

CORNERSTONE

The Magazine of
WITNEY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



Christ Jesus is the chief cornerstone.
In Him the whole fabric is bound together, as it grows into a temple,
dedicated to the Lord (Ephesians 2:21)

April & May 2025

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We are now a third of the way into the year – April already, and May won't be far behind! As you read this edition, we will soon be celebrating 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 would have, but not any longer, do the 'Witness Walk' to the Market Square service on Good Friday. As families, especially with children, no doubt you also celebrate by the giving, and receiving of Easter eggs



I now turn to some of this month's contents: along with the standard contributions, Lesley Barter has written about her recent visit to the Balkans; Tony Houghton has written about the good shepherd, and some articles have been extracted from Parish Pump, 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:

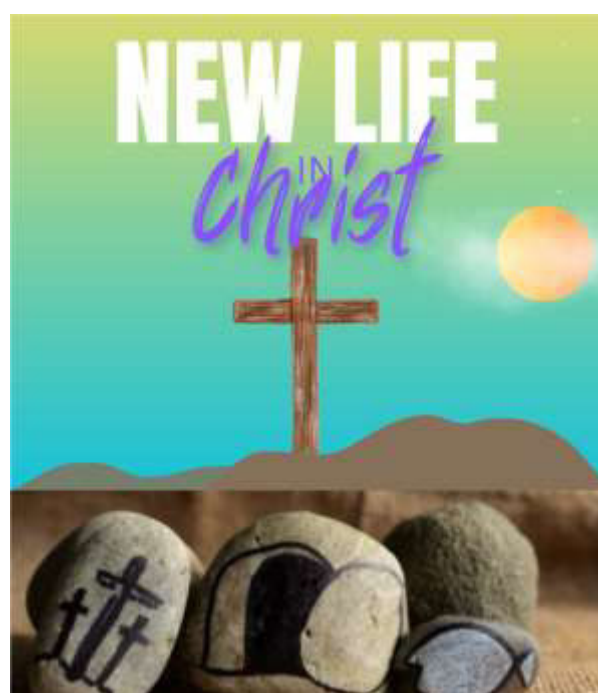
E-mail: terrypowlesland@uwclub.net

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 1st June**

Your Editor



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April & May 2025 Diary

Services: 10.30am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month

Apr

6 th	am	Rev Judi Holloway			
	pm	Nanna Blackman		Communion	
13 th	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	Palm Sunday	Communion	new members
17 th	pm	Rev Bryan Doyle	Maundy Thursday		6.15pm for 6.30pm
18 th	am	Rev Judi Holloway	Good Friday		
20 th	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	Easter Sunday		
27 th	am	Rev Bryan Doyle			

May

3 rd	11.00am	Saturday Praise			
4 th	am	David Kinchin			
	pm	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Hi 5's Café Church	3.30pm	Communion
11 th	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin			
18 th	am	Nanna Blackman		Communion	
25 th	am	Rev Judi Holloway			

June

1 st	am	tbc			
	pm	Nanna Blackman		Communion	
7 th	11.00am	Saturday Praise			

The following events are given for your particular attention:

Apr

8 th	Chair-based Exercise Class	repeated on 15 th /29 th	10.45 – 11.45am
11 th	Food Bank Quiz		6.00pm
26 th	Witney Book Circle		10.30am
29 th	CF Safety Seminar		7.00pm

May

4 th	Hi 5's Café Church Cream Tea	Sunday	3.30pm
6 th	Chair-based Exercise Class	repeated on 13 th /27 th	10.45 – 11.45am
25 th	Church meeting		12 noon
31 st	Witney Book Circle		10.30am

Jun

5 th	Hi 5's Music Evening	Thursday	6.00pm
10 th	Chair-based Exercise Class		10.45 – 11.45

Rotas

WELCOMING TEAM

Apr	06	Janet Hayes
	13	Lesley Barter
	20	Jean Hodgson
	27	Pat Smith
May	04	Jacqui Powlesland
	11	Janet Hayes
	18	Lesley Barter
	25	Jean Hodgson
June	01	Pat Smith
	08	Jacqui Powlesland



FLOWERS

Apr	06	Jacqui Powlesland
	13	Judi Holloway
	20	Easter Flowers
	27	Rita Hayes
May	04	Janet Hayes
	11	Judi Holloway
	18	Jacqui Powlesland
	25	Rita Hayes
June	01	Janet Hayes
	08	Judi Holloway



SUNDAY COFFEE

Apr	06	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	13	Elaine Kinchin & Heather Houghton
	20	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	27	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
May	04	Pat Smith & Janet Hayes
	11	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	18	Elaine Kinchin & Heather Houghton
	25	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
June	01	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
	08	Pat Smith & Janet Hayes



THURSDAY COFFEE (10 – 12)

Apr	03	Ann Clack
	10	Jean Hodgson
	17	Elaine Kinchin
	24	Pat Smith
May	01	David Kinchin
	08	Judi Holloway
	15	Ann Clack
	22	Jean Hodgson
June	29	Elaine Kinchin
	05	Pat Smith
	12	David Kinchin



Nanna Blackman as standby - We would be extremely grateful for other people to join

SOUND SYSTEM

Apr	06	Terry Powlesland
	13	Nanna Blackman
	20	Nanna Blackman
	27	Tony Houghton
May	04	Terry Powlesland
	11	Nanna Blackman
	18	Tony Houghton
	25	Terry Powlesland
June	01	Terry Powlesland
	08	Nanna Blackman



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

Apr 07 Hazel Woodward
 12 Andrew MacLarty
 23 Jo Rudd
 26 Joyce Kearsey
 28 Tony Houghton



May 04 Graham Beechey
 11 David Climie
 12 Pearl Christian
 21 Terry Powlesland
 23 Usha Reifsnider
 24 Pip Cartwright
 30 Pat Smith

SAFE
 SECURITY ADVICE FOR
 EVERYONE



Bringing communities together



**Congregational
 Federation**

Free Safety Seminar

**Witney Congregational Church and SAFE by
 CST invite you to a seminar on Conflict
 Management and Women's Safety.**

29
 APRIL

7 PM - 9 PM

Venue:

**Witney Congregational Church
 Welch Way, Witney OX28 6JF**

SAFE talks are not suitable
 for anyone under 18

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

enquiries@safe.cst.org.uk



MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear church family,

I greet you in the name of our precious Lord, Jesus Christ.

We are in the Lenten Season, with Holy Week rapidly approaching. What does Lent mean to you? I hope the following quote from Chris Tiegreen's devotional, "The Promise of Lent", will be insightful and encourage you as you journey through Lent and beyond.

"Many early Christians prepared to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus with a season of repentance. Their practices varied widely from place to place and from time to time, but by the fourth century, the idea of spending forty days in preparation for Easter had crystalized into common practice. The Lenten season became a time of sobering reflection – on sins, on the death and decay of a world gone wrong, and on the hopeless condition we would be in without the intervention of God in Christ. Believers were encouraged to feel the full weight of these concepts by expressing repentance and denying themselves. It is perhaps the most solemn time of year for many Christians.

Lent is not meant to be depressing, however; it is meant to be reorienting.

Repentance is never an end in itself in God's Kingdom; it always leads to joy. It is an entry point to a new way of seeing, the beginning of an inner transformation that changes our vision and the direction of our lives. It may remind us of our disappointments for a moment, but it is meant to move us quickly into the light, where our eyes are filled with awe, wonder, and anticipation. Even the most sober-minded believer contemplating the themes of Lent realizes the ways God has turned them all toward His glory and our ultimate good. When we gaze at His true nature, everything changes. The past fades away, and our hearts are filled with hope.

We may feel the full weight of the old for a time, but it is temporary. The new will last forever. Lent is a time of transition, when we turn our eyes away from fading disappointments and toward the brilliant promises of God."

As we continue our journey together with Jesus, I pray that through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we will be filled with hope, as we reflect on God's goodness – His love, forgiveness and faithfulness, as He continues with an inner transforming work in us, that changes our vision and our lives, to be more like Jesus and to be agents of change in our fallen world, to the glory of the Father.

This is my final minister's letter in the Cornerstone Magazine. As you are probably aware, God has called me to create a new ministry, which will be called Insight. It will be a resource to encourage Christians to meet regularly for extended periods of time to enhance their relationship with God through growing in their knowledge of the Word of God and thereby gaining greater insight into the Father's heart. The time spent together will also strengthen their relationships within the Body of Christ, and they will be able to encourage one another on their walk of faith.

We still have the rest of April to journey together, and both Ruth and I thank you for all the love and support you have shown us – please know that we love you and you will remain in our hearts and prayers.

NB/BEWARE – WE PLAN TO KEEP IN TOUCH!!!

Remember that although distance may separate us (or not...as we don't know where God is taking us yet – prayer item please), as brothers and sisters adopted into God's family, we are united in Christ, and nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Your brother in Christ,

Bryan



PRAYER LETTER No 217

We live in troubled and troubling times. I wonder who has never said or thought that? If it is not global issues, it is family concerns; if it does not involve politics, it involves emotions. Turmoil and chaos seem to be the order of the day. After a series of tragic events, Shakespeare gives these words to Claudius: "**When sorrows come, they come not single spies but in battalions.**"

I like that quotation not only because it seems so often to be true – but because of the word **spies**; sorrows, woes, troubles, problems (we have so many words because these feelings are so common) sneak up on us, like a spy would. We leave church with a smile on our faces and a song in our hearts and one text message or news bulletin can turn that peace into chaos.

Many hymn writers have suffered and turned that experience into hymns of comfort; others lead apparently pampered lives yet dedicate their time to others' suffering. H G Spafford, for example, was a Presbyterian elder and Sunday School teacher. He worked as a lawyer and early in 1871 he invested in property in Chicago; in October of that year, a massive fire reduced most of the city to rubble and ashes. Two years later, his family planned a trip to Europe but Spafford was too busy to go so his wife and four daughters sailed off without him. Their steamship, the *Ville de Havre*, was struck by another vessel in mid-Atlantic and 226 people died including the four Spafford girls aged 12, 7, 4 and 18 months. Mrs Anna Spafford survived and sent Horatio a telegram: "saved alone". Spafford set sail as soon as possible to meet his grieving wife and the captain of his ship told him when they passed over the place where his daughters died. Spafford wrote the hymn **It is well with my soul**. The hymn words are poetry and include the phrases 'when sorrows like sea billows roll', 'though trials should come' and 'the clouds be rolled back like a scroll'. What is the remedy for all these woes? According to Spafford: 'let this blest assurance control – that Christ has regarded my helpless state'. We are never alone – God stands with us always.

A hymn, written by Priscilla J Owens, was a favourite of many at Hope Congregational Church in Oldham; they called it the Boys Brigade hymn. It begins 'Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?' It continues: 'Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear, when the breakers roar and the reef is near?' and 'Will your anchor hold in the floods of death?' Our reward is spelled out in the last verse: 'Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore, when life's storms are past for evermore?' But where is the comfort while we are being battered by storms?

'We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!'

Cecil Frances Alexander is best known for her children's hymns like **All things bright and beautiful**, **Once in Royal David's city** and **There is a green hill far away**, which are written in simple language but still are true to theology. She was married to an archbishop in Ireland and travelled many miles every day to visit the needy and infirm, providing food, clothing and medicines. With her sister Anne she started a school for deaf children. But her adult hymns show that she too understood the storms that life inflicts on us. In 1852 she wrote **Jesus calls us o'er the tumult** 'of our life's wild, restless sea'. As she wrote it as a hymn for St Andrew's day (Nov 30th) she recalls that 'Brothers Simon, Andrew heard it by the Galilean lake, turned from home, and toil, and kindred, leaving all for His dear sake'. Were the lives of those simple fishermen easy after answering the call of Jesus? You don't have to read far into any Gospel to discover that their pre-conceptions of what Jesus's Messiah-hood meant, were constantly being overturned. They left their families and business – they must have worried about who and what they had left behind... Jesus had worked as a carpenter in his family's business before he too answered the call and became what the locals would have called a wandering rabbi. Alexander's words show she too understood that no life is smooth and peaceful all the time: 'In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease'. And what is her remedy for the times our lives are tumultuous? When Jesus calls we need to 'give our hearts to your obedience, serve and love you best of all'.

Why is a prayer chain letter focussing so much on hymn words? Because hymns and psalms and spiritual songs are a ready resource when we are lost for words. When situations overwhelm us, it sometimes seems that God is nowhere to be found. The fact that hymns which have stood the test of time are still sung in our churches prove how useful it can be to turn to carefully honed phrases when we feel our inspiration has dried up. Just because Congregationalists as a 'denomination' are proponents of extempore (off the cuff) prayers, does not mean that God will not hear us when we echo the words of others.

I don't understand why Putin has become so strong, why there is war in Europe *again*, why Trump with his obvious lies and silly plans has been elected to serve a second term as president. A degree in theology does not give me the answers to what is going on – and sometimes in these situations my words will be angry or ill thought out. (That is fine – just read some psalms!) Prayer is easy, at least it is easier than waiting for the answers to prayer. But as Spafford, Owens and Alexander show us, stay close to God, hold fast to faith and we will not be overcome

Every Blessing, Elaine

Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Elaine 07534 879449)

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

A Postcard from The Balkans

It has become a national pastime to complain to each other about our government and our politicians. 'They don't understand what it is like here, in the real world,' we say. 'They are in it for themselves, not to change things for the better.' 'They will say anything to get elected, but once in power they do what is expedient.' Which one of us has not uttered, or thought these things recently? I know I have.

I have just returned from a whistle-stop tour in The Balkans, where I visited Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania and North Macedonia. It was exhausting and involved a great deal of travelling, but it opened my eyes to some uncomfortable truths about countries that are on our doorstep. Living as we do in leafy Witney, the day to day hardship of making ends meet is not a reality for many of us. If it is, we have the welfare state to help us. That is not the case in parts of eastern Europe and it is why until recently many people from there have made their way to this country in search of a better life. Most of us feel that their presence here has enhanced our society and our economy.

If we think about The Balkans at all, it is as a holiday destination. I was surprised, however to see many villages on my travels that looked depressingly dreary. It was clear that many rural communities struggle to make a living from what appears to be unforgiving mountainous terrain. Many inland towns look (I am ashamed to admit) like our down at heel northern seaside towns. Boarded up shops, junk yards and abandoned commercial enterprises. By contrast with this, however, there is some impressive scenery: soaring mountains (many snow-capped), lakes (rather bleak at this time of year) and a magnificent

coastline. It is in these coastal oases that the much needed tourist economy flourishes. In the summer they are popular for cruise liners.

What interested me most, however was the stunningly beautiful frescoes and dazzling icons in the old monasteries and churches which have survived the ravages of the Ottoman Empire and Communist governments. Some are more breathtaking even than those in Italy. Some of the mosques too are magnificently decorated. It is hard to believe what a difficult political history this part of the world has had, the legacy of which remains today.



It was in Albania that I came face to face with the realities of the past, which were a million miles from the artistic beauty of religious building. There is a museum housed inside a bunker in Tirana, which was built by the communist dictator to protect himself and his government in case of nuclear war. Within its labyrinthine underground corridors it tells the harrowing story of the communist regime which only ended in 1992. The repression, neighbour spying on neighbour, torture and disappearances were part of daily life.

Religion of any kind was banned. People trying to escape over the border were immediately shot.

The fact that this was happening next door to us in Europe, and so recently, was what stuck in my mind. As an island, we have been able to enjoy centuries of impregnability. Our children have grown up without the threat of war. It behoves us to reflect upon this God given privilege. To value it, together with the freedom to worship the God of our choice, to speak our mind without fear of arrest and to live the life of our choice. Let us thank God for it.

The following article, written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith, and is entitled:

God in the Sciences: The Wonder and the Sorrow of those PCR (polymerase chain reaction) Tests

PCR tests were a fact of life for most of us three years ago this month. As a biologist who was doing this procedure long before most people had heard of it, I take secret delight in people's use of the acronym. Let me open the laboratory door and share the wonders it conceals.

That swab that you, or someone else, poked down your throat and up your nose went into a tube containing a little liquid. That liquid was then heated or mixed with a chemical to kill any live virus particles, then purified to get rid of every part of the virus except RNA.

The test was actually RT-PCR, the first step being Reverse Transcription by an enzyme

that converted any RNA present into DNA. Multiple copies of that DNA were then made, using the Polymerase Chain Reaction. Reverse transcription produced one half of a DNA helix, like one side of an unzipped zip. The enzyme DNA Polymerase is a little like the zipper, except as well as zipping up, it also manufactures the other half of the zip using DNA subunits that have been added to the tube. This process works because a bit like a zip, the two sides of the DNA helix are mirror images of each other. If that new helix is unzipped, DNA polymerase can then make a new strand on both sides.

The beauty of PCR is in its simplicity. Multiple rounds of heating (which melts the DNA helix strands apart) and cooling (which allows the enzyme to make new DNA) produce more and more mirror-image DNA strands.

Scientists often have stories to tell about the wonders they study, or make use of, in the lab. Sadly, if this particular process worked it meant that there was probably COVID-19 in the sample, and someone might have been about to become quite ill.

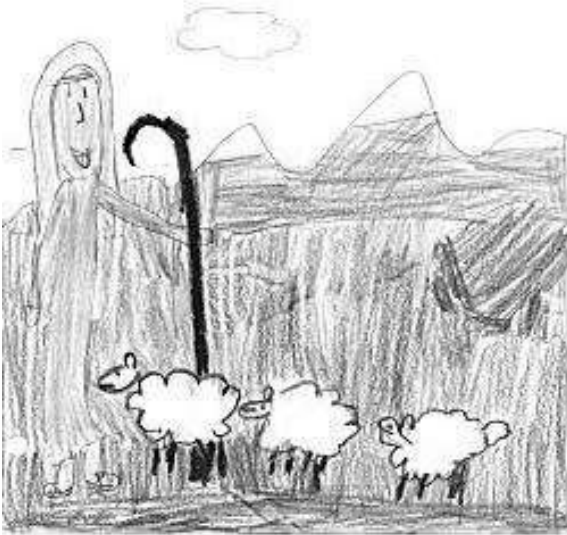
Do you live with similar tensions in your own life? Maybe you love taking care of people, but your role only exists because others live with great physical or mental challenges.

or the Psalmists, a relationship with God was forged in the confusing space where the struggles of life mingled with praise for creation and trust in Him. How can we learn from these inspired ancient writers, celebrating the wonders we experience in our day-to-day lives while also lamenting the world's brokenness, praying for healing and justice?

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The following article has been written, and submitted by Tony Houghton, and is entitled:

The Good Shepherd: A Call to Follow in John 10:1-20



In the Gospel of John, chapter 10, verses 1 to 20, we encounter one of the most intimate and profound images of Jesus: that of the Good Shepherd. This passage not only offers a glimpse into the compassionate care that Jesus has for His followers but also calls us to reflect on what it means to truly listen to and follow His voice in our daily lives.

Jesus begins this discourse by describing Himself as the Good Shepherd, contrasting Himself with the thief and the robber. These individuals, He says, come only to steal, kill, and destroy, while He, as the Good Shepherd, comes to bring life—life in all its fullness (John 10:10). The imagery is powerful, especially for an audience in Jesus' time, many of whom would have been familiar with shepherding. To them, a shepherd was more than a mere caretaker; the shepherd was a protector, a guide, and, above all, one who had a deep and personal relationship with the sheep.

In verse 3, Jesus says, "The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." This is not just a picture of Jesus as a distant figure leading a crowd, but

rather a shepherd who knows each sheep individually. This intimacy is a challenge to us. Do we recognise His voice? In the hustle and bustle of modern life, with its constant distractions and noise, are we listening for the voice of the Good Shepherd, calling us by name and leading us toward deeper spiritual growth?

Jesus contrasts Himself with the thieves and robbers—those who exploit others for personal gain. This image invites us to examine the influences in our lives. Are we following voices that promise fulfilment but lead to emptiness, or are we choosing the voice of the Good Shepherd, who promises life in abundance? This is a moment for self-reflection, especially in a society that often elevates material success, self-interest, and instant gratification. The voice of Jesus may not always be the loudest or most appealing in the short term, but it is the one that leads to eternal fulfilment.

In verses 14 and 15, Jesus expands on the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, saying, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep." The depth of this relationship is remarkable—Jesus not only knows His followers but lays down His life for them. This sacrificial love is the ultimate expression of His care. For us today, this truth is both comforting and challenging. Comforting because we know we are deeply loved and cared for, but challenging because it calls us to a life of selflessness and sacrificial love, just as Jesus modelled for us.

This passage also speaks to the inclusivity of Jesus' mission. He mentions in verse 16 that He has "other sheep that are not of this sheep pen" and that He must bring them also. This is a reminder that the love of the Good Shepherd is not limited to a particular group but extends to all who will hear and respond to His voice. It challenges us, as the

Church, to expand our vision of God's kingdom and to share the Good News with everyone, regardless of background or status.

Finally, Jesus' words about laying down His life point to His ultimate sacrifice on the cross. This is the ultimate act of love, and it is a love that invites us to follow in His footsteps. Are we willing to take up our cross, as He did, and serve others with the same self-giving love? It's a question that requires both courage and commitment, but it is one that will transform our lives and the lives of those around us.

As we reflect on John 10:1-20, we are reminded that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows us intimately, loves us sacrificially, and calls us to follow Him closely. May we be challenged to listen for His voice amidst the noise, to trust in His guidance, and to follow Him wherever He leads, knowing that He will always lead us to life in abundance.

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

23rd April - St George, our Patron Saint who isn't English

The English have a patron saint who isn't English, about whom next to nothing is known for sure, and who, just possibly, may not have existed at all. But that didn't stop St George 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 St George 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 St George 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 hymnwriters - '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 admiration.

The following articles have been extracted from Parish Pump:

Richard of Chichester, wanting to see more clearly, dearly and nearly

Ever wonder where the prayer ... *‘May I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly, day by day’* comes from? Richard of Chichester, a bishop in the 13th century, wrote it.

He began life as Richard de Wych of Droitwich, the son of a yeoman farmer. But Richard was a studious boy, and after helping his father on the farm for several years, refused an advantageous offer of marriage, and instead made his way to Oxford, and later to Paris and Bologna to study canon law.

In 1235 he returned to Oxford, and was soon appointed Chancellor, where he supported Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his struggles against King Henry III’s misuse of Church funds. After further study to become a priest, Richard was in due course made a bishop himself. He was greatly loved. He was charitable and accessible, both stern and merciful to sinners, extraordinarily generous to those stricken by famine, and a brilliant legislator of his diocese. He decreed that the sacraments were to be administered without payment, Mass celebrated in dignified conditions, the clergy to be chaste, to practise residence, and to wear clerical dress. The laity was obliged to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days, and to know by heart the Hail Mary as well as the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed.

Richard was also prominent in preaching the Crusade, which he saw as a call to reopen the Holy Land to pilgrims, not as a political expedition. He died at Dover on 3rd April 1253. In art, Richard of Chichester is represented with a chalice at his feet, in memory of his having once dropped the chalice at Mass! One ancient English church is dedicated to him.

And, of course, he is author of that famous prayer, now set to popular music, which runs

in full: *“Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ for all the benefits thou hast given me, for all the pains and insults which thou hast borne for me. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly and follow thee more nearly, day by day.”*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lutheran pastor and martyr

Standing up to tyrants, no matter what the cost. That kind of courage has been in the headlines since the war in Ukraine began, as many brave people have defied Putin’s oppression.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer did not have Putin to contend with, but Hitler. Bonhoeffer did not back down either, when the time came.

Bonhoeffer grew up with no thought of ever defying the leader of Germany. Nothing could have been further from his mind or background. Born at Breslau in Silesia (now the Polish city of Wroclaw) in 1906, Bonhoeffer was the son of an academic. In 1912, his father was appointed to be Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology at Berlin university, and so the family moved to Berlin.

Bonhoeffer never even considered going into politics. Instead, he studied theology in Tübingen, Berlin and New York, before returning to Berlin as a lecturer in theology in 1931.

But though Bonhoeffer did not chase political trouble, it soon came to him. For on 30th January 1933 Adolf Hitler, leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, had come to power. His totalitarian approach left no room for anyone in public life to disagree with him. Including anyone in the two major churches - Lutheran and Catholic.

But Bonhoeffer refused to be compliant, and joined the Confessing Church, which had

formed in opposition to the takeover of the Lutheran Church. The Confessing Church also opposed Hitler's attempts to force antisemitism on the church and society.

Bonhoeffer was in America when war broke out in 1939, but he returned to Germany. He said: "I shall have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war, if I do not share the trials of this time with my people."

Back in Germany, he joined the underground anti-Nazi opposition and worked hard to oppose Hitler. In 1943 he was arrested and imprisoned at Tegel prison in Berlin. The involvement of many of his contacts in the July 1944 plot to kill Hitler may well have sealed his fate. He was finally moved on to Flossenbergl concentration camp.

In April 1945, as American troops were approaching the camp, Bonhoeffer was hanged. The last words of this brilliant and courageous 39-year-old opponent of Nazism were: "This is the end - for me, the beginning of life."

Bonhoeffer left a great legacy behind him. His writings, and especially his *Letters and Papers from Prison*, have inspired many trying to make sense of persecution and needless suffering. His 1937 book *The Cost of Discipleship* is described as a modern classic.

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 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 the first Good Friday: Friday 7th April 30 AD or Friday 3rd April, 33 AD with Easter Day falling two days later. Modern scholars continue to think these two Fridays to be 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 22nd March, which last fell in 1818. The latest is 25th April, which last happened in 1943.

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.

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

All in the month of April

250 years ago, on 18th April 1775 that American silversmith and folk hero Paul Revere made his famous midnight ride on horseback from Charleston to Lexington to warn residents that the British were about to attack.

250 years ago, on 23rd April 1775 that J M W Turner, the British artist was born. Known for his landscapes and turbulent marine paintings.

175 years ago, on 16th April 1850 that Madame Marie Tussaud, French artist known for her wax sculptures, died. Founder of Madame Tussaud's wax museum in London.

175 years ago, on 23rd April 1850 that William Wordsworth died. A Romantic poet, he was Poet Laureate from 1843-50.

150 years ago, on 1st April 1875 that Edgar Wallace was born. This British writer, playwright and journalist was best known for creating King Kong.

150 years ago, on 17th April 1875 that the game of snooker was invented by Neville Chamberlain, a British army officer stationed in India.

125 years ago, from 14th April - 12th November, that the 1900 Paris Exposition, a World's Fair, was held. Nearly 50 million people visited Paris that year.

100 years ago, on 10th April 1925 that F Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*, was published.

80 years ago, from 1st April to 22nd June 1945 that the Battle of Okinawa, Japan took place. The largest amphibious assault in the Pacific War, it was an Allied victory.

80 years ago, on 30th April 1945 that Adolf Hitler, Austrian-born German Nazi Party Leader, Chancellor of Germany (1933-45) and dictator (1934-45) committed suicide along with his wife, Eva Braun.

70 years ago, on 5th April 1955 that Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced his retirement because of failing health. He was succeeded by Anthony Eden on 7th April.

70 years ago, on 10th April 1955 that British nightclub hostess Ruth Ellis shot and killed her lover, David Blakely. On 13th July she was hanged at Holloway Prison, the last woman to be executed in the UK.

70 years ago, on 18th April 1955, that Albert Einstein, German-born American theoretical physicist, died. Considered the most influential physicist of the 20th century. Known for developing the special and general theories of relativity.

65 years ago, on 1st April 1960 that Dr Martens boots went on sale in the UK.

50 years ago, on 4th April 1975 that Microsoft, the computer software/hardware company, was founded by Bill Gates and Paul Allen in Albuquerque New Mexico.

50 years ago, on 23rd April 1975 that US President Gerald Ford gave a televised speech in which he announced that the USA's involvement in the Vietnam war was over, and all US aid to South Vietnam had ended. The war itself ended on 30th April, when North Vietnamese forces captured the South Vietnamese capital Saigon.

40 years ago, on 21st April 1985 that Brazilian racing driver Ayrton Senna won the Portuguese Grand Prix. It was the first of his 41 Formula One wins.

40 years ago, on 23rd April 1985 that the Coca-Cola Company changed the formula of Coca-Cola and launched it on the market as New Coke. The public were out-raged, and the original formula was restored within three months.

30 years ago, on 4th April 1995 that Kenny Everett, DJ, comedian and TV entertainer, died. Known for his zany humour, characters and sketches.

30 years ago, on 19th April 1995 that the Oklahoma City bombing took place. A truck bomb exploded outside the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building, killing 168 people and injuring 500 more. Timothy McVeigh was convicted of the bombing and executed in June 2001.

25 years ago, on 12th April 2000 that Queen Elizabeth II awarded the Royal Ulster Constabulary the George Cross in recognition of its collective and sustained bravery during the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

25 years ago, on 22nd April 2000 that the 'The Big Number' change took place on the UK's telephone system. Many area codes were updated or replaced, and new ones created for mobile, freephone, local rate, national rate, and premium rate services.

20 years ago, on 2nd April 2005 that Pope John Paul II died. Succeeded by Pope Benedict XVI on 19th April.

20 years ago, on 9th April 2005 that Charles, Prince of Wales, married Camilla Parker Bowles, who gained the title the Duchess of Cornwall.

10 years ago, on 2nd April 2015 that the Gorkha earthquake took place in Nepal. Nearly 9,000 people were killed, 22,000 injured, and 3.5 million made homeless.

The following article, written by Tim Lenton, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

Remembering Albert Einstein

Seventy years ago this month, on 18th April 1955, Albert Einstein, the German-born theoretical physicist, died. Considered the most influential physicist of the 20th century, he is known especially for developing the special and general theories of relativity.

He formulated possibly the best-known theory in the world – the special theory of relativity (including the iconic equation $E =$

mc^2) – in 1905 while working as a technical expert, third class, at the Swiss Patent Office in Bern. He went on to become widely known and admired as a physicist of genius. He died in his local hospital in New Jersey of a haemorrhage, having become an American citizen. He was also a Swiss citizen.

Einstein's family were secular Ashkenazi Jews. He was never convinced that God intervened on a personal level, regarding such an idea as naïve. But he had a firm belief in God as creator and sustainer of the universe.

He had an ongoing and never settled debate with Niels Bohr, the Danish theoretical physicist, about the way the

universe was described by quantum mechanics, holding that chance could not be behind it because “God does not play dice”.

Einstein was clear that he was not an atheist – more a “religious nonbeliever”. He was disappointed in the end by his failure to prove non-randomness and to come up with a unified field theory by including electromagnetism in his geometric theory of gravitation. He did receive the 1921 Nobel Prize in Physics for his theory of the photoelectric effect.

Not long before he died, he wrote in a letter to physicist David Bohm: “If God created the world, His primary concern was certainly not to make its understanding easy for us.”

Albert Einstein was married twice and had three children by his first wife, Mileva Marić. He also played violin – hence the subtle reference to him “playing electric violin” in Bob Dylan’s *Desolation Row*.

The following article, written by Canon Paul Hardingham, and has been extracted from Parish Pump, and considers the effect of Easter, and is entitled:

The Real Easter

In CS Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the lion Aslan is put to death by the White Witch. The stone table on which He is killed cracks in two, but Aslan meets with Lucy and Susan alive again. He explains the Witch’s failure:

‘her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, she would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a

traitor’s stead, the Table would crack, and Death itself would start working backwards.’

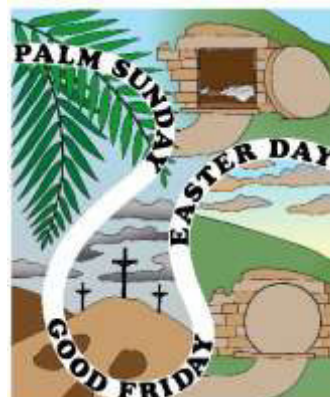
This is a great picture of what Jesus’ cross and His resurrection has achieved. As Paul writes, *‘I want to know Christ, to know the power of His resurrection’* (Philippians 3:10). To understand the real Easter, we should experience the same power that raised Jesus from the dead!

New Hope: Like the girls in the story, Easter highlights the sadness and confusion that loss brings. Yet the resurrection of Jesus brings new hope, as it demonstrates the victory secured by the cross over sin, Satan and death. We can face life’s difficulties knowing that Jesus walks beside us.

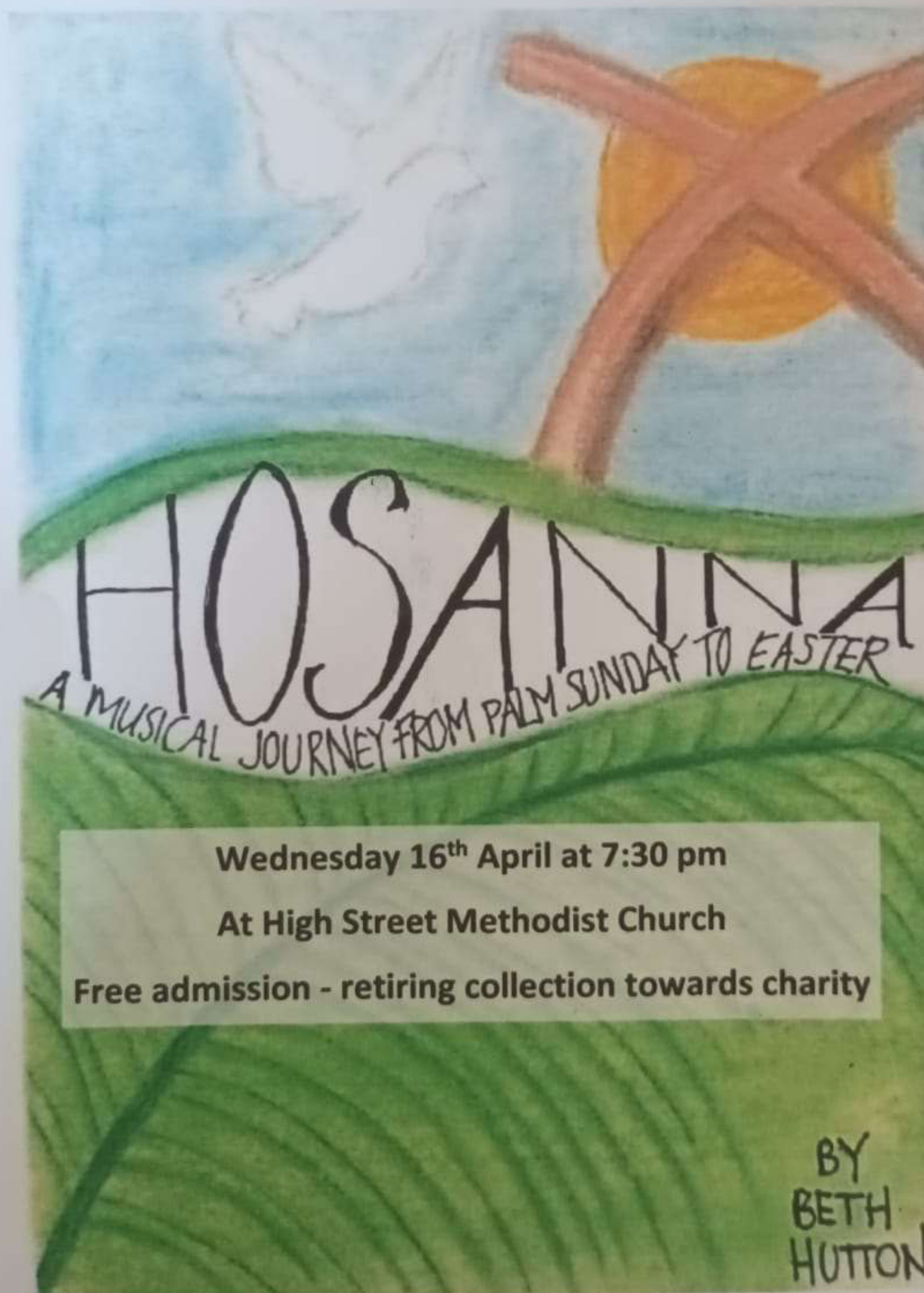
New Love: Our relationships are often characterised by a lack of forgiveness, hurt and betrayal. Yet Jesus’ resurrection opens the possibility of new love, as His power enables us to accept others and forgive them.

New Life: When we are trying to make sense of life, like the girls in the story, Jesus offers us a living relationship with Himself. It’s a friendship with God through Jesus that can begin today and continue for eternity.

When Lucy met Aslan again, she cried: *‘Oh, you’re real, you’re real!’* We too can find the real Easter through a life changing encounter with the living Christ.



WITNEY INTER-CHURCH SINGERS
present



Wednesday 16th April at 7:30 pm

At High Street Methodist Church

Free admission - retiring collection towards charity

BY
BETH
HUTTON