

St Mary's Church, Bromley

Parish Magazine

September/October 2021

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What, no magazine?

If you think this issue is late coming out, then apologies -and the explanation. The previous issue, which came out at the end of June, gave the copy date as 10th August. The first contribution arrived on 16th August, and items (for which I am very grateful) continued to arrive up until the 24th. Everything then needs proof-reading, & putting into the correct format (clever Elaine) before it can be photocopied and added to the website. And that takes time, fitted around the other commitments (and holidays) of those carrying out the exercise.

You may also have noticed that this issue is called September/October, and there is a reason for that, too. This is Elaine's last issue, so there currently is no editor for October. Might helping with the production of the magazine be something you would enjoy? Do you think it should be continued or discontinued? Have a different approach or format? Do you value it enough to offer your practical support? Please let the vicar or me know.

Meanwhile, this issue is as varied as ever, with plenty of illustrations, as, after all, "What use is a book...without pictures or conversations?"

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Editor for November: To be confirmed

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Please support the editors by giving articles and notices to them by the copy date.



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CHURCH OPENING TIMES

Monday	Grace Café/Drop-in Via Zoom
Wednesday	Cancelled due to Coronavirus outbreak
Thursday	Cancelled due to Coronavirus outbreak

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Disclaimer

The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various participants in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editors.

Vicar's Article

LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDoured THING



We all like a good story. I particularly enjoy feature films. They are ways to express life in all its fullness and to explore other people's experiences. However, stories will be selective and concentrate on what is exceptional and entertaining. This does mean stories can also obscure the truth of life. Our lives demand labour from us. This may be paid employment, housework or rearing children. But how many stories portray the labour of life? In fact, quite often characters in stories seem to have no real means of financial support. To realistically portray people's working lives would probably be rather dull. In fact, that may be why people are looking at the stories - they are seeking to escape from the drudgery of their lives.

One of the big projects that the Church of England is engaged in at the moment is called Living in Love and Faith. Our society now has a wide range of sexual expressions. These are often given a shorthand designation of a string of letters such as LGBTI+. These refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual and the plus means there are other practices too. The Church of England has long valued its ministry of heterosexual marriage and either quietly ignored other expressions or in some cases actively disagreed with them. Living in Love and Faith recognises that now has many alternative lifestyles demanding respect. It is a time for the church to do some serious reflection and work out how it will minister in the future.

I began this article with how labour is not portrayed in our stories. When it comes to sex it is almost as if there is an over portrayal of sexual practice. My opinion has always been that sex is not just about sex. There is an old word which rarely gets used these days to describe having multiple partners and that is promiscuity. The word is not really about quantity it is describing activity that does not have a meaning, or at least an admirable meaning. The media is full of reports about the way that people get sexually abused or women in particular are disrespected if not humiliated. What are the sexual practices that have true value?

The content in our stories about sex are usually about the initial romance which is a wonderful time in our lives. But once a relationship has begun

there is a movement from attraction and excitement to embracing all things with the love that you have found. One of my big questions is what is the difference between sex and love. So often love just becomes a euphemism and a polite way of mentioning sexual activity. But love has far greater treasures, far deeper demands and finally, richer rewards than just romantic recreation.

Love begins with respect and always acknowledging the immense value of who we are with (Genesis 1.27). The conduct of the relationship is always with kindness, courtesy, honesty and determination (1 Corinthians 13.4-7). There will be great joy and to ensure there are circumstances to celebrate and express devotion which at times are sexual (Song of Solomon 2.3,4). The relationship with a person includes their family and friends and this is extended as children are welcomed into the relationship through birth or from previous relationships. (Luke 10.27-29). All of these things are enabled with practical action, generosity and selfless service (Genesis 29.20).

I have tried to give a rounded description of love with a few passages from the Bible. Love is not only about a sexual relationship or is limited to people of the opposite sex. In addition, each of the elements I mention may not be present in every intimate relationship.

There are many issues in coming to terms with people who are LGBTI+. I think the way to start is with the nature of love and then move on to the variety of ways it is expressed. This is an alternative with starting with sex and seeking to answer its questions in isolation from the fullness of life.

The heart of our faith is in worshipping and living with the God of love. It looks like love is found in many places that in the past were not respected. There is wrong and hurtful sex but this is a failure to love. Where love is present, we have an opportunity to recognise and celebrate what is taking place.

Best wishes



Alan Keeler

The Vicar's Day off is Friday

Revd Alison Tyler

ON PENITENCE.



I always used to think that penitence was a very gloomy business, focusing on just how bad I was and feeling overwhelmed by the uphill struggle to seek perfection, even though we all know we should not expect to attain perfection in this this life. I always knew somehow that I would not win the struggle.

Dealing with life in the pandemic has been very stretching, lots of new things to do and think about, and one thing I was asked to do was to look at penitence and reconciliation, and to produce a piece of liturgy; it has been eye-opening and transformative. I have been reminded of things I should have realised that I knew already. Not only are we 'ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven' as the hymn tells us, but we are welcomed by God to become a part of the solutions and the answers to our prayers for the future. The Greek Orthodox Church teaches that "The Greek term for repentance, *metanoia*, denotes a change of mind, a reorientation, a fundamental transformation of outlook, of someone's vision of the world and of themselves, and a new way of loving others and loving God".

So repentance in the Greek, *metanoia*, doesn't mean grovelling on the ground and thinking or feeling 'what a guilty worm I am'. It means, literally, "a change of mind and heart", so that as a result I come to see everything differently. But at the same time – for the word has a double sense – it means "returning" or coming home to God, not in the same way that we shall return to God at the end of our earthly lives, but resuming our active place in the body of Christ here on earth. It is not gloomy. but joyful; what is not to like about returning home to God, with all the elements of joy and welcome, and return of the lost that this involves?

Repentance is both adventuring out into something totally new and coming back home to something profoundly old. Once I started thinking about *metanoia*, I was well on the way to a consideration of joyful penitence, because of the call to look forward and to work and plan for change.

Meanwhile, I receive a daily email meditation from the American Catholic Franciscan thinker Richard Rohr, and for a few days in September 2020 his

daily emails covered Restorative Justice, which I had experienced as a Prison Chaplain, but then it moved on to Restorative Living. and my whole viewpoint shifted. If Restorative Justice is about making reparation and repair in the lives of those involved in the criminal justice system, then Restorative Living can well be about restoration and repair in our societies and our world in the light of the climate emergency, as well as living in such a way as to prevent future possible harm and damage in our daily lives.

It is clearly a call to look at what is in plain sight and crying out for repair, and to take care for the future. The whole of God's Creation is exploited, and so degraded by human over-use and lack of care, that it is now in crisis needing urgent restoration and repair. Our human societies likewise need attention, dealing with the needs of all those forgotten, voiceless women, children and men in our conflict-ridden world, oppressed and persecuted, sometimes in prison, often broken by neglect, abuse and exploitation, not to mention becoming collateral damage in other people's wars.

Suddenly, repentance and forgiveness have brought the possibility of great joy with them. Repentance is the act of admitting wrong-doing and saying sorry. It involves someone understanding how their actions have caused pain and suffering to another person. It is a form of living mindfully and carefully. It means that we can be truthful and open about our wrongdoing, as well as actively, creatively and verbally sorry; then we can be forgiven. Metanoia means we can do things differently; we do not have to carry on in the same old way – what joy! Our penance can be a positive and joyful engagement in repair and restoration, of both God's Creation and of one another.

Forgiveness is the act of pardoning an offender. In the Bible, the Greek word for forgiveness literally translated means 'to let go', as when a person does not demand payment for a debt. So, our sins have been let go, and are no longer held against us because we have been redeemed and set free. In Christ everything has changed; nothing will ever be the same again and all things are possible. Small wonder, then, that we can be both heartily sorry and ashamed of our sins, mistakes and failures and yet be joyous, forward-looking, forgiven penitents at the same time.

Alison Tyler

Living in Love and Faith



As mentioned in Alan's article earlier in the magazine the Church of England has a project to explore its approach to LGBTI+ issues. You are welcome to look at the materials yourself.

It is suggested that you visit <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>

This is the home page for the LLF website. There is an introductory video of 2 min 20 sec.

There is The Living in Love and Faith book. This can be downloaded from: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith/living-love-and-faith-book>

This contains a great deal of material but at 482 pages this is quite a read. However, the download is free and if you wanted to read it all or browse a few key subjects you may find it interesting.

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What's on in St Mary's Churchyard

During the current Covid crisis we have been using the Churchyard more than ever. Beside the Garden Church on term-time Sundays, we have had gardening parties, a Nature Count, the annual Choir Lunch and a Study group social evening.

God's Acre

Before we started doing anything outside, Alan wanted to know how big the Church grounds are. Is the church in God's Acre? We also wanted to check whether the church garden is really suitable for holding events. How many hazards are there, where are the gravestones, how much flat lawn is there and so on.

So, Alison and I went armed with a lovely hand drawn plan of the churchyard from Maria to check the lie of the land. We carefully paced out the churchyard from the street to the back fence and then from side to side and came to the conclusion that it is a lovely garden, definitely a resource to be utilised and about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre.

The first thing that is needed is to ensure that the garden is being maintained. The council mows the lawns and does some tree trimming, but the rest is up to us. So, Alan has set up gardening parties. We had four of them in the late spring and early summer all of which were well attended. We appeared at the designated time and were all given tasks to do. I cleared a few graves in the front of the church, while others moved the pile of wood and branches that had grown in the back garden, brambles were decimated; small trees and saplings were uprooted.

By the time we had finished the evening sessions it was dark, so we were ready for the refreshments provided. We were rewarded with a beer (or soft drink of your choice) and food in the shelter of the porch.

The gardening parties are going to continue, probably monthly.

Garden Church

Since the Church has opened there has been Garden Church for the children. Families with children bring blankets to sit on and leave the service after the Collect and before the sermon, for songs, a Bible story, games and prayers before returning into the church for the rest of the service. So far, they have been blessed with good weather, but the Warwick Hall is booked, just in case.

Nature Count



St Mary's is investigating how to become more eco-friendly. One thing that we needed to do is to find out where we are now, so we thought that we should take part in the nationwide churchyard nature count. This started out with the idea that a few eco-warriors should go round with a clipboard noting the different types of plants and any insects, but it grew. Gazebos were offered in case of rain.

Wrapped refreshments and drinks were to be available. Bunting was to be hung and various activities were devised – stone painting, a photo competition and so on.

In the end, after a damp start, the sky cleared just as we started to get the bunting up and it stayed fine for the whole afternoon. Photos were taken, plants were listed, especially by an ex-biology teacher who made a meticulous and long list of everything that she found and a good time was had by all. But the main attraction turned out to be unplanned – the Marble Race. A course with obstacles was created going down the slope into the side garden and the race was on.

The photo contest was judged later after the Sunday service in Church and won by Jan, but I have no idea who won the marble race



Choir Lunch

The choir has restarted. Initially with only six at a time, but now we can have a few more, so long as they are well spaced out. We met after one of the Sunday services in the garden for a bring-your-own lunch. We brought our own food, drink and chairs and gathered in the back garden for a good chat.

Study Group Social



The study group has been meeting weekly by Zoom for most of the year. We have taken a break for summer, so now that the weather is better, we thought that it would be good to meet in person. So, we arranged to meet on the Wednesday evening in the middle of August.

We were lucky. The weather was fine and it stayed warm(ish) all evening. We all gathered in a circle, got out the bubbly and settled in for the evening. There were lamps; we had fried cauliflower and Vicky Andrews had given us plenty of chocolate coated peanuts. Not a balanced diet, but nice. Now we have agreed what to do next and have gone away with the dates for the autumn.

Winter is Coming

The summer in the garden has been lovely, but winter is coming. We will have to start planning the next set of events. A little more challenging, but there is Halloween, with pumpkin carving, and other winter events, so we must start to think about what next for our Churchyard.



Churchyard Gardening

The work parties that were held in June and July made a wonderful difference to the look of the church grounds. About sixty hours were put in which were enjoyable to take part in and with a lovely sense of fellowship with refreshments that the end of each session.

You are welcome to join us for two further events on 18 September and 16 October

between 10 a.m. and noon with refreshments to conclude. Please bring useful tools and gardening gloves.

Alan Keeler

Miscellaneous musings on daily life...

*The most effective way to remember your wife's birthday
is to forget it once...*

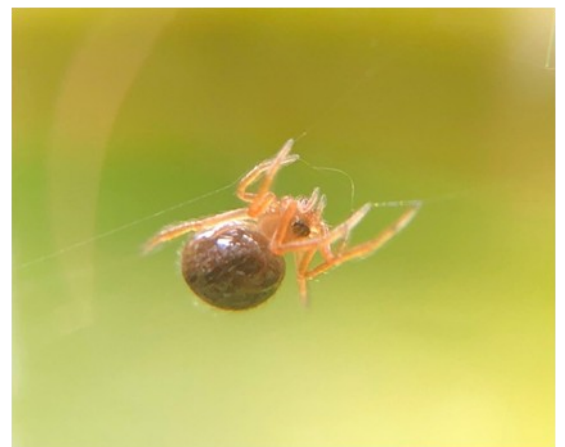
*Kind: someone who could tell you all about his operation –
but doesn't.*

Spotted in the Churchyard

The residents of College Road must have been impressed by all the activity in the churchyard this summer - "Working parties" have been keeping the brambles & ivy under control; the Uniformed groups have been out enjoying their activities; the Choir had a picnic lunch; children have enjoyed "Garden Church", and on Saturday 3rd July the bunting was out for a Churchyard Nature Hunt.

On offer was a plant/wildlife identification area; a craft table; refreshments – and a very popular marble run. Visitors were invited to take wildlife photographs and then submit them into a competition, to be judged by the congregation on 25th July. For those who did not see all the pictures then, here they are:





Left – runner up – Maria Staines

Right – the winner - Jan Staines



The Parable of the Sussex Farmer:

A farmer plants his fields with seed. He varies his crops and takes regular advice from the agronomist – it is a scientific business. But he remains totally dependent upon the weather, upon which he has absolutely no control. A wet spell at the wrong moment is disaster – but so is a drought. In fulness of time, the farmer reaps his reward, sometimes small, sometimes greater.

We all know the parable of the Sower. We think we understand the meaning – until we try to explain it simply to someone else! Last year I heard a sermon saying that at different times we may identify with different seeds, and not to panic when we encounter a time of doubt, as this is healthy and will pass. But what might a walk through the fields say to us now?



Left to their own devices, even the footpaths become overgrown very quickly. How long does it take for the signs of faith in our own lives to fade if we don't attend to them?

We tend to discount the weeds as unwanted and unappealing. But might they include the tempting ideas and lifestyles which are actually more attractive than the crops intended?



The crop grew well, but even as it ripened, conditions meant that it couldn't easily be harvested.



Our Christian journey is ongoing ... some aspects of our lives are more fruitful than others.

Some of the crop bore good fruit – even if perhaps not in a “showy” way. Do we fail to notice the best parts of our lives, or the most fruitful members of our Church community?



Jill Atkinson – and Sussex farmland, July 2020

A view from the pew



In the course of a recent sermon, the vicar mentioned that he and Gill tackle crosswords together. This is also something that Mary and I have begun during bouts of enforced inactivity. Either over a morning cup of coffee or an afternoon cup of tea, we settle in for 20 to 30 minutes of crossword solving. Alan did not clarify whether the crossword was “Quick” or “Cryptic”, though he did reference “The Guardian” as the daily source.. For us, it is always “Quick”. Mary has a series of books containing simple crosswords, and, more importantly, all the answers at the back of each book.



The clues are mostly one-word, and the answer is usually a synonym or alternative meaning of that word. On first inspection, a small number of clues seem to answer themselves. Mary takes control of the book and write in the answers. We then begin to have one or two letters in place for words that are not immediately obvious. It narrows down the options – in some cases this is sufficient to

enable another word or two to be entered.

However, as in distance running, we then hit the “brick wall”. We have racked our brains, made suggestions – and failed to fill the remaining gaps with viable letters. Time to turn to other means “Granny, that’s cheating,” says our grandson, as we dial up Google.

“No”, she replies. “It’s using our resources!” Google, Crossword Finisher, dictionary, computer, Encyclopaedia, smart-speaker, mobile phone, “The Complete Works of Shakespeare”; these are all resources that we have the good fortune to possess – so why not use them? In the final event, there are always the answers at the back of the book - though for some odd reason we generally

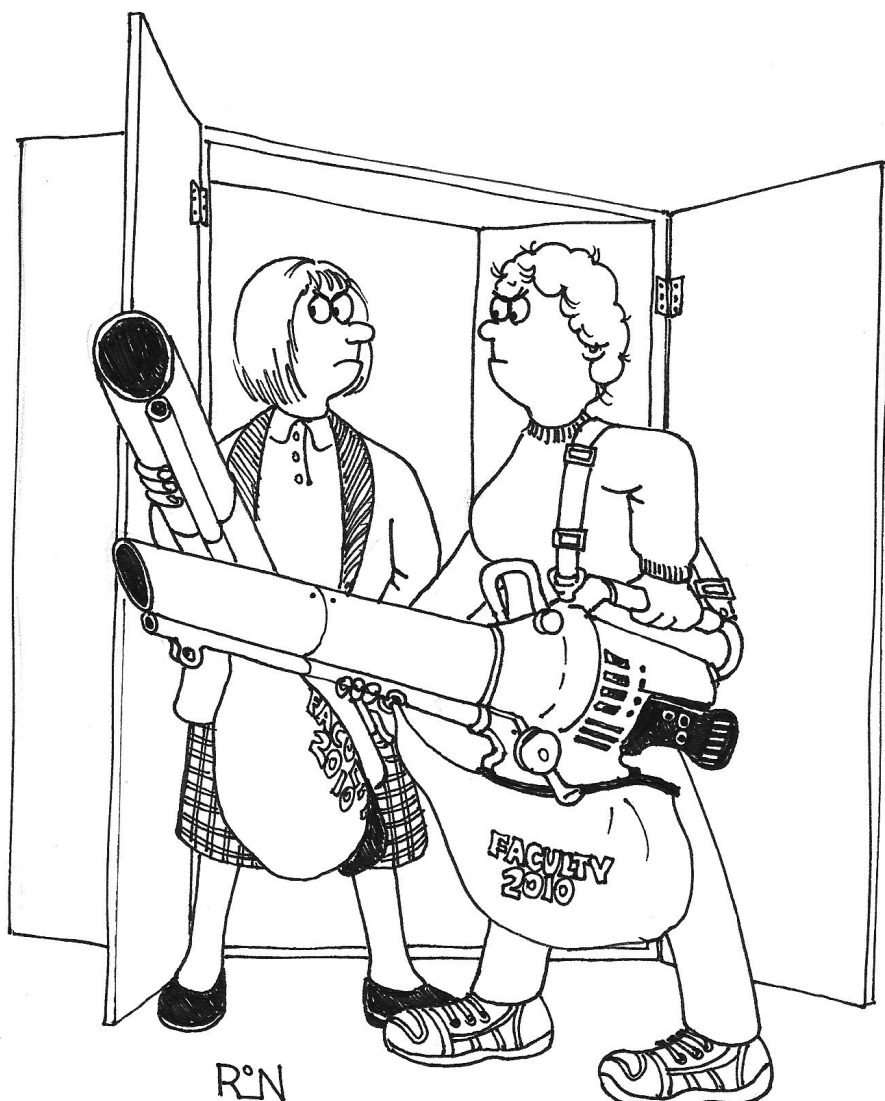


prefer to complete the puzzle without reference to these. Eventually we do read through these answers to the clues, just to check that we got them right – and also to get that warm glow that a red star or 20 /20 written on your work engenders.

But our grandson still thinks we cheat!

We consider that we are savvy and use what we have been given in order to solve the clues. But he may be right. The young seem to have a higher moral standard than we oldies. Long may this be so. It means the future is full of promise.

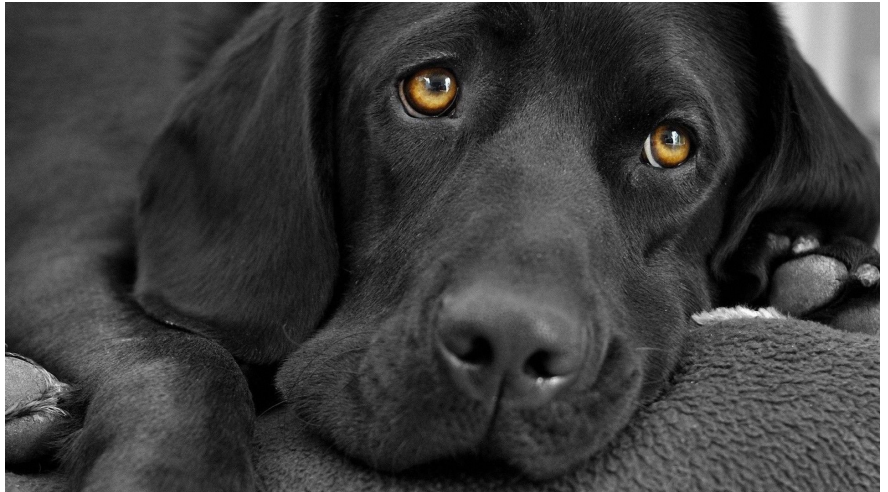
Peter Fall



*Shifting the cobwebs in the North aisle
required a faculty*

How much is that doggie in the rescue centre?

There are going to be a lot of homeless young dogs this autumn. That is because almost one in five people who bought a lockdown puppy last year are now thinking about giving up their new pet.



Research from The Kennel

Club found that many owners are worried that they will be unable to give their dog a suitable home when they return to full-time work in the office. The result is a “looming welfare crisis faced by this pandemic pup generation.”

The Kennel Club also found that many new dog owners want to see more places open up for dogs. Accessibility is becoming an increasing priority for dog lovers, and so the Kennel Club is calling on establishments from all sectors to become more dog friendly. The campaign ‘Open for Dogs’ is stressing the benefits of welcoming canines to businesses and workplaces.

Paul Tomlin.

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CHOIR AND MUSIC AT ST MARY'S

Earlier in the year, the choir had decided to continue singing in church during the month of August. Slightly unexpectedly, in July the PCC decided not to allow congregational singing following "Freedom Day", and to keep restrictions in place for the time being. So there has continued to be singing at services in August. Nonetheless, choir numbers have stayed low to ensure that infection could not be spread through singing too closely together. The current limit is eight singers. with a choir gradually expanding its ambition and its numbers.



Restriction to six singers in May did not dim their enthusiasm. On occasions reduced to a handful of singers, they have always been ready to lead the worship, and appear on livestreams, video recordings

and in person each week.

The absence of a "pinged" organist in July led to a cello being used as the lead instrument. This was beautifully played by Mary Fall, particularly in her voluntary – a Gigue in the style of Bach, eliciting a round of applause at the end of the service.

We are looking forward to widening our ambition, with the possibility of St Mary's Festival Choir being reconvened for a concert in November. Nothing is certain, but we hope our confidence is not misplaced.

The Bromley Boy Singers began rehearsing again in St Mary's earlier in the year, and delivered a stunning concert in July to a small enthusiastic audience of close relatives. The concert was live-streamed under their charismatic conductor, Travis Baker. It displayed their choreographic skill as well as their vocal flexibility and showed off the boys' movement as well as their well-trained voices.

Peter Fall

Bifocals

A preacher went into the pulpit one Sunday morning wearing a pair of new bifocals. The reading portion of the glasses improved his vision considerably, but the top portion of the glasses didn't work so well. In fact, he was experiencing dizziness every time he looked through them. Finally, he apologised to the congregation.

"I hope you will excuse my continually removing my glasses," he said. "You see, when I look down, I can see fine, but when I look at you, it makes me feel sick."

Postcard from Eastbourne



We were down in Eastbourne at the weekend and visited where the Cuckmere meets the sea.

Lovely sunshine, white cliffs in the setting sun.

These pictures were taken within minutes of each other. One looking towards the sunset, the other away from it. No tricks, but what a difference.

Trine Hevezi

If you go down to the shops today....



...maybe you have kept up with local developments, so it is no surprise to see that the Zed Pods planned for the carpark behind the Burnt Ash Lane parade of shops are nearing completion – but I must admit that I hadn't realised that the carpark closed (temporarily) in March, and that work is due to be finished in September.

I imagine that local people still have strong views about this development, but I am surprised the total - albeit temporary - closure of the carpark hasn't had a more noticeable impact upon residential parking. Perhaps that is because the local traders have been unable to operate normally for many months anyway.



The project to provide 25 affordable homes has been nominated for no less than three awards – Architect of the Year, Best use of Steel Technology; and Social Housing Project of the year. The winners will be announced on 21st September.

What do you think?

Question time?

I often found that young children asked fascinating questions about God, and that their views were very thought-provoking. So, I was interested to receive an email from the Bible Reading Fellowship advertising their “Parenting for Faith” materials, and offering a free download: which is also available to you: <https://parentingforfaith.org/post/101-questions>

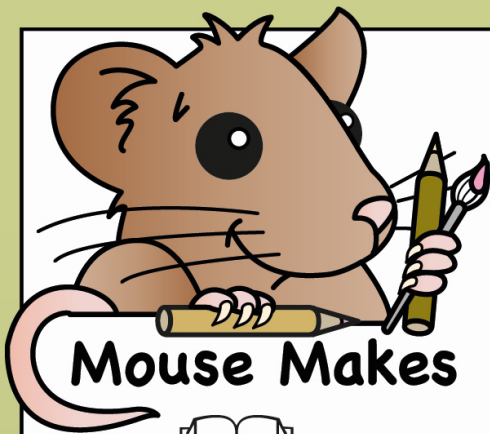
The hope is that the 101 questions might “start some great conversations about God, the Bible, the universe and just about everything else!” They seem to me to offer some good discussion points for everyone, & not just families with children. I’m not going to copy out all 101, but here are a few to get you started.

Have you ever wondered?

- In the story of Daniel and the lions' den, did Daniel expect to die or did he expect God to save him?
- If you had to be trapped in a car on a road trip with anyone in the Bible, who would it be?
- What hymn / worship song do you NOT like and why?
- Could Jesus have been dyslexic?
- Do you think it would have been fun to be Jesus’s brother or sister growing up?
- What story in the Bible would you definitely not want to be a part of?
- If you could add one person from the Bible to your household, who would you pick and why?
- On the seventh day of creation God rested. What do you think he did?

There are no “correct” answers, and they might not fit on a postcard!

Jill Atkinson



Mouse Makes



The bowl of flour and the jar of oil

It had not rained for months and months, there was a drought in the land. God sent His prophet **Elijah** to the town of Zarephath. At the town gate he saw a widow gathering firewood.

"Please bring me a drink of water and some bread." he asked her. ...



She answered "All I have is a handful of flour and a drop of oil in a jar, it is our last meal."

"Do not worry." Elijah said, "Make the meal and make a small loaf for me."

The woman did what Elijah had asked and God blessed her ...

... The bowl never ran out of flour and the jar never ran out of oil until it rained again!



Find these words from the story in the word search:

- WORD • LORD • GOD • ELIJAH • SENT • ZAREPHATH • GATE • CITY • WIDOW
 STICKS • WATER • DRINK • BREAD • FEED • HANDFUL • FLOUR • LITTLE
 OIL • SON • EAT • DIE • FULL • WENT • MAKE • BAKED • ATE • JAR • JUG • MANY
 DAYS • LIVE • NEVER • EMPTY

Worship Diary

We are delighted to have resumed public worship in St. Mary's church. We continue to have the hygiene practices put in place July last year. These include wearing masks, using gel, having a one-way system and recording attendance for Track and Trace purposes. We are pleased to welcome people to our services at the stage they feel comfortable.

In July of this year the government gave new freedoms with regard to Covid precautions. The PCC will be reviewing our current practice and the Newsletter and website will report any changes made to our practices.

Our services will continued to be live streamed and can be viewed on our Facebook page unless otherwise stated:

<https://www.facebook.com/stmarysbromley/>

The words of the service can be found on our website:

<https://www.stmarys-bromley.org.uk/lockdown/st-marys-worship/>

Our Sunday Clubs will recommence in September after their break in August with a break at the Autumn half term. This takes place during our Sunday morning service. Please join the congregation in the church building. Sunday Clubs then go to their session after the opening worship and return at The Peace.

We will be observing the Season of Creation which runs from 1st September to 4th October. This will be an opportunity to reflect on many wonderful aspects of the world in which we live and the challenges of the climate crisis. The services of worship for will be as follows:

September

Sunday 5th – 14th Sunday after Trinity, Climate Sunday

10.30am Family Communion with Sunday Clubs Garden Church

Sunday 12th – 15th Sunday after Trinity

10.30am Family Service – A voyage of prayer

Sunday 19th – 16th Sunday after Trinity, God saw what he had made and it was good

10.30am Family Communion with Sunday Clubs Garden Church

Sunday 26th – 17th Sunday after Trinity, We are stewards of creation

10.30am Family Communion with Sunday Clubs Garden Church

October

Sunday 3rd – 18th Sunday after Trinity, Caring for our climate
10.30am Family Communion with Sunday Clubs Garden Church

Sunday 10th – 19th Sunday after Trinity
10.30am Family Service, Harvest Festival

Sunday 17th – 20th Sunday after Trinity, Safeguarding Sunday
10.30am Family Communion (no Sunday Clubs Garden Church)

Sunday 24th – 21st Sunday after Trinity
10.30am Family Communion with Sunday Clubs Garden Church

Sunday 31st – 22nd Sunday after Trinity
10.30am Family Communion with Sunday Clubs Garden Church

We also have a quiet service of Compline at 8.00 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday on our Facebook page.



Night Sanctification

Father, bless me and my body keep,
Father, bless me in my soul;
Father, bless me through this night of sleep,
In my body and my soul.

Father, bless me as I live my days,
Father, bless me in my creed;
Father, bless me in my binding ways,
To my life and to my creed.

Father, sanctify to me my speech,
Father, sanctify my heart;
Father, sanctify my portion each,
In my speech and in my heart.

From Poems of the Western Highlanders

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