-Age Worship              | Communion       |

The following events are given for your particular attention:

#### Feb

|                  |                       |        |             |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------------|
| 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | Pastoral Care meeting | 7.30pm | 9 Pensclose |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> | Fellowship Group      | 2.30pm | 9 Pensclose |
|                  | CTiW Council meeting  | 7.30pm | Venue tbc   |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> | www.                  | 6.00pm |             |
|                  | Y4J                   | 7.00pm |             |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> | Prayer Chain meeting  | 9.15am |             |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> | www.                  | 6.00pm |             |
|                  | Y4J                   | 7.00pm |             |

#### March

|                 |                     |         |                              |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------|------------------------------|
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | Deacon's meeting    | 7.30pm  |                              |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> | Lent Soup Lunch     | 12.30pm | Congregational Church        |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> | World Day of Prayer | 10.30am | Our Lady & St Hugh RC Church |

|                  |                      |                  |                  |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 12 <sup>th</sup> | Fellowship Group     | 2.30pm           | 11 Hollis Close  |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> | www.<br>Y4J          | 6.00pm<br>7.00pm |                  |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> | Prayer Chain meeting | 9.15am           |                  |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> | Church meeting       | 7.30pm           |                  |
| 21 <sup>st</sup> | SWMA Assembly        | 10.00am          | Moreton-in-Marsh |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> | www.<br>Y4J          | 6.00pm<br>7.00pm |                  |

## ROTAS

### WELCOMING TEAM

|            |    |                               |
|------------|----|-------------------------------|
| <b>Feb</b> | 01 | Mel Knapton & Irene St Clair  |
|            | 08 | Viviane Boyd & Cecily Lau     |
|            | 15 | Pip & Beryl Cartwright        |
|            | 22 | Jill & Robert McBride         |
| <b>Mar</b> | 01 | Nanna Blackman & Theo Howells |
|            | 08 | Joan Currie & Susan Wass      |
|            | 15 | Pat Smith & Claire Woodward   |
|            | 22 | Lesley Barter                 |
| <b>Apr</b> | 29 | Mel Knapton & Irene St Claire |
|            | 05 | Viviane Boyd & Cecily Lau     |



### COMMUNION

|            |       |                                      |                  |
|------------|-------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Feb</b> | 01 am | Susan Wass                           |                  |
|            |       | Preparation                          | Susan Wass       |
|            | 15 am | Beryl Cartwright & Jacqui Powlesland |                  |
| <b>Mar</b> |       | Susan Wass & Chris Esapa             |                  |
|            |       | Preparation                          | Pat Smith        |
|            | 15 am | Judi Holloway & Norline Martin       |                  |
| <b>Apr</b> |       | Jacqui Powlesland & Chris Esapa      |                  |
|            |       | Preparation                          | Susan Wass       |
|            | 05 am | Lesley Barter & Beryl Cartwright     |                  |
|            |       | Susan Wass & Norline Martin          |                  |
|            |       | Preparation                          | Beryl Cartwright |



### FLOWERS

|            |    |                   |
|------------|----|-------------------|
| <b>Feb</b> | 01 | Sonya Boyd        |
|            | 08 | Judi Holloway     |
|            | 15 | Val Obriain       |
|            | 22 | Beryl Cartwright  |
| <b>Mar</b> | 01 | Jill McBride      |
|            | 08 | Jacqui Powlesland |
|            | 15 | Rita Hayes        |
|            | 22 | Joan Currie       |
| <b>Apr</b> | 29 | Sonya Boyd        |
|            | 05 | Easter            |



### COFFEE

|            |    |                               |
|------------|----|-------------------------------|
| <b>Feb</b> | 01 | Sue Birdseye & Irene St Clair |
|            | 08 | Susan Wass & Judith Bungey    |
|            | 15 | Jill & Robert McBride         |
|            | 22 | Mel Knapton & Clare Woodward  |
| <b>Mar</b> | 01 | Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley |



08 Café Church  
 15 Sue Birdseye & Irene St Clair  
 22 Susan Wass & Judith Bungey  
 29 Jill & Robert McBride  
**Apr** 05 Mel Knapton & Clare Woodward

**REST & CHAT**

**Feb** 05 Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair  
 12 Jill & Robert McBride  
 19 Beryl Cartwright & Stephen Hopwood  
 26 Joan Currie & Iris Lindsay  
**Mar** 05 Pat Smith  
 12 Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair  
 19 Jill & Robert McBride  
 26 Beryl Cartwright & Stephen Hopwood  
**Apr** 02 Joan Currie & Iris Lindsay



Every effort has been made on the rota list to meet individual circumstances. However, please change with someone else if the dates are not convenient for you

**Feb** 13 Emily Chennells  
 Judi Holloway  
 16 Leah Cotton  
 22 Dave Wesson  
 24 Marian Walker  
 25 Jean Howell



**Mar** 08 Joan Currie  
 11 Lesley Barter  
 Mel Knapton  
 16 Ben Smith  
 19 Beryl Cartwright  
 22 Peter Sellman

**CTiW Lent**

**Lunches**

Week 1 – tbc  
 Week 2 – Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March – Cong Church  
 Week 3 – tbc  
 Week 4 – Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March – RC Church  
 Week 5 - Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March – High St Meth Church

**Quiet Day** led by Rev Joy Hance – see opposite

**The right question at the right time**

A series of Friday evenings designed to cultivate an inquiring attitude to the big issues of our time

Join us for a simple meal & some ‘question storming’

Open Doors, Range Rd, Witney  
 7.15 – 9.15pm  
 March 6<sup>th</sup>; 13<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>

For more information and/or to sign up please go to <https://therightquestion.eventbrite.co.uk>  
 e-mail: [adams@cnet.org](mailto:adams@cnet.org) or phone 01993 700765

[www.witneychurches.org](http://www.witneychurches.org)

Churches Together in Witney  
 invites you to a

**LENT QUIET DAY**

on **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2015**

at the Congregational Church  
 Welch Way, Witney

from 10.00 am - 4.00pm

Please bring a packed lunch and a Bible:  
 drinks will be provided.

For more information and/or to book please contact  
 the Revd Joy Hance on 01993 707935  
 or email: [joysmail@talk21.com](mailto:joysmail@talk21.com) by Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February.



## Pastor's Paper

It was in the hurly burly of a busy Oxford that I crossed Cornmarket Street passing the front entrance of Waterstones.

Through the noise I heard a voice. It was clear and distinct. "I'll believe it when I see it!" At that moment I turned my head to the left and saw a person crossing the road with a white stick sweeping from side to side. The words of the unknown voice and the sight of the person who was blind arrested my attention. My children would say it was "totally random" and yet that random moment brought into sharp focus what it is to see. It felt like a 'God-moment' when the Spirit trying to speak to me.

The sight impaired person was skilfully finding his way through the busy streets without being able to see with his eyes. In contrast, the unbelieving voice called to mind the words of Thomas, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Thomas encountered Jesus and was invited to touch his wounds. Thomas didn't need to feel the flesh for he knew in an instant that the unbelievable was true: "My Lord and my God!"

None of us have ever seen the risen Jesus. I don't know about you but I have my moments when I say, "I'll believe it when I see it!" At the core of being a follower of Jesus is living and declaring that he is alive. It is a huge step of faith to be among those whom Jesus calls 'blessed' because they "have not seen and yet have come to believe" (John 20:29).

For followers of Jesus every Sunday is Easter Sunday. In fact, each day is Easter because we are people of the resurrection. On the 18 February we will gather for our Ash Wednesday service, imposing the ashes and breaking bread. We will journey with Jesus through the testing of the wilderness,

following him through the gates of Jerusalem to the foot of the cross. As we carefully attend to the agony of Jesus we will confront our own denials and desolations as we prepare to receive the news that Christ is risen.

I hope that you will take the opportunity to participate in the Lent Lunches and the Right Questions sessions being held at Open Doors. One of the highlights of the church year is our Maundy Thursday supper, the Good Friday reading of the passion, and the ecumenical Silent Walk of Witness culminating in a service of worship in the Market Square. I would encourage you to plan to create the space to foster your faith in the risen Lord.

One of the ways in which Churches Together in Witney bears witness to the risen Lord Jesus Christ is through Street Pastors. On the 1 March at 6 pm there will be a Praise and Prayer evening with a focus on the work of Street Pastors. There is a desperate shortage of Street Pastors and a need to pray that more people will hear the call to join in this vital ministry.

On the 17 January, I led the Street Pastors and Late Nite Café in prayer at 10:30 pm. Then I hit the streets with an amazing team of people. I saw first hand how they engaged with people. I cannot count the number of times that they were approached by late night revellers and told how cool and amazing they were. "Do you get paid?" No. "You guys are amazing - giving up your own time and looking out for us. I have huge admiration for you!"

It was a privilege to join the team and to engage in dialogue with people in Witney. I ended up letting someone try on my hat and drew the line at lending my glasses!!!! My beard was a source of fascination (was it the grey?).

I witnessed the SP's approaching a group of young people who were smoking cannabis. They handed out lollypops and invited them

to visit the Late Nite Café in the Market Square. Then there was a group of young men who were drunk and worried for their friend who had lost his credit card. The time that each SP took to listen and care was a witness to the love of Jesus.

Before going home I visited the Late Nite Café to say goodnight. One person on the stall is not a Christian. I know her through my involvement with schools and so it was easy for me to ask her why she wanted to be part of the Café. She told me she had seen the stall one evening when she had a 'works-night-out' and thought that it was a fabulous thing to do. Even though she is not a practising Christian she wants to be part of what we do. Who knows? Perhaps she will come to find Jesus for herself.

I pray that each one of you will be renewed in your faith in Jesus over the weeks leading up to Easter.

Shalom  
Jason

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The following poem, written by Eliza Barret, has been submitted by Maureen Miles, and is entitled:

### **Have you ever?**

Have you ever walked through woodland  
When bluebells are thick on the ground,  
With the smell of damp earth and lichen,  
While birdsong is loud all around?

Have you ever meandered with sand in  
your toes  
Amid shells on a distant shore,  
With wind-tangled hair and salt on your lips  
And the vast ocean's powerful roar?

Have you scuffed through leaves in the  
autumn

As they rustle and crunch in the cold,  
Breezes constantly mixing the palette of  
russet  
And olive and ochre and gold?  
Have you lifted your face as the snowflakes  
fall  
And obscure everything from your sight,  
As they softly envelop each thing that they  
touch  
And turn the world white overnight?

As each season dies and a new one begins  
With the unfulfilled promise of birth,  
Are you grateful for being alive and at one  
With the beauty and joy of the earth?

Have you wondered at starlight and  
mountains,  
Desert colours, the fragrance of flowers,  
And looked to the sky, giving thanks for a  
world  
As rich and inspiring as ours?

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### **Buy a CD – and help MAF in Madagascar**

MAF is appealing to supporters to buy a CD in order to raise money for a major new project in Madagascar. The new worship CD is called 'In God We Trust', or IGWT for short. The band who created it will donate £3.50 to MAF for every album that they sell.

MAF's new project is called MAMAFY, which is the Magagasy word 'to sow'. It wants to transport pastors and evangelists into rural communities across Madagascar in order that they can evangelise these very remote regions. With planes, the dangerous five day journey can be cut to two hours.

More details on the CD at:

[www.maf-uk.org](http://www.maf-uk.org)





## PRAYER LETTER No 168

### Campaigns

The General Election will be held on May 7<sup>th</sup> this year and already different Political Parties have started campaigning. All sorts of organisations and charities, secular and religious organise Campaigns on different time scales, weekly, yearly or for a longer period of time. Campaigns can be local, national or international, focused on political, medical, economic or social grounds, depending on the issues. Many are inter-related

Some examples of different Campaigns

- Medical:** Finding vaccine for HIV/AIDS Immunising children from malaria in the 3<sup>rd</sup> World
- Political:** Cancelling 3<sup>rd</sup> World Debt Poll Tax (in the 1980's)
- Economic:** Fair Trade Tax Evasion
- Social:** Providing clean water in developing countries. Free education for children

Jesus led his own campaign for social justice and by doing so gave examples and teaching to His disciples to do likewise.

Jesus challenged and crossed social, religious and economic boundaries. He spoke out against political injustices. He mixed with the outcasts of communities, the lepers, prostitutes and the hated tax collectors. He challenged the religious authorities by overturning the tables in the Outer Court of the Temple where people were being overcharged for the sacrificial animals.

How can we get involved in campaigns ? We need to be informed about the purpose of the campaign. Find out about the ones you are interested in or feel moved to be involved. Get information and read about the campaign. Look out for Television and radio programmes about it or search the internet. Write a letter, e-mail or twitter your concerns to the relevant authorities who need to make changes. Volunteer if you are able in whatever way you can.

Jesus made a difference to many people's lives by healing outcasts who suffered from medical afflictions and those outcast from social standing. Jesus still makes a difference to people's lives today. Can you make a difference to people's lives by the campaigns, issues or charities you support? If you don't support any think of one you might be able to support in some way. If you support too many maybe select the ones you feel are making the most impact to improve people's lives.

Above all **pray** about the campaign or charity you choose and ask God to guide you through the Holy Spirit in any decision you make.

Every Blessing

Beryl

P.S. How many of you pass the Big Issue seller by the Woolgate in Witney at weekends? Even if you don't buy the magazine, go up and speak to him, say hello, or just smile, show your support. He is a Christian.

*Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Beryl Cartwright (703717)*

The following article, written by Canon David Winter, is the eleventh in a 12-part series to mark the Centenary of the beginning of the First World War:

## THE GREAT WAR: ARMISTICE

1918 was a miserable year for the countries involved in the Great War. Nothing much seemed to happen, in the sense of the conflict coming to any conclusion. Casualties continued to mount, so that all over Europe there were bereaved families - indeed whole villages where most of the young men had been killed or were grievously wounded.

In Britain, the advantage of being an island may have kept us from the invading German army, but now it began to make us vulnerable to a new and deadly foe, the marauding U-boats, which stalked the seas in order to torpedo ships bringing food and goods to these shores. Suddenly there were shortages and the need for a new naval strategy to deal with their menace. Zeppelin, and then aircraft raids on London and other British cities brought home the truth that this war was not simply being fought out on foreign fields.

The truth was, however, that bad as things were in Britain and France, they were far worse in Germany. Casualties were so great that teenage boys were being recruited into the army, food was scarce, and by early 1918 the resources to continue fighting the war were at breaking point. If they could not win the war in the next six months, the generals told the Kaiser, it would be lost. Soldiers were drafted back from the far-flung battle grounds of Asia and Africa to shore up the dwindling ranks at home.

By contrast, in June 1917 the first American troops had joined the war, though they were inexperienced in battle terms and relatively few in number. But

by the Spring of 1918 their numbers had swollen, and the encouragement that gave to the hard-pressed Allies was considerable. During the summer of that year the balance of the war began to tip crucially towards the Allies, so that as Autumn approached the German generals were moving towards accepting the need for some kind of negotiated cease-fire. The Allies were at the German borders, the Americans had brought not just men but equipment and, more importantly, hope. Perhaps, after all, this war could be won.

That was the atmosphere in which the warring powers agreed to formal talks about what they called an 'armistice' - a word derived from Latin, simply meaning 'end of armed combat'. The Germans at first hoped it would give them a chance to recover, and perhaps eventually pursue the conflict with renewed strength. The Allies, however, from a position of strength, were determined to ensure that Germany would be left in no condition to wage war or swiftly to recover economically.

With those as the negotiating positions, the generals met in a railway carriage at Versailles, near Paris. An armistice agreement was eventually hammered out and the guns of this terrible war were silenced at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.



The following article has been submitted by Lesley Barter, and is entitled:

## **Making Mission Meaningful**

Wouldn't it be interesting to ask everyone attending a Christian Church on a given Sunday exactly what had brought them there? I should love to see a pie chart showing what percentage were lifelong churchgoers, originally taken there by their parents, how many had been introduced by Christian friends and how many were mid-life converts due to a crisis or a subconscious yearning for spirituality.

Nature or Nurture? It would certainly throw some light on the best way to promote our message and save us all a lot of time spent on the wrong things! Is It time we took a more scientific approach to mission?

Let's start at home.....what made YOU into a practising Christian?

If the majority of us were brought up in the Christian faith, to roll this out we need to take Christian education in our schools a lot more seriously. We can't force whole families into church so our faith schools need to take a much more active role in promoting our message to young people. We could learn something of this from other faiths which shamelessly indoctrinate their young people. It certainly produces enthusiastic Christians in developing countries.

It may be that some of us were attracted into church at a difficult time in our lives or when we were seeking meaning for them. In order to engage with other such people in a sustainable way our worship should reflect our pastoral commitment and the underpinning unshakeable presence of a God who is always there for us. At the same time we must make it accessible and completely non-exclusive.

And what of the people who were brought into the Christian family by caring

friends? Replicating this is our greatest responsibility and challenge, for it is we, the raggle-taggle band of pilgrims who must step up and take this on into the next generation. It is what we have signed up to and after all, who doesn't enjoy sharing good news?

Maybe we don't have the statistics, but if we all see ourselves as missionaries, we might be surprised at what we can achieve.

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The following article, written by Paul Hardingham, has been extracted from Church News Service, looks forward to Lent, and is entitled:

## **True Fasting**

This month sees the beginning of Lent, the 40 days of preparation running up to Easter. Although fasting is one of the neglected disciplines associated with this period, it occupies an important place in the Christian life.

Jesus began his earthly ministry with fasting in the wilderness for 40 days and he also taught his disciples to fast (i.e. not *if* but *when*), '*when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*' (Matthew 6:17/18). We don't fast to manipulate God into doing what we want or to impress others. It is not a command, but a choice we have to make to develop our relationship with God.

### ***What is fasting?***

Fasting is voluntarily abstaining from food etc. to focus on God and give time for prayer. Prayer and fasting usually go hand in hand, as together they glorify God. '*So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.*' (Ezra 6:23).

### **What are the benefits of fasting?**

Fasting gives us space to humbly focus on God for his strength, provision, and wisdom and results in a more intimate relationship with Christ. As Isaiah points out, it's not self-centred, but part of our care for the poor: *'Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to lose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?'* (Isaiah 58:6). Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal our true spiritual condition, leading to brokenness, repentance, and a transformed life, with a heart more attentive to God.

### **How do we fast?**

Most commonly fasting involves missing one or two meals as part of a day for seeking God. Of course, some can't abstain from food for medical reasons. Fasting might also include refraining from TV, alcohol, sex (*cf* 1 Corinthians 7:1-5) or whatever may be getting in the way of us being fully focused on God.

*'Jesus takes it for granted that his disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian's life. Such customs have only one purpose - to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done.'* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

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The following article, written by Philip Barron, considers the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fairtrade movement...

### **Saluting Free Trade**

In February we can celebrate two decades of the Fairtrade movement, founded back in 1995. Recent research showed that 78 per cent of the UK public now recognise the Fairtrade Mark, which stands for the world's largest and most recognised fair-

trade system. Its aim is to secure a better deal for farmers and workers.

Based in Bonn, Germany, it sets

international standards, organises support



for producers around the world and promotes trade justice internationally.

The work of building a market for fair-trade products is carried out by national Fairtrade organisations across the

world. There are such organisations not only in Europe but also in India, South Korea, Hong Kong and Kenya.

An independent company runs the Fairtrade certification system, ensuring that the relevant social and environmental standards are met for new raw materials and products. Here in the UK, the Fairtrade Foundation is an independent organisation that provides independent certification that licenses use of the Fairtrade Mark on products in the UK.

The Foundation was established in 1992 by CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Traidcraft and the National Federation of Women's Institutes (to name just a few).

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### **Answer to prayer**

A small boy badly wanted a baby brother, so his dad suggested he pray every night for one. The boy prayed earnestly, night after night, but his prayers seemingly weren't answered. So after a few weeks, he didn't bother to ask anymore.

Some months later, his dad said they were going to see Mum in the hospital and he was going to get a big surprise. When they got to the room, the little boy saw his mother holding two babies. The little boy stood still for a moment, and then cautiously observed: "It's a good thing I stopped praying when I did."

The following article, written by Richard Bewes, considers how God has revealed himself to us, and is entitled:

### **What is the shape of your Bible?**

*The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. (John 1:9)*

The shape of the Bible is like that of an hour-glass, in which thousands of sand grains sink down from its wide top, trickling through the tapered centre, only to fill out once again at the bottom. At the top – with Jesus as ‘The Word’ behind creation, the dimensions are enormous: *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made (John 1:3)*

But quite quickly the glass begins to narrow down. *The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. (John 1:4,5)*.

At the fall of humanity and the darkness that followed, a divinely-provided way of restoration is pledged. The hour-glass tapers down - *to a single continent in the middle-east*. It narrows still further - to a particular country measuring little more than 250 miles long and 70 miles wide – and even more - to a family – the children of Israel. Surely, the hour-glass cannot become any narrower?

But it does. For Israel – called to be God’s light to the nations – fails in her mission. She meets with exile at the hands of the Babylonians. Despite her eventual restoration, the Old Testament ends with a faithful Remnant of ‘those who feared the Lord and honoured his name’ (Malachi 3:16).

The glass narrows further still. *The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world*. In a remote town of Galilee a promised Child is born. Twelve disciples join him. Thirteen men! Surely the hour-glass is down to its narrowest width.

But no. One disciple turns traitor, another turns coward; the rest are scattered. At this narrowest point of the hour-glass, we are down to a solitary grain – none other than the original Being who inhabited eternity. *He became flesh and lived for a while among us.*

As Lamb of God in his suffering on the Cross, this single Person is all that Israel could never be – the solitary fulfilment of the divine Covenant, at the centre of God’s saving purposes.

Then the widening process begins, with the once-descended Child now *ascended, higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.* (Ephesians 4:10). Pentecost drives his salvation in ever-widening dimensions.... to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8).

Be a part of this, where we are now - at the widest other-end of history’s hour-glass!

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The following poem, written by Chrissy Greenslade, has been submitted by Maureen Miles, and is entitled:

### **Seeds of Happiness**

Embrace this day, completely new,  
Exciting and unknown;  
You’re planting seeds of happiness,  
your cheerful thoughts have sown.  
Hold on to all your reveries,  
Remember, make them last,  
Disperse the trials of yesterday,  
For they are in the past.  
Your smiles with sunny warmth will  
spread,  
Worries will soon have flown,  
For harmony and peacefulness,  
Will be the flowers you’ve grown.

The following article, written by Canon David Winter, is the final episode in a 12-part series to mark the Centenary of the beginning of the First World War:

## **THE GREAT WAR: AND THE CONSEQUENCE WAS . . .**

Some of you will remember the old party game of 'Consequences'. Armed with pencil and paper participants added various steps to a sequence of risible events, culminating in the requirement to answer this question: 'And the consequence was?' Well, mostly that was another laugh, but in real life consequences of our actions are not always funny, and sometimes they are disastrous. The world is full of unexpected consequences, personal, social and political.

That seems to be the story of the end of the Great War. The guns fell silent on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918, but the consequences of that appalling conflict have rumbled and echoed on through the history of Europe ever since. The problems seem to have stemmed from the 'peace process' itself. After the Armistice, there were months of negotiations culminating in the Treaty of Versailles, which was finally signed on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1919.

The conditions of the Treaty, largely dictated by the victorious Allies of course, were intended to ensure that Germany would be in no position in the foreseeable future to embark on military aggression. Kaiser Wilhelm was to go into exile. The German army was to be limited to 100,000 men, with no artillery, tanks or aircraft and her navy reduced to only eight sea-going ships - with no submarines. The Rhineland would be occupied by the Allies for fifteen years and Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France.

Other parts of Germany were ceded to Poland and all the overseas territories were shared between the Allies.

Probably worst of all were the swinging financial reparations which Germany had to pay for the damage she had inflicted on Belgium, France and elsewhere. Effectively, the German economy was left in ruins.

Very soon, this led to the collapse of the Deutschmark. Hyperinflation followed in the early years of the nineteen-twenties. By 1923 a loaf of bread cost two billion marks! The week's pay devalued overnight and families were literally starving. Not surprisingly there was public disorder and strikes, and America - the only major economy to survive the war unscathed - felt bound to come to her rescue, pumping money into the German economy.

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 put an end to that, paving the way for an unscrupulous and ambitious politician called Adolf Hitler to offer an authoritarian way out - National Socialism, as he called it. Singling out the German Jews as 'the problem' - he'd learnt that tactic 20 years earlier in his native Austria - the hideous era of the Hitler Youth, the Nuremberg Rallies, Kristallnacht and Belsen began. Hitler built the autobahns and made the trains run on time, but he also prepared a whole nation for war and did his best to eliminate the Jewish people altogether.

And the consequence was? Well, take your choice, but the Second World War is the most obvious, and the mass emigration of Jews to their old homeland was another. There was, perhaps, a better consequence, too. At the end of World War II Churchill demanded 'Unconditional Surrender' by the Axis powers, but he also counselled 'magnanimity in victory'. The lesson of 1919 had been learnt. Germany and Japan were defeated, but not humiliated, and the world now is a rather safer place . . . as a consequence.