

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 st Saturday of the month	
Sunday Services	10.30 am		
	6.00 pm	1 st 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

Tuesday	12.15pm	Lite Bite piece of the Word (1 st Tuesday of each month)
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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

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Tuesday	Monthly	Deacon's Meeting
	Bi-Monthly	Church Meeting
Thursday	10.00am	Thursday Coffee Morning
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

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



As you read this edition, we celebrate the greatest of all Christian feasts - **Easter**; where we are free to rejoice in a risen saviour who is near to us in resurrection power. Let us not forget the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice made for us all on the cross, and the increasing number of Christians within Witney and the local area who do the 'Witness Walk' to the Market Square service on Good Friday. No doubt you also celebrated by the giving, and receiving, of Easter eggs

Turning now to those who have contributed to this edition; alongside the standard pages, Canon David Winter looks at St George; there are articles on Easter; Lesley Barter reflects on the recent Lent Quiet Day; Jo Matthews writes on her visit to New Zealand; Elaine Kinchin likes NAMES and there is information relating to the recent appointment of a new County Ecumenical Development Officer, 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

or, just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up.

The next 3-monthly Summer edition, covering June, July & August, is due on **Sunday 4th June**

Your Editor

What can I eat for Easter?

Can't eat beef - mad cow

Can't eat chicken - bird flu

Can't eat eggs - Salmonella

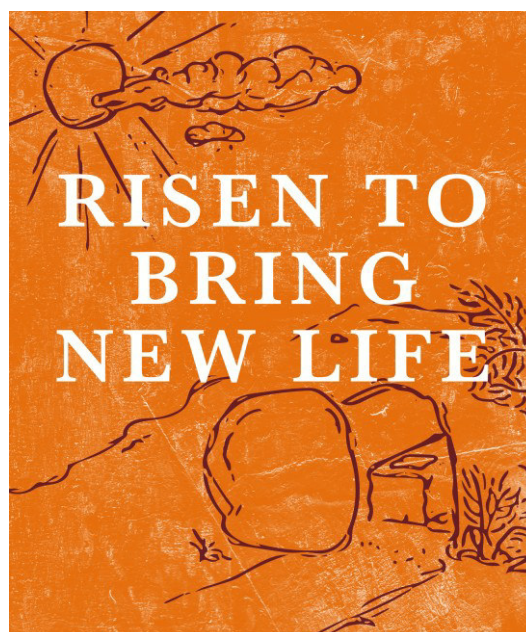
Can't eat pork - fears that bird flu will infect piggies

Can't eat fish - heavy metals in the waters

Can't eat fruits and veggies - insecticides and herbicides

Can't eat potatoes, pasta, bread or rice - nasty carbs

Hmmmmmmmm! I believe that leaves - **chocolate**



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16. Ecumenical Development Officer



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 Dr Jason Boyd unless advised below

April

2 nd	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Evening Worship	Communion
9 th	am	Palm Sunday	
13 th		Maundy Thursday Supper	6.30 for 7.00pm
14 th	9.45am	Good Friday Service	
	10.45am	Meet at High St Methodist Church for Silent Walk of Witness	
	11.00am	United Good Friday Service in the Market Square	
16 th	6.00am	Dawn Service – Congregational Church garden	
	8.00am	Communion Service	
	8.45am	Breakfast	
	10.30am	All-Age Worship with Communion	
23 rd	am	tba	
30 th	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Madley Park Residential Home	3.00pm

May

6 th		Saturday Praise	11.00am
7 th	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Evening Worship	Communion
14 th	am	Morning Worship	
21 st	am	Morning Worship	Communion
28 th	am	tba	

June

3 rd		Creative Fun	10.00am
4 th	am	Café Church	
	pm	Evening Worship	Communion

The following events are given for your particular attention:

April

4 th	Springfield School Easter Assembly	10.45am	
	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm	
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm	
5 th	Lent Soup Lunch & Bible Study	12.30 – 2.15pm	Davenport Rd Methodist Church
8 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am	
29 th	Wedding	1.00pm	

May

2 nd	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm	
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm	
13 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am	
25 th	May – 4 th June Thy Kingdom Come: Call to Prayer		
25 th	Quiet Day	10.00am – 4.00pm	

June

6th

Lite Bite piece of the Word
Deacon's meeting

12.15pm
7.30pm

ROTAS

WELCOMING TEAM

April	02	Lesley Barter
	09	Beryl & Pip Cartwright
	16	Beryl Cartwright & Irene St Clair
	23	Cecily Lau & Lesley Barter
	30	Cecily Lau & Nanna Blackman
May	07	Susan Wass & Irene St Clair
	14	Susan Wass
	21	Viviane Boyd
	28	Viviane & Sonja Boyd
June	04	Lesley Barter & Nanna Blackman



COMMUNION

April	02 pm	Lesley Barter	
		Preparation	Lesley Barter
	16 am	Lesley Barter & Beryl Cartwright	
		Judi Holloway & Viviane Boyd	
May		Preparation	Lesley Barter
	07 pm	Susan Wass	
		Preparation	Susan Wass
	21 am	Beryl Cartwright & Susan Wass	
		Cecily Lau & Norline Martin	
June		Preparation	Beryl Cartwright
	04 pm	Lesley Barter	
		Preparation	Lesley Barter



FLOWERS

April	02	Joan Currie
	09	Sonya Boyd
	16	Easter Flowers
	23	Val Obriain
	30	Jacqui Powlesland
May	07	Rita Hayes
	14	Judi Holloway
	21	Beryl Cartwright
	28	Joan Currie
June	04	Sonya Boyd



SUNDAY COFFEE

April	02	Clare Woodward & Susan Wass
	09	Sue Birdseye & Irene St Clair
	16	Susan Wass & Judith Bungey
	23	Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley
	30	Clare Woodward & Susan Wass



May	07	Sue Birdseye & Irene St Clair
	14	Susan Wass & Judith Bungey
	21	Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley
	28	Clare Woodward & Susan Wass
June	04	Café Church



THURSDAY COFFEE

April	06	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
	13	Hilary Pratley
	20	Beryl Cartwright
	27	Hilary Pratley
May	04	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
	11	Beryl Cartwright
	18	Hilary Pratley
	25	No Coffee Morning – Pentecost Quiet Day
June	01	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
	08	Beryl Cartwright



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

Apr	26	Sonya Boyd
		Simon Brusich
		Joyce Kearsey
		Seren St Clair
	28	Jo Matthews



May	04	Graham Beechey
	16	Jean Stanley
	21	Terry Powlesland
	24	Pip Cartwright
	25	Bill Elliot
	30	Pat Smith

June	01	Marjorie Lee
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Thank You

To the church and the congregation

I would like to pass on my most warmest and sincere thanks for all of the donations given to Storm and myself since we lost our dear Daniel. You have enabled me to buy food and pay bills whilst I've been unable to work.

We really are very touched by the generosity of everyone and hope to see you all really soon! Lots of Love, Emma and Storm

Best wishes
Emma Wallace

Easter Eggs are losing their 'Easter'

Next time you are out shopping, have a look at the Easter Eggs on sale. How many of them actually mention Easter? It seems that many of the best known brands have quietly dropped any reference to the Christian festival, and now sell Easter products labelled simply as 'chocolate egg' or even 'egg'.

David Marshall of The Meaningful Chocolate Company says 'A lot of businesses, quite often, are not comfortable with the religious aspect of the festival.'

Pastor's Paper

It is a visible coming together of churches in Witney: the Lent Soup Lunches have proved popular once again with 30 to 40 folk gathering together in churches across the town to share in fellowship over a plate of soup with bread and cheese. 20 to 25 folk have stayed on to share in Bible Studies led by a variety of folk from different church traditions. It has been a rich time of sharing. Eating and learning together has been an opportunity to raise funds for Christian Aid.

Then there was the oasis of prayer created by Revd. Joy Hance. A dozen folk from different denominations gathered for a day of silent prayer as we explored the theme "On the mountain top – choosing to listen". This was a rich time of worship. Another Quiet Day is being planned for Ascension Day (Thursday, 25 May 2017) to kick off "Thy Kingdom Come" (25 May – 4 June). Would you pencil it in your diary? Even better put it in ink and commit to participating. I promise that if you come with a generous spirit then God will outdo your generosity with his abundance!

"Thy Kingdom Come" - Witney is having a first gathering for prayer and planning on 3 April 2017, 7:30 pm at Witney Congregational Church. This is open to everyone and we hope that people from Witney and area will gather together to explore prayer and enrich our relationship to God. Here is a link to the Archbishop of Canterbury's call to prayer:

https://twitter.com/thykingdom_come/status/846330989563432960

Start praying now. Pray for the desire to pray. Pray that the desire to pray would grow strong as we seek to be filled with the Spirit of Jesus. Wouldn't it be wonderful to find ourselves immersed in

the love of Christ and inviting others to discover the grace of God?

I am ahead of myself now. There is no ascension or Pentecost without the cross. In a couple of weeks we will be joining with Jesus in his Passion. The jubilant praises of the people hailing Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem gives way to the sound of water splashing into a bowl. Jesus slips off his outer garment and wraps a towel around his waist. Shocked disciples cannot understand their teacher debasing himself to the work of a slave! Peter's protest turns to a whole hearted desire to be washed. Feet washed, Jesus shares the Passover meal with his disciples. Of bread and wine He says, "This is my body. This is my blood." From the table to the garden we watch Jesus attended by angels as he agonises. Sweat like drops of blood trickles down and soaks the ground. Betrayed with a kiss, abandoned by his disciples, and denied by Peter, he is bound and beaten and made to carry the gibbet to the place of his death. His body placed in a fresh tomb carved into rock, God raises him to life three days later. The empty tomb perplexes those who discover it. The slow dawn of perception lights them with the knowledge that Jesus is risen!

But there are those who whisper, "Fake news." Jesus' body was stolen by the disciples to feed their frenzied fantasies about their friend. In time everyone would see that this tale of a risen Jesus is nonsense. The story will die out and his disciples will move on to a new 'Messiah'.

Fake news

Alternative facts

These phrases have become common parlance in the past few months. The social media has shown a capacity to manufacture things that never happened by falsely attributing words, doctoring

photographs and using skewed statistics. It is hard to know what is 'true' and what is 'untrue'.

At dawn on Easter Sunday morning, we will gather in the church garden with Christians from across Witney and acclaim, "Christ is risen! Hallelujah! He is risen indeed!"

Is this fake news? Can it possibly be true that Jesus lived, died and rose again so that the world might be saved?

And the sceptic pities our delusion. The atheist scorns our capacity for ignorance. The sympathetic will grant Jesus the status of a good man and a wise teacher. But a dead man coming alive? Come on! Get real! It's impossible!

Easter is by far the greatest test of Christian faith. It is relatively easy to buy into the Christmas story without going for the whole package of God becoming flesh in an infant. It is much harder to have faith in God made flesh living and dying and rising from the grave. To sing "Thine be the glory!" with the line, "No more we doubt Thee," requires Herculean faith.

I confess that every Easter brings me face to face with an unsettling worry that perhaps I have invested my life in a fairy tale. Yet I find myself too with those first disciples who met the risen Jesus. "...They worshipped him; but some doubted" (Mt. 28:16). Paul knew how critical the resurrection was: "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died" (1 Corinthians 15:13-14, 20).

I pray that you would be given God's grace to follow Jesus to the cross and to stay faithful to the end. I pray that you will see him through tear blurred eyes and hear

him speak your name. I pray that in your doubting worshipping you will be filled with the joy of the risen Jesus.

Here is prayer for us from the 4th century called the 'Anima Christi':

Soul of Christ, sanctify me;
Body of Christ, save me;
Blood of Christ, inebriate me;
Water from the side of Christ,
wash me;
Passion of Christ, comfort me;

Good Jesu, hear me;
Within your wounds, hide me;
Never let me be separated from
you.

From the deadly enemy, defend
me;

In the hour of my death, call me,
and ask me to come to you,
that with the saints I may sing your
praise forever and ever.
Amen.

Shalom

JASON

**Bible study on Thursdays at 7:30 pm
in the Church Lounge**

Theme: "Teach us to Pray"

4, 11 & 18 May

1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 June

God hears
our prayers



The following article has been written, and submitted, by Jo Matthews, and is entitled:

Conservation and Comfort

One of the strongest impressions which are carried away by visitors to New Zealand is that of the fine art of conservation of all native living things. Over the numerous years of both living and periodically visiting these islands at 'world's end', I have never before been so impressed with the emphasis on protection of the species. Whether it is the luscious, unique areas of bush which can exude a mixture of peace, perpetuity and strength; or the smaller things that fly, sing, croak, buzz, crawl, hoot, twinkle or just grow, the country is alive with beauty and interest which absolutely must be conserved. Bird sanctuaries abound, as do other so-called sanctuaries, where the public are encouraged to look for the tiny creatures who could be missed because of brilliant camouflage, or to learn to identify the amazing varieties of birds, by sight or sound. Of course there is no monopoly on well-researched, caring conservation. Other countries, including our own, are well aware of the urgency of the challenge in our world today.

One afternoon last month I walked, with my son David and his twin daughters aged 13, in a park not far from their home. It is called 'Kowhai Park' after a distinctive native flower. Among the welcoming posters which greeted us at the entrance were some Do Nots. 'No dogs allowed' and 'no smoking anywhere', were among them. The park was beautifully kept, with wide grassy spaces and arrayed with beds of summer flowers. A little river ran through the area.

The dominant feature was a collection of large aviaries, well populated and magnetic in its attraction. There were several species of the native parrot family, large and small, colourful and plain. All interested in passers-by and all very vocal

One of the twins, Victoria, ran up to the nearest aviary. "Hallo!" she called. Immediately there was an avian chorus of Hallos! "SO cool", said Victoria. Delighted, the conversation was repeated until both girls had to be almost dragged away from the fascinating birds and their luxury, spacious habitat. We continued our stroll through the park (avoiding the children's play centre as this would not have been considered 'cool' for teenagers,) until it was time to return home.

As we came towards the gate we were immediately arrested by the sight of literally dozens of ducks, probably mallards, settling comfortably all over the immaculate grass near the river. Some had taken to the water but the vast majority were just resting on the grass, totally relaxed and happy. I remarked on this unusual sight and the answer to the phenomenon came from David. "Oh, the duck-shooting season must have begun." he said. "Ducks from all over the place come here because they know they'll be safe."

Can it be that ordinary, familiar ducks are able universally to sense a pending danger, communicate with each other and then, in total agreement take off and flock to a place which they know can give them comfort and total security? Clearly it's more than a possibility, it happens!

Can we 'ordinary' human beings' empathise with flocks of ducks? We have many Scriptures to help us! In Psalm 91: we read "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust." And, "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge."

Jesus told us: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt.28:20b)

Praise God, we know exactly where to find a 'safe place'.



PRAYER LETTER

No 179

LOVE

‘For God so LOVED the World that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.’

What is LOVE? Where is LOVE? When do we LOVE? How do we show LOVE?

Often we use the word LOVE as an adjective to describe something or someone; e.g I love that type of music or I love that view or I love that person although I have never met him or her. The love of things, possessions, nature, ideas etc, often get in our way of sharing God’s LOVE with others.

There are so many songs, hymns, poems about love that we use in worship which are also in the secular scene too. People compose these songs, hymns and poems as their desire to show their love to the person or persons intended.

The song that has the chorus of ‘Freely, freely, you have received, freely, freely give’ reminds us of the gift of LOVE that God has given to the world. Jesus gave his unconditional love by dying on the rough wooden cross so that our sins could be forgiven and we could be re-united with God. LOVE is costly and Jesus paid the ultimate price with his life.

The outcome of the ‘Terror Attack’ in Westminster showed such love and care amidst such destruction. P.C.Palmer gave his life protecting M.P.s, others without hesitation rushed to give help, comfort and support to the severely injured. The family of the man from the U.S.A. who was killed in the Attack showed such love in forgiving the Killer. These were tragic circumstances but we can show God’s love to others we meet every day in the way we behave, remembering the words Paul wrote to Corinthians;

‘Love is patient, love is kind.

Love does not envy, does not boast, is not proud.

Love is not rude, is not self seeking, is not easily angered,

Love keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth.

Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.’ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

Wow, those words really hit hard confronting us with the reality of LOVE. The above words are often read during a Marriage Service reminding not only the couple involved in the commitment required in their undertaking to live together but to the congregation too.

In Mark’s Gospel we read that a teacher of the Law asked Jesus which commandment was the most important. Jesus’ reply was;

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

MARK 12:30-31

A song to help us about Love is

Love is something if you give it away, give it away, you end up having more

It’s just like a Magic Penny, hold it tight and you won’t have any.

Lend it, spend it, you’ll have so many, they’ll roll all over the floor.

Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more.

Some momentous thoughts on LOVE

Let us always meet each other with a smile because the smile is the beginning of LOVE. **Mother Teresa)**

Sometimes the heart sees what is invisible to the eye. **H. Jackson Brown Jr**

Where there is LOVE there is Life. **Mahatma Gandhi**

Faith makes all things possible.....LOVE makes all things easy. **Dwight. L. Moody**

These things remain, Faith, Hope, Love, but the greatest of all is LOVE. **Apostle Paul**

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage. **Lao Tzu**

Spread LOVE EVERYWHERE YOU GO. Let no-one ever come to you without leaving happier. **Mother Teresa**

LOVE is Life, if you miss LOVE you miss Life. **Leo Buscaglia**

LOVE all. Trust a few. Do none wrong. **William Shakespeare**

LOVE is like the wind, you can't see it but you can feel it. **Nicholas Sparks**

You don't love someone because they are perfect, you LOVE them in spite of the fact that they are not. **Jodi Piccoult**

I am not sure what Heaven will be like but I know that when we die and it comes to God to judge us, he will not ask, "How many good things have you done in your life?", rather He will ask, "How much love did you put into what you did?" **Mother Teresa**

LOVE is the greatest gift that God has given us. GOD IS LOVE.

LOVE is the keystone of our being. LOVE is cement that keeps it all together. AL.

There is no greater LOVE than a man should lay down his life for another.

What is your definition of LOVE? Maybe you can think and let me have your ideas so we can compile our own list of our, 'Thoughts on LOVE'.

May God be with you as we complete our journey through Lent, remembering on Good Friday the sacrifice of Love that Jesus made on the cross and the joyous celebration of His Resurrection on Easter Day. Hallelujah!

Every Blessing

Beryl

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

The following article, written and submitted by Elaine Kinchin, is entitled:

Names

I was interested to read on the Sunday Link for 19th March this year a short piece by Therese Garman about names. I have been fascinated by names and am often put off reading a book or watching a TV drama if the characters have the 'wrong' name.

Let me explain: The BBC drama "Outnumbered" features characters with these names (in alphabetical order): Ben, Jake, Pete and Sue. It should be fairly obvious to you, if you think about your family, friends and neighbours that, if this is a nuclear family based in England, the parents are Pete and Sue; Ben and Jake are their sons. This 'guess' is backed up by information from Government records: The names Susan or Suzanne were in the Top 100 names for women aged 33-73. The range for the name Peter is much wider, as boys' names are fewer and more static, in general. So Peter could be the name of anyone from 13 to over 100! But Ben and Jake must be the children - these names were most fashionable from the 90s onwards. The sticking point for me is Karen. Karen is aged between 33 and 63. Use your own family and friends (or wider circle) to confirm this. Karens are the friends of Tracy and Michelle and Sharon. They are roughly 40-50. So why is the Karen in the sitcom Outnumbered not a middle-aged woman but a child of five, in the first episode?

You can see how fascinated I am by names!

The piece on the Sunday Link began by mentioning that names really meant something in the Jewish culture. John = grace of the Lord. Jesus = he saves. Mary = bitter. Naomi = pleasant. Ruth = friend; vision of beauty. Samuel = God has heard.

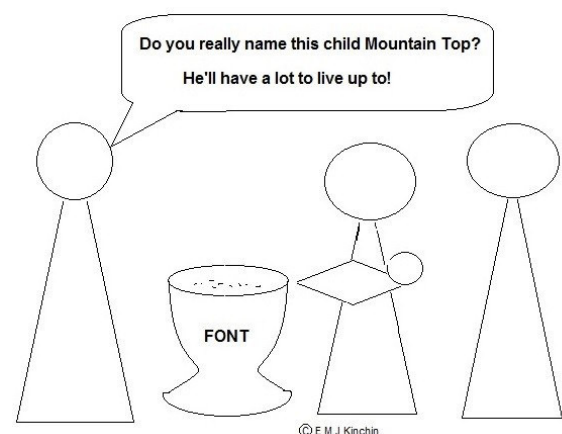
Therese Garman then reminded us that names can change. Abram became Abraham (exalted father) to **father of many**), Sarai became Sarah (quarrelsome to princess), Simon became Peter (listen to rock).

This shows us that it is NEVER too late to change - Sarai was renamed after her menopause and Simon ran a successful fishing business. When God wants you to change your life significantly, he knows you need to adopt new characteristics.

Therese Garman writes: "Nobody is suggesting that you change your name ...but reflect on your cultural, social and spiritual identity. Are these in harmony?"

That was the point I was making with "Outnumbered". The name Karen does not fit culturally. (It means 'pure' which makes it one of the many derivations of Katherine.)

Therese Garman finished with this: can God say of you, "I have called you by name, you are mine"? (Isaiah 43:1) However, I'd like to remind you of a verse in Revelation: To everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it. Perhaps next time we meet, we'll need to introduce ourselves afresh: I don't think I'm a "Twila" but I definitely am creative!



The following thank you letter has been extracted from an e-mail from Fran Lawson of Mary's Meals UK

Good Afternoon,

My name is Fran and I am the Church Officer here at Mary's Meals UK.

I just wanted to get in touch to say a huge "Thank You" to everyone at Witney Congregational Church for the wonderful donation of £1000 that you recently sent to help us in our work.

I love the fact that this total was raised by the collection of 5p coins! It just shows what can be achieved by lots of people donating small amounts.

You can be sure that this money will be put to good use and will allow us to continue to fulfil our promise to provide daily school meals to the poorest children in Malawi.

If you ever require any other information or resources to assist you with future awareness raising or fundraising projects on behalf of Mary's Meals, please just let me know.

Please convey our heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in your Malawi 5p Collection.

We couldn't do the work we do without the generous support of good people such as yourselves all across the globe.

Thank you!

Kind regards

Fran



The following article is reflections on the Lent Quiet Day led by Joy Hance, and is entitled:

On the Mountain Top: Choosing to Listen

We all have special places where we feel God's presence. For some it is the peace and tranquillity of a church – perhaps a mighty cathedral, where the awesome architecture and beautiful art speak of God's superhuman qualities and creativity. Or perhaps an intimate country chapel, a world away from the hurly burly of city life, where God's enveloping love is almost tangible. For others it may be the freedom of the open countryside on a spring day, that fills us with joy and makes us feel blessed.

In the bible, however, it is more often on the mountain top that God chooses to reveal Himself. The Burning Bush on Mount Horeb (Exodus 3), the awesome encounters and the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19 & 24), Elijah's contest with the Baal prophets on Mount Carmel (1Kings 18) and the personal encounter with Elijah through the still small voice on Mount Horeb (1Kings 19)

Nor were such events restricted to the Old Testament: we came finally to the Transfiguration (Matthew 17 1-9). This profoundly spiritual experience affected Peter, James and John in the same way that such experiences change the lives of those of us who have been fortunate enough to experience them since. Once again it happens on a mountain and even at a distance from the other disciples.

It is not simply that we feel closer to God when we are on high ground. We now know that the sky is not a heavenly platform where God sits on a throne waiting to welcome us. Space exploration

has presented us with all the proof we need that God is not confined to a location somewhere near the sun.

It is easy to understand why mountain locations, away from human interference and distraction were then and are still, a stage for communication with God. They are a reminder of His awesome presence with us, wherever we are. We don't have to climb mountains but we do have to listen and be aware.

The following article has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

Christian dog

A strong Baptist family decided to buy a dog. But they wanted it to be a Christian dog. Down at the local animal sanctuary they were shown a dog that might be suitable, but the family decided to make sure. The father said: "Go fetch my Bible." Obediently, the dog trotted to the car, grabbed the Bible off the front seat, and laid it at the feet of the man.

"Ah," said the father, "he may know what the Bible is, but can he find his way around it?" He told the dog to find Psalm 23. The dog opened the Bible with his nose, and pawed through the pages to Psalm 23.

"Ah," said the father, "he may know the Bible, but is he baptized?" Immediately, the dog turned and jumped into the nearby stream, went under, and jumped out again.

"Ah," said the father, "It may be baptized, but does he pray?" The dog immediately sat down, closed its eyes and waved its front paws in the air. "Wait a minute!" exclaimed the mother, outraged, "this dog is no good for us – he is Pentecostal!"

The following article has been submitted by Beryl Cartwright, and is entitled:

Some Gardening tips

If you have any spring bulbs such as daffodils or tulips or an amaryllis, cut the flower heads off when the flower looks dead. **Do not cut off the leaves.** This enables the leaves to make food for the bulb, enabling the bulbs to bloom in following years. If you have a garden you can leave the bulbs in situ removing the leaves when they have died down, gone yellowy. Alternatively you can dig the bulbs up and leave them to die off in another obscure part of the garden with leaves intact.

If you are lucky enough to have had an amaryllis leave it to die off in the pot with the leaves on having cut off the dead flowers. Put the pot somewhere out of the way until December then start watering it. Bring it into the warm and light and watch it grow again. Do not water it during its dormant stage. With loving care you will have more beautiful blooms next January or February

The following article has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

Good Friday

I was standing in line at the bank when there was a commotion at the counter. A woman was very distressed, exclaiming, 'Where will I put my money?! I have all my money and my mortgage here!! What will happen to my mortgage?! You can't do this to us!'

It turned out that she had misunderstood a small sign on the counter. The sign read: WE WILL BE CLOSED FOR GOOD FRIDAY

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

EASTER: the most joyful day of the year

Easter is the most joyful day of the year for Christians. Christ has died for our sins. We are forgiven. Christ has risen! We are redeemed! We can look forward to an eternity in his joy! Hallelujah!

The Good News of Jesus Christ is a message so simple that you can explain it to someone in a few minutes. It is so profound that for the rest of their lives they will be still be 'growing' in their Christian walk with God.

Why does the date move around so much? Because the date of Passover moves around, and according to the biblical account, Easter is tied to the Passover. Passover celebrates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and it lasts for seven days, from the middle of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which equates to late March or early April.

Sir Isaac Newton was one of the first to use the Hebrew lunar calendar to come up with firm dates for Good Friday: Friday 7 April 30 AD or Friday 3 April, 33 AD, with Easter Day falling two days later. Modern scholars continue to think these the most likely.

Most people will tell you that Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox, which is broadly true. But the precise calculations are complicated and involve something called an 'ecclesiastical full moon', which is not the same as the moon in the sky. The earliest possible date for Easter in the West is 22 March, which last fell in 1818 and won't fall again until 2285. The latest is 25 April, which last happened in 1943 and is next due in 2038.

Why the name, 'Easter'? In almost every European language, the festival's name

comes from 'Pesach', the Hebrew word for Passover. The Germanic word 'Easter', however, seems to come from Eostre, a Saxon fertility goddess mentioned by the Venerable Bede. He thought that the Saxons worshipped her in 'Eostur month', but may have confused her with the classical dawn goddesses like Eos and Aurora, whose names mean 'shining in the east'. So Easter might have meant simply 'beginning month' – a good time for starting up again after a long winter.

Finally, why Easter eggs? On one hand, they are an ancient symbol of birth in most European cultures. On the other hand, hens start laying regularly again each Spring. Since eggs were forbidden during Lent, it's easy to see how decorating and eating them became a practical way to celebrate Easter.

Why Easter will never go away

How do you make sense of the Resurrection? Dead men don't rise, so why believe that this particular dead man did rise?

At the end of St Luke's Gospel we read that: "they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement" (Luke 24.4). This is highly significant. The Gospels do not show us a group of disciples who were in a receptive frame of mind. After the crucifixion, they were in hiding, frightened and scattered. Then suddenly, they came out of hiding and were totally different; excited, joyful. By Pentecost they were confident, with one firm message: "You crucified Jesus, but God raised him up!"

How did they know this? Because of experience. Some of them had visited the tomb of Jesus: it was empty. Others claimed to have seen and touched the risen Lord. Were they hallucinating? People can hallucinate in groups – when taking drugs, for example. But of course each one will see

a different hallucination. But the disciples all saw the same thing. Or rather, the same person. Jesus.

Were they lying? Jesus had died a humiliating death as a criminal. Perhaps they wanted to rescue His good name. So did they pretend they had seen Him? This theory has a big problem. Their preaching led them into trouble with the authorities. They were beaten and imprisoned and some of them killed. People will die for ideas and causes which they believe in passionately. But not for things they have made up. We might suffer for our convictions, we will not suffer for our inventions.

If the disciples had been hiding Jesus, they would have kept very low-key, and out of the way, so that the authorities did not come after him again.

Besides, to preach that God had raised Jesus from the dead – which is exactly what they did preach – would have been a lie. Beatings and threat of death would soon have loosened their tongues. Inventions crumble under pressure; convictions hold fast.

Another reason for believing in the Resurrection is this: Jesus' continuing impact. Thousands and soon millions of people in every generation since have shared an inescapable sense of being 'accompanied' through life. Though unseen, they identify this presence as the Risen Lord.

Sometimes this experience of meeting Jesus is gentle and fitful. Sometimes it is dramatic and life-changing. This reminds us that the resurrection of Jesus is not just an interesting historical puzzle. It is a vital present day reality. It brings wonderful comfort, assuring us of the central Christian truths: death is dead; Jesus is alive; God is love.

Have a joyful – and a challenging – Easter

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

Archbishop urges Britain to 'seize and define the future'

In the Presidential speech at the February General Synod, the Archbishop of Canterbury argued that the current political and social climate is an opportunity for re-imagining the nation's practices, values, aspirations and global role.

The Archbishop said "this could be a time of liberation, of seizing and defining the future, or it could be one in which the present problems seize our national future and define us."

The Archbishop went on to argue that the Church of England can be a part of the answer: "we have a voice and a contribution and a capacity and a reach and above all a Lord who is faithful when we fail and faithful when we flourish.

"How are we going to contribute to the national future? There is before the churches of this land, over the next many years, an extraordinary opportunity to be part of reimagining a new Britain, its practices, values, aspirations and global role. To do so we must ourselves be cross shaped, Jesus following, confident in faith and humble in service, above all outward looking.

"We are called to be the people of the cross ... seeing and loving the world around as Christ does, so that in this time of a choice between national hope and opportunity or threat and fear we may play the part to which we are called in reimagining our country and seizing the best future that lies before us."

The following article written by Canon David Winter, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

St George - our patron saint who isn't English

It's perhaps typical of the English that they should have a patron saint who isn't English, about whom next to nothing is known for sure, and who may not have existed at all. That didn't stop him being patriotically invoked in many battles, notably at Agincourt and in the Crusades, and of course it is his cross that adorns the flags of English football fans to this day.

It's most likely that he was a soldier, a Christian who was martyred for his faith somewhere in Palestine, possibly at Lydda, in the early fourth century. At some point in the early centuries of the Church he became associated with wider military concerns, being regarded as the patron saint of the Byzantine armies. There is no doubt that he was held as an example of the 'godly soldier', one who served Christ as bravely and truly as he served his king and country.

The story of George and the dragon is of much later date and no one seems to know where it comes from. By the middle ages, when George was being honoured in stained glass, the dragon had become an invaluable and invariable visual element, so that for most people the two are inseparable. Pub signs have a lot to answer for here: 'The George and Dragon'.

However, it's probably more profitable to concentrate on his role as a man who witnessed to his faith in the difficult setting of military service, and in the end was martyred for his faithfulness to Christ.

The idea of the 'Christian soldier' was, of course, much loved by the Victorian hymn-writers - 'Onward, Christian soldiers!' The

soldier needs discipline. The heart of his commitment is to obedience. The battle cannot be avoided nor the enemy appeased. He marches and fights alongside others, and he is loyal to his comrades. In the end, if the battle is won, he receives the garlands of victory, the final reward of those who overcome evil.

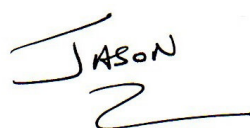
St George's Day presents a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to distance the message of his life from the militarism and triumphalism that can easily attach itself to anything connected to soldiers and fighting. The opportunity is to celebrate the ideal of the 'Christian soldier' - one who submits to discipline, sets out to obey God truly, does not avoid the inevitable battle with all that is unjust, wrong and hateful in our world, and marches alongside others fighting the same noble cause. Discipline, obedience, courage, fellowship and loyalty - they're not the most popular virtues today, but that doesn't mean that they don't deserve our gratitude and admiration.

Thy Kingdom Come - The Archbishop's National Prayer initiative - 25th May to 4th June

There will be a meeting to discuss arrangements for Thy Kingdom Come on **Monday 3 April 2017 at 7.30pm** at Witney Congregational Church.

This will be the first opportunity for prayer and planning and to consider dates for the future

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JASON' with a stylized flourish underneath.

News from Churches Together in Oxfordshire 1 February 2017

Appointment of a new County Ecumenical Development Officer

We are delighted to announce that Mr David Hare will be taking up the post of County Ecumenical Development Officer from 20 February.

This is David:-



And he says:-

'I am someone who went to an Anglican school and is now undertaking lay training with the Church of England. For over 30 years between these two points I have worshipped with several different denominations! I have been involved with the Public Sector social services and then charities for most of my life, working mainly, but not exclusively, with learning disability/mental health. I still volunteer for a social company who work, mainly outside, with people who have personality disorders. My other time is taken up with Cricket: I am on our County League Board and am an Umpire. And I'm also very involved with local politics. I look forward to meeting you, working with you all to ensure the united Christian Church is seen to be alive and relevant to modern life.'

David will be commissioned at the CTO Annual Meeting, to be held at Kidlington Methodist Church, Oxford Road, Kidlington, OX5 2BP, on Tuesday 21 March, 7 for 7.30 p.m. We are also planning to share some perspectives on churches working together in different ways and settings. Please come!