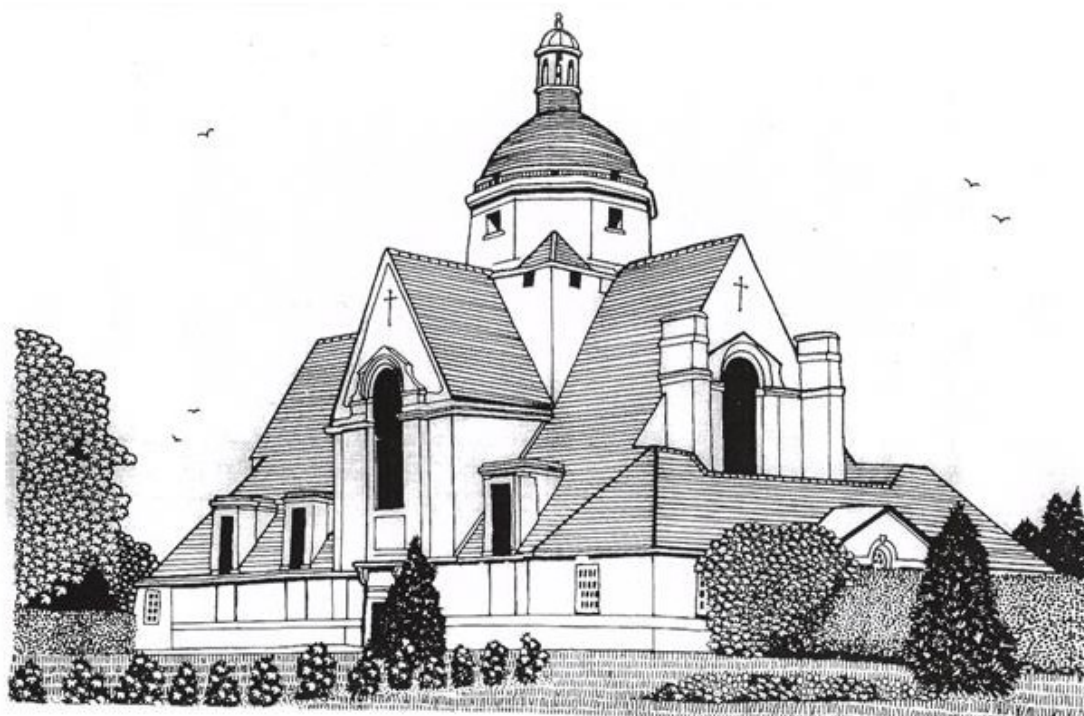


NEWS & VIEWS

***The Free Church
Hampstead Garden Suburb***



MARCH 2024

PLEASE TAKE ONE

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB FREE CHURCH

(United Reformed and Baptist)
Central Square, London, NW11 7AG
www.hgsfreechurch.org.uk

Sunday Services:	<i>11 a.m. (and 6.30 p.m. when announced)</i> <i>Holy Communion is celebrated at Morning</i> <i>Worship on the first Sunday of every month.</i> <i>The Junior Church meets at 11am every</i> <i>Sunday</i>
Minister and Pastoral Emergencies Contact	Minister Revd Aled Jones 020 4531 2055 Minister@hgsfreechurch.org.uk
Correspondence Secretary	Penny Trafford 020 8959 3405 Secretary@hgsfreechurch.org.uk
Pulpit Secretary	Carole Lindfield derekandcarole.lindfield@earlblue.com
Treasurer	Joe Fryer 07814 532049 Treasurer@hgsfreechurch.org.uk
Lettings Officer	Eddie Hayden lettings@hgsfreechurch.org.uk

Safeguarding Statement

Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church believes that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all those who are vulnerable (children, young people and vulnerable adults). We expect all of our leaders, volunteers and those who use our premises to share this commitment and value the support of those who worship here in achieving this.

The Elders (Trustees), Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church
January 2016

NEWS & VIEWS

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB
FREE CHURCH
Central Square,
London NW11 7AG



NO 795

MARCH 2024

Dear Friends

The Manse, March 2024

I had the privilege during February of spending some time with minister colleagues at the conference organised by the London Baptist Association. This was held at the High Leigh centre in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire. Every time I attend such an event, I'm surprised by how the topics under discussion have made me think about the demands of ministry in today's world.

Our focus this time was the subject 'From multi-ethnic to intercultural church.' The Evangelical Alliance's Rev Dr Israel Olofinjana challenged us to reflect on how the nature of Englishness and Britishness is changing in a post-Windrush and post-Brexit era. He presented a thesis that Britain needs a new ecclesiology (understanding of ourselves as church), which is truly intercultural. Dr Eleasah Louis then led us into discussions on how to become anti-racist churches by putting ideas regarding decolonisation into practice.

As ever during Lent, Christians around the world seek not only to abstain from certain foods and activities, but also to spend time reflecting on God's Word and seeking to be agents of change. Our Monday morning study group is working its way through Christian Aid's 'Act on Poverty' programme. This is a series of six sessions designed to make us think about how we can be change agents in our own communities, as well as bringing hope to our neighbours in other countries.

This programme was specifically designed for a general election year in order to empower us to, as the name suggests, act on poverty in significant ways. At the beginning of March each year, Welsh people are often reminded to heed the advice given by St David in his final sermon: 'Do the little things'. I firmly believe that his message applies beyond the borders

of Wales, too! We should all do what we can to help improve the lives of others.

Lent culminates with Holy Week, of course. Jesus is lauded as the bringer of salvation on Sunday morning, but by Friday afternoon hangs condemned to die on the cross. Remarkable, and yet so easy to see happen in a world which is so self-fixated.

Our focus then shifts entirely onto God's remarkable life living giving act of resurrection. From Friday's tears of grief to Sunday's shrieks of joy! Our new life in Jesus is won for us by both the cross and the empty grave, and this Easter we resolve to celebrate this glorious mystery once again.

I trust, and pray, that God will give each one of us his joy and blessing as we sing Hoyle's translation of Edmond Budry's great twentieth century hymn, 'À toi la gloire, O Ressuscité!':

Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb.
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
Let His church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
For the Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting.
*Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
Endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.*

After darkness, light; after death, life: praise be!
Your servant in Christ Jesus,

Aled Jones



Praying for the Needs of our World

The mission of the charity Tearfund is 'to follow Jesus where the need is greatest'. But how do we know where that actually is? Which of the million problems in our world is God asking us to address? And how does God want us to pray about them? Tearfund's research discovered that 65 per cent of us describe the prospect of praying about global poverty 'overwhelming'. And, of the 27 million people in the UK who pray, 71 per cent report doing so for their families, 40 per cent for healing and their friends, but just 24 per cent pray about global issues of poverty, injustice and environmental crisis.

As part of my daily Bible Reading and Prayer I find the Tearfund Prayer Diary helps me to look outwards and pray for global issues. In the February Prayer Diary Pete Greig, founder of the 24-7 Prayer movement and a Tearfund ambassador, offered his thoughts on how to make prayer for global issues less overwhelming. Greig suggests we should spend more time listening and less time speaking. He suggests three practical pointers, drawn from his book *How to Hear God*, to help us grow in our ability to discern the voice of God:

1. God's Word in the Bible

God speaks first and foremost through the Bible, so we must begin our search for his voice within its pages. When debate about immigration was filling headlines in both America and the UK recently, Greig posted Leviticus 19:34 on social media: 'The foreigners residing among you must be treated as native-born. Love them as yourself.' Greig was surprised at the outrage this verse provoked amongst Christians. Greig noted that Ron Sider reminded us that 'God's Word teaches a very hard, disturbing truth. Those who neglect the poor and the oppressed are really not God's people at all—no matter how frequently they practise their religious rituals.' Greig says we must begin by listening to God's word about injustice in scripture with a willingness to be challenged.

2. God's whisper in silence

When praying for justice, Greig tries to begin by sitting quietly, wordlessly holding the situation before the Lord. In these moments of stillness Greig may sigh deeply, allowing the situation to affect his heart in an expression of lament. He says he is learning to listen for the 'still, small

voice' of God in the quietness. (1 Kings 19:12) As he sat in silence recently feeling overwhelmed by news of world conflicts, he was reminded of Jeremiah 31:15: 'Rachel is weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.' The despair we feel about the deaths of children in Gaza, Israel and Ukraine are found in that Bible verse.

3. God's Word for us in the wider culture

Greig also tries to keep his eyes and ears open to anything God may be saying through the world He's made. The theologian Karl Barth argued that we need 'the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.' And Jesus urged us to read 'the signs of the times.' (Matthew 16:3). Ultimately, Greig believes we hear God's word for those on the margins from those on the margins. Tearfund does a good job recounting such stories of hope from around the world, but we do not have to travel far to find the voices of those who are disregarded, despised or oppressed. And in learning to listen carefully and prayerfully to their lives, God himself speaks to us.

To summarise Greig suggests the following:

Start by spending time in God's Word. Let Him speak to you through the scriptures.

Take some time in stillness, holding the situation before God. Let Him speak to you in the quiet.

Look around you at what is happening in the world. Let God speak to you through the things around you. Lift them up to Him in prayer.

Jenny Stonhold



O, Jesus I have promised.....

Do you often find yourself, as I do, humming a tune and irritatingly are never able to remember the first line. Or equally, listening to the recording of a service and missing the first line? We have such a large collection of wonderful hymns and choruses, music as well as words, which always uplift us. I always remember the chorus writer Graham Kendrick, when teaching us one of his new compositions, saying 'why should the devil have all the best tunes?' Some words can have such a profound effect that one would have to be made of stone not to be moved by the sentiment. Singing and music can also have a profound effect – if I were to hear Widor's Toccata and Fugue, or Elgar's Nimrod, I get sent somewhere, not sure where, but to some deep corner of my being. Stupid you might think but the music has such an uplifting effect on the spirit, that it is like looking at a magnificent sunset.

Then it's the words too, one of my favourites being 'O Jesus, I have promised' by J.E. Bode. I need that declaration of faith regularly to remind me of that steadfast fact and, even more so, that Jesus is 'my master and my friend'. Here is someone who understands me even more than I know myself. Sometimes life can become so full of un-answered questions and challenges that I find myself understanding what St Paul meant when he said that 'I don't want to do that which I do, and that which I want to do – I don't do'. Then I remember Jesus is my master and my friend and that He'll understand. The third verse is even more re-assuring:

Oh, speak to reassure me,
To hasten, or control;
Oh, speak, and make me listen,
Thou Guardian of my soul.

Hymns become even more personal when I listen to Bernadette Farrell's 'O God, You search me and You know me - nothing is hidden from Your gaze' based on Psalm 139. The hymn continues:

All my thoughts lie open to your gaze,
When I walk or lie down you are before me:
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
You have known its meaning through and through,
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future too.

For a God who knows me 'inside out' so to speak, yet still loves me, what an amazing love! So I'll still keep on singing of His wonderful love, out of tune though I often am!

Rosemary Birch

J.S. Bach St John Passion

Sunday 24th March 2024 5:30 pm

St John the Baptist Church, High Barnet

*By kind permission of the Vicar & Church Wardens
Junction of High Street and Wood Street, EN5 4BW*

Tickets: £30 (with Interval drink)
£20, £10 and £5



Please use the link below or use the QR code.

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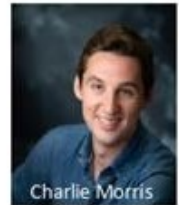
Miku Yasukawa *soprano* Christopher Mitchell *alto*

Thomas Kelly *tenor* James Geidt *bass*

Charlie Morris *Pilate* Augustus Perkins-Ray *Jesus*

with professional orchestra

Jonathan Gregory conductor



- Doors will open at 5 pm on 24th March.
- Under school age children are not admitted.
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Bible Study: “Woman, why are you weeping?”

Jesus’s Resurrection in John 20, verses 1–18

One of the resources I use as I prepare to lead Sunday worship is a book called *The Worship Sourcebook* published by Faith Alive Christian Resources in 2004. It contains an extensive selection of material for each section of a Christian service, including a large numbers of prayers for illumination. These are prayers to be used as God’s Word is read and proclaimed.

This is one example: “God our helper, show us your holy ways and teach us your paths. By the Holy Spirit, open our minds that we may be led in your truth and taught your will. Then may we praise you by listening to your Word and by obeying it. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.” Prayers such as this ask for the Holy Spirit’s presence and work within us as we walk God’s way and seek his paths.

As she comes to Jesus’s tomb early on that first Easter morning, Mary Magdalene is making a journey of discovery. It is before dawn, between 3 and 6 a.m. On arrival, to her astonishment, she finds that the disc-like stone which had been rolled down a sloping groove to seal the grave had been removed (verse 1). While relatively easy to close, it would have required several strong men to open it.

After going to the disciples and reporting that Jesus’s body was missing, she came back with Peter and John, the beloved disciple, to what should have been Jesus’s resting place (verses 2–3). Then, the two disciples see what they *believe* they see and decide to go back home. Mary, however, stays (verse 11).

Here her illumination journey begins, as she looks into the tomb through weeping eyes. The loss of the body is the final indignity, the last straw. Even her mourning for Jesus is violated. It is not hard to imagine the enormous emotional strain which the last few days had placed on Mary. Her tears were more than understandable.

And yet she looked. Where the disciples saw nothing but the folded grave-clothes, Mary sees two angels (verse 12). Have they always been there, but she’s only just *seeing* them now, in her time of sorrow?

The angels speak to her, asking why she is weeping (verse 13). Whereas the disciples — to whom we might give the benefit of the doubt that they are wrapped up in their own grief — walk away and leave her alone in her sorrow, the angels minister to her.

Mary continues to hear. First, she hears and responds to the angels’

question, then she seems to hear something behind her since she turns to see a man standing there, who she presumes to be the gardener. Similar to the angels, he asks her who she is looking for and why she is crying. And Mary answers like she did to the angels, but this time asks for his assistance (verses 14–15).

The angels' question, "Why are you weeping?" and Jesus's questions, "Why are you weeping? Who is it you are looking for?" are loaded with themes seen throughout John's Gospel. A basic question in John is the issue of seeking. The verb 'seek' or 'look for' (ζητέω) characterises the human quest for meaning and commitment. Combine that with the question of Mary's grief, and added potency is added to her seeking.

Then, the real illumination happens, the power of the spoken word by the Word himself, as Jesus Christ, the resurrected Lord says her name. She hears, "Mary!" and all of a sudden, Mary understands who it is she is looking at (verse 16). She has 'found' the one she is looking for!

Found doesn't quite seem like the right word, though, does it? She has simply persisted in being present; persisted in wanting to honour the body of the man she loved. Mary has stayed present in the midst of her grief and sought the Lord. It was the resurrected Jesus who made himself known to her in his life-transforming appearance, as he will do in all of the other post-Resurrection encounters.

Here the illumination comes through the personal and intimate saying of her name. The single word, "Mary" spoken as Jesus had always uttered it was enough. The Good Shepherd "calls his own sheep by name ... and his sheep follow him because they know his voice" (John 10, verses 3–4). Anguish and despair are instantly swallowed up by astonishment and delight.

At other times, illumination will come in the breaking of bread — think of the two making their sad way to Emmaus in Luke 24, verses 13–35 — and still others through miraculous events — remember the enormous catch of fish the disciples caught after Jesus called out to them from the shore (John 21, verses 1–14). And yet, in each and every encounter, Jesus does not appear because of anything people have done or conjured. It is through the gift of Jesus's presence and the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, helping those he meets to understand who they are encountering.

Back to Mary and Jesus in the garden: she saw, she heard, she understood. Then, Jesus tells her to go and act on his behalf; he commissions her. He wants Mary to go to the disciples and tell them that Jesus wants them to know that he is ascending to "his Father, their Father and God" (verse 17).

NEWS OF PEOPLE

We continue to extend our condolences to David Trafford and his family on the passing of his mother, Mary, at her nursing home in Sheffield. The funeral was held in Poole. *Aled Jones*



Like a good missionary, Mary acted immediately on the Lord's command and went to tell the others the good news. And how does Mary begin her message to the disciples? She uses the simplest of words, "I have seen the Lord!" (verse 18).

Because Peter and John went home, this is what they missed. They too saw, and in some way "believed," but they settled for that being enough and went home. Mary, on the other hand, saw — really saw — and was ministered to by the angels. She heard the voice of her Shepherd, was made to understand, and she encountered the very presence of Jesus Christ. Then she went and did what Jesus told her to do.

Mary Magdalene becomes the first apostle — one sent to announce Christ's resurrection — and moreover is the "apostle to the apostles". No social station prohibits one from becoming an apostle. All it needs is the basic conviction that Christ lives among us. John's Gospel has no hesitation in placing a woman in the same category of relationship to Jesus as the Twelve who are included in the "his own" in chapter 13, verse 1.

This is the way of the Holy Spirit, who continues to make the Father and the Son known to us. In particular, this is what we believe is possible every time we come to the Word of God, and why we pray for eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts and minds to understand and bodies that will do what it is we hear God speak through the Scriptures. As was intimated in the prayer I cited earlier, "we praise [God] by listening to [God's] Word and by obeying it".

Christ's resurrected body is surely ascended and seated at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven, but the same Spirit who raised him from the dead is active and at work in this world and in us!

We don't have to settle with seeing the grave-clothes, as was the case with Peter and John, the beloved disciple (verses 6–8). We can hear God call us by name. We can know the very presence of the resurrected and resurrecting God-with-us. This Eastertime, may we be shown God's holy way and taught his paths; may we praise God by listening to his Word, and by obeying it, as Mary Magdalene did. *Aled Jones*

Thanksgiving Service for Molly Scopes



The Choir in the 1980s with John Winter

Molly Scopes, who has died aged 88, was an Elder and Choir Member of the Free Church and her life was celebrated on 2nd February at a Thanksgiving Service in Leamington which we attended. Molly and her husband Roger, a URC minister, lived in Grey Close and their daughters Bridget and Joanna were members of Junior Church and the joint Free Church/St Jude's youth group. Bridget and Joanna gave the moving tribute to their mother which concluded with thanks to the long list of carers who had looked after Molly in a nursing home near Bridget as she had Alzheimers in her final years. Roger is now living with his daughter, Joanna in Leamington,

Brian has memories of Molly in Elders' Court. She always showed a very caring approach and possessed great organisational skills. She had an eye on the details of a subject while seeing the bigger picture as well. Besides singing in the Choir, Molly played the piano for Evening Services. It was good to meet up with John Winter, a former Free church organist, who played the organ for Molly's Thanksgiving Service.

When we first knew Molly she was a Chemistry Lecturer at Westfield College, Hampstead and Roger was a lecturer at New College Theological College. Derek Lindfield trained at New College as did the Free Church student assistant ministers, Bob Woods who married us fifty years ago and Jon Dean. Roger was at a Reformed Church conference in Jersey where he

met Gilles Castelnau, the minister of Montrouge Reformed Church in Paris. Together with Molly they organised the twinning of the Free Church with Montrouge and the first of many exchange visits between our two churches.

When in 1989 Westfield College merged with Queen Mary College, Molly took a major role and became senior Vice-Principal. She was awarded an OBE in 1997 for services to Higher Education and Science.

Jenny and Brian Stonhold

THE APPROACH TO LENT

O Lord God
You have always
Walked along with me.
You have been my friend on sunny days
And during the foggy nights.
You, you've never left me
You are my light
Even when shadows fall.
From your well I get refreshment-
Your cooling streams revive me.
Your love for me is so great
That even in death you are still with me.
You are my road, you are my new life!



Give me, O Lord,
When I fast before Easter
The courage to live your words,
The words which give me life,
Which open new horizons,
Which push away the shadows,
Which makes us firm and upright.

Give me, O Lord
On my Lenten way
The strength to share your word,
With humility and truth.

Lenten prayer, from "Allo-Montrouge", reprinted from the Lutheran "Edition Oliveton." Translated by Joan Holton.

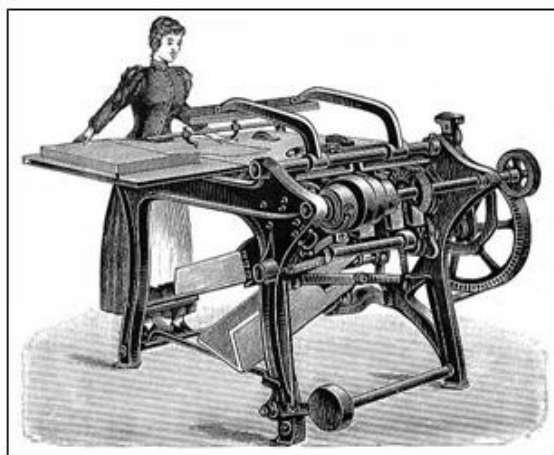
From the Archives

1934

From Hampstead Garden Suburb
Free Church Magazine March 1934

Ninety years ago the Rev Frank Ballard was still finding his way as a new Minister - he talks of looking forward and of peace in the world etc. The

"talkies" sound exciting as do the Badminton and the Jumble Sale! Then in 1944 he is sending out his News Letter to keep his flock in touch, as best he can, all over the world during World War 2.



Here, There and Everywhere

It is difficult to realise that this month sees the completion of the first year of my ministry at the free church. It has been a year of beginnings, of introductions, of learning how to keep step. In the second year we hope to march forward with confidence. May I appeal to all who are associated with us to assist in the advance? As I said when we celebrated the 24th Anniversary, it is a time of crisis when everyone should be at his post. We believe that the Gospel and the Church are essential to the salvation of men and the peace of the world, and if the Church is to do its work in this generation it must have the active cooperation of all who believe in its mission.

The "talkies" are coming to the Church Hall on March the 19th, when Mr Holyday has arranged for a sound film of Stanley's expedition to Central Africa to be presented. This is an interesting experiment, and we urge our readers to take advantage of this opportunity. There will be a collection to defray expenses.

The Social Working Party propose holding a Badminton Tournament in aid of church funds on the evening of Monday March the 26th. As play will be of an interesting standard, a cordial invitation is extended to spectators. Refreshments will be served at 9:00pm, and a nominal charge of 9d will be made as a further contribution to the funds.

The ladies of the Social Working Party are holding their Annual Jumble

Sale on Saturday March the 17th, in the Church Hall, Northway, at 3:00pm. Clothing, books, gramophone records, household effects, etc, anything our friends can dispose of that can be of benefit to our purchasers, will be collected by the Iroquois Scouts, preferably on the evening preceding the sale, by arrangement with Mrs Cory, 15, Sutcliffe Close.

1944

From the HGS News Letter March 1944

During this month the Free Church lost two members of the armed forces, Dick Morgan who Rev Frank Ballard writes about here, and Gilbert (Tim) Wallen, who had been a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft 111 since 1941. During this time he had been an accomplished forger of documents in the Great Escape project. He was one of the 50 who escaped in 1944, were recaptured and murdered by the Gestapo in woodland near Danzig on March 29th 1944. Currently an exhibition of the Great Escape is on at the National Archive at Kew until July (free admission.)

MY DEAR PEOPLE, there are so many things for me to write about this month that you must forgive me if instead of the spaciousness of a letter these pages read more like a list of notices. I am not sure that the last two months have not brought us more troubles and heartaches than any similar since I have been in the Suburb. Let me, however, for the sake of those of you who are away from home, start with a reassuring word. Since I last wrote to you the enemy has made more attacks upon London and he has absurdly exaggerated the damage he has done. There has been in consequence a widespread anxiety about our sufferings. Well, there have been losses. Property has been damaged and people have been killed. We, however, have been fortunate and ought to be very thankful. Some of our members had exciting experiences, and one, Mr Swinnerton, was taken to hospital with a badly damaged hand. He has had much pain but is, I believe, doing well. What has troubled us more than the raids has been the fighting elsewhere and anxiety for our friends in the thick of it. And our anxiety has not been without good cause. Last month I referred to the marriage of Dick Morgan. Shortly afterwards we heard from him, and a letter was lying on my desk addressed to him. Before it was actually posted I had been informed by his father of his death. He had been on operations over France and returned to this country, but crashed before he reached his aerodrome. My wife and I represented the congregation the



Rev Frank Ballard (1933-1951) and Mrs Isabel Ballard - photo taken in the Manse garden just after the war

following Monday at the Mortlake Crematorium, and I was permitted to say a few words about him. Dick was not only one of the ablest of our young men, he was one of the most reliable. With maturity beyond his years he had thought his way through to definite beliefs, and had the courage to stand for them. With such gifts of mind and character he might have done tremendous things, and we cannot but feel that his death is more than a private calamity, it is a loss to the community. We at the Manse cannot forget the way he helped us with fire watching during the worst nights of the blitz, and from all that we have heard we know that he has continued to carry himself with the same modesty and gallantry through succeeding dangers. It is only since his death that we learned of his exploits, one of which left him for a long period in the North Sea in a tiny dinghy. Any words we try to say to the parents seem too conventional and utterly inadequate, but I hope they know that they are surrounded by friendship and supported by prayer. The question left in my mind is this: are we worthy of such sacrifices? Frank Ballard

Anne Lowe



JOHN BIRCH'S DIARY

Long time to return. Many countries now again enjoy freedom, which was taken from them by Great Britain and other conquering powers. It is therefore logical, and in my view correct, that they should get back what amounts to national treasures. It is equally clear that this can only happen if there is solid proof that the country can once again “nurture and protect” these items. Mongolia, a country with a rich cultural history, stretching back over many centuries, is a frontline candidate. It is essential that any country wanting returns must show proof that that it is able to care for and make available in its public domain all items claimed. Arising particularly from the geophysical position - an Eastern country but with strong connections to Europe, and the world beyond - Ulaanbaatar has claims to a wide variety of artefacts which originated from there but are now scattered “world-wide”. Some are essential elements in the emergence of these countries into present day states. Not all will be able to satisfy the requirements to look after them and make them available for the public to see as appropriate. Handled correctly the result will be to return to the country of origin items which should be available for everyone to study and enjoy - to the benefit of all.

Mars are Marvellous. Personally I have always enjoyed Mars Bars - and hope to do so for years to come. It's not just the product that is important but the packaging as well. The company have moved away from the original plastic wrapper to more environmentally friendly paper packaging. If the change is a success, it will become permanent. Mars Wrigley's research and development centre is in Slough (has to be somewhere!) Just to make clear how much effort and research goes into finding the right paper packaging I will quote in full: “The challenge was to find the right paper packaging and solution with an adequate level of barrier properties to protect the chocolate whilst guaranteeing the full safety, quality and integrity of the product to prevent food waste” - which boils down to making it tasty, nutritious and enjoyable. And I'd thought it was just a chocolate bar! Good to know!



'Hands up' Science is constantly providing solutions: to allow tasks to be done which previously relied on human decisions. A robotic hand has now been designed, completed and successfully treated to be able to scan objects access and then pick them up safely. The sensor is able to “decide whether or not it

can pick up an object and hold it without dropping”. The sensors act like skin to ‘know’ the pressure being applied. All of this has come about through a co-operation between the University of Cambridge and University College, London. A spokesman said “we can’t say exactly what information the robot is getting but it can theoretically estimate where the object has been grasped and with how much force.”



Not just a clue but also a glue. Adhesives are an essential part of everyday life. There is now proof that successfully ‘sticking’ has been around for more than 40,000 years. Its historical existence was confirmed when re-examining several stone tools found in south-western France. The glue was made from combining two natural substances which we know as bitumen and ochre. When applied it was used to grip hand-held tools without being sticky on the hands.

The problem with elephants. What was just an ordinary by-pass in a small city in Sri Lanka has now become a road regularly blocked by elephants. It’s become a problem: difficult to stop an elephant crossing who even chases vehicles that do not offer them food. Perhaps a safe-guarded trail across the road, with fruit to attract the jumbos??.



John Birch



THE FUTURE IS BOTANICAL

'OUR FUTURE IS BOTANICAL' This is the slogan written on the banner you can see as you go through the gates to Kew Gardens. Even if there is a long queue at the ticket office, once you are in the Gardens, there always seems to be plenty of space.

As you wander through the trees or sit by the lake, you may not realise that Kew is actually a charity. The Gardens are a centre for world class plant science. The botanists do research all over the world to secure the production of food crops, to find new medicinal plants and to conserve the remaining pockets of wild jungle where new discoveries may be made.

As many countries, particularly in Africa, become hotter and drier, we need to grow food from plants which can withstand high temperatures and drought. In Ethiopia, for example, the enset plant supports the lives of 20 million people. It is a tall plant, part of the banana family and among the many varieties, some are more resistant to pests and others to drought. Kew is part of a team who are compensating local farmers to grow a wide variety of these plants so that none of the resistance is lost. Inside the banana-like fruit are large teeth-cracking black seeds - but it is not the fruit which is harvested. The farmers chop off part of the root which is left to ferment and can eventually become a type of porridge. It is mainly women who cultivate the plants and they can sell any extra harvest in the market to make a living.

Even our important coffee bean tree is threatened. Our favourite coffees are arabica and robusta but neither of these can survive very high temperatures. Wild coffee bean trees growing in the jungle are essential as



Enset plant



Coffee bean plant



Seeds of the chinchona (quinoa) tree

they provide seeds for the coffee farms and can be crossed with domestic trees. Kew botanists are working now, with international colleagues, to make sure the wild trees are protected and coffee production can continue.

The main anti-malarial drug, quinine, is derived from the chinchona tree. Nowadays resistance to the drug is increasing so new solutions have to be found. A new technique using AI has been developed which enables researchers to sift through long lists of plants to find ones containing an anti-plasmodium compound. This is because malaria is caused by a plasmodium parasite. It is thought that

many new medicinal plants are yet to be discovered in the wild jungles of the world. Surprisingly, research is being carried out in the wetlands of China to test some microscopic fungi and bacteria which are able to digest plastic and could be used in waste treatment centres of the future. All sorts of plastic waste are fished out from these wet areas. It is very encouraging to hear about these projects. There are so many more and still so many discoveries to be made. As the results keep coming in, I think we might hope for a bright future for everyone.

Mary Charras



UK Poverty revisited by the UN - A Personal View

In November 2018 the UN rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, made a two-week mission to Britain. Over 12 days he toured the country - London, Oxford, Cardiff, Newcastle, Glasgow and Belfast - listening to people's experiences, interviewing witnesses and taking a record-breaking 300 submissions. He talked with local and UK government officials as well as a range of ministers in central government, in Wales and with the First Minister of Scotland.

His report pulled no punches; despite the UK still being the world's fifth largest economy, the levels of child poverty were "not just a disgrace, but a social calamity and an economic disaster". He said that compassion had been abandoned during almost a decade of austerity policies - policies that had been so damaging that significant elements of the post-war social contract, devised by William Beveridge more than 70 years ago, had been swept away.

The UK revisited by the UN

Fast forward five years to the visit in November last year by the UN rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier de Schutter, to the UK, to urge ministers to increase welfare spending. De Schutter said that poverty levels in the UK were "simply not acceptable" and that the government was violating international law. Referring to Philip Alston's earlier visit he said that "things have got worse."

So, what's changed since Alston's visit that might have informed De Schutter's comments? A few statistics at random:

- *child poverty has worsened, one million children in the UK experienced destitution in 2022, meaning their families "could not afford to adequately feed, clothe, or clean them, or keep them warm." (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)*
- *the number living in food poverty almost doubled between 2022 and 2023 with one in five (22%) of households reporting skipping meals, going hungry or not eating for a whole day in January, up from 12% at the equivalent point in 2022. (Food Foundation)*
- *five year old boys in Britain are now shorter than those of the same age in Europe and shorter than they were in 1990.*
- *rising infant and child mortality rates across England, with geographical*

disparities widening between regions and levels of deprivation, (National Child Mortality Database).

And so on and so on – we are all familiar with the dismal litany of economic and social failure since 2010. We only have to think about the appalling state of the NHS and social care, or even day to day stuff like our pot-holed roads, under funded schools, the cuts to the ‘Sure Start’ programmes, the closure of libraries, parks, public swimming pools, youth clubs, the growth of food banks and homeless people on our streets – even the surprise reappearance of cases of rickets and TB - to realise that the UK is in deep economic and social trouble.

Austerity as a way of life

The question then becomes ‘how on earth did we get into this mess’?

The answer is, of course, the austerity policies which were introduced by the government in 2010 as a way of dealing with the fall out from the GFC (Global Financial Crisis) of 2008. These policies quickly became a way of life, indeed a permanent way of life, for people in the UK. The problem was that austerity, as an economic policy, could only ever be a temporary ‘fix’ – a temporary sticking plaster while ways were devised of dealing with the underlying wound. It could never be a permanent answer to anything. This is because the long-term damage done to the real economy quickly (very quickly) outweighs any benefit that accrues to the Government’s fiscal balance sheet – the ostensible reason for austerity policies in the first place. The reasons for this were set out in an earlier article (News and Views, November 2018)

Over time, the language of austerity has changed little, politicians now like to talk about ‘fiscal responsibility’ or maintaining market confidence, making sure we can pay our way, etc – but the effect always seems to be much the same, ie continued cutbacks and calls for restraint. Even the opposition seems compelled to go along with this pseudo-accountancy language as though it is some kind of badge of maturity and responsibility. The question then becomes: why are we still clinging to the austerity or fiscal responsibility mindsets that have so catastrophically failed the UK economy from 2010 to the present day? Why – as the latest UN intervention points out - are we still digging and deepening the hole in which we find ourselves? Why are we still talking about tax cuts when even the IMF is saying that we ought to be increasing welfare spending instead!

Finance versus Economics: One reason of course is that the UK has always prioritized the needs of finance over the needs of the economy.

Partly this is for historical and social reasons; our ruling elites have often come from money, been employed or worked in money, understand money and inevitably reflect its needs and concerns. They have little interest in economics per se – ie the day-to-day workings of the real economy as it impacts on you and me – if only because their background and position largely insulate them from such concerns. Theirs is the world of hedge funds, bond markets, off-shore companies, private bank accounts, trust funds, buying and selling shares, etc – their interaction with the real economy is largely limited to things like generating shareholder value from companies and rentier income from property – and selling off public assets at well below market value in order to maximise private profits. Their interest in things like Keynesian economics, employment and welfare is more or less non-existent. Indeed, it seems to be the case that very few of them actually understand how real economies work. (As in their apparently genuine belief that a national economy is more or less like a household economy except much larger).

Neoliberal Ideology. But the main reason for doggedly continuing with these failed policies was because many politicians quickly realized that austerity policies were an ideal way of realizing their dream of the full-blown neoliberal state – ie the establishment of the smallest possible state with minimum public services and a subservient population completely reliant on ‘the market’ to provide their needs. These aims have been the one consistent thread of government policy for the last forty years – and particularly since 2010. Nothing (with the possible exception of the Labour Government from 1997 to 2010) has been allowed to affect that aim. The neoliberal mantra has always been ‘never waste a crisis’ and the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 was a crisis ‘made in heaven’ for the realization of those aims - and to give them credit, these aims have now been largely realized.

We go back to a key observation in Alston’s 2018 report: “Leaving the economics of change to one side, it is the underlying values and the ethos shaping the design and implementation of specific measures that have generated the greatest problems. The government has made no secret of its determination to change the value system to focus more on individual responsibility, to place major limits on government support, and to pursue a single-minded, and some have claimed simple-minded, focus on getting people into employment at all costs. Many aspects of this program are legitimate matters for political contestation, but it is the mentality that has informed many of the reforms that has brought the most misery and wrought the most harm to the fabric of British society. British compassion for those who are suffering has been replaced by a punitive, mean-spirited, and often callous approach apparently designed to instill discipline where it is least useful, to impose a rigid order on the lives of those least capable of coping

with today's world, and elevating the goal of enforcing blind compliance over a genuine concern to improve the well-being of those at the lowest levels of British society."

The failure of national discourse within the UK

It seems strange that it has been left to foreign visitors and organizations to point



Philip Alston in Belfast in November 2018

out and query these obvious features of UK economic policy. There has been little if any domestic awareness or understanding of the direction of travel which the UK has undertaken over the past forty years. This is perhaps understandable. After all, it is difficult to believe that the immiseration of a population (or, at least, a very large proportion of it) should be considered acceptable in the realization of an ideological aim which most people are unaware of and whose approval or otherwise has never been sought. There are several reasons for this lack of interest - besides simple disbelief - not least the fact that neoliberalism, throughout its long history, has always made a point of keeping its aims secret, aware that few in their right mind would ever approve of the world it seeks to establish. Instead, the heavy lifting jobs of discussion and propagandizing neoliberal ideology has been left to a myriad of pressure groups, 'thinktanks' and factional groups within mainstream political parties. But equally important is the nature of enquiry and discourse within British media – concerned as it always is with effects rather than causes. Thus there are always plenty of 'human interest' stories about the way people are being affected by the thousand and one cuts to the services they are receiving, but never any analysis about the ideology that has brought all this about. To the extent that causes are presented at all, it is only Brexit, the Pandemic and Ukraine that seem to interest them. Yet the truth is that the economic damage wrought by the austerity ideology has been far, far greater than all these put together. (Whereas the latter is estimated to have cost us a 5% long run shrinkage of the economy, the former has been estimated to have made the economy some 15% smaller than it would have been in the absence of austerity policies!) But perhaps the most damning and revealing remark was made to a journalist who asked how the UK compared with Donald Trump's US. Alston said, "In many ways, you in the UK are far ahead of the US." In fact, "the Republicans would be ecstatic to have pushed through the kind of austerity that governments have pushed through in the UK."

John Ditchfield

JOHN BIRCH'S COMPETITION

Competition No. 60: A Slice for Life

Link the cake to a particular area.

1. A type of currant bun - usually curved into a square shape with a glazed top. First baked in London in the 18th Century.

1. A short crust pastry shell, filled with jam, fragipane and covered with flaked almonds. I am linked with Derbyshire.

3. A fruit cake associated with the East coast of Scotland.

4. A buttery biscuit flavoured with mixed spice and lemon zest and named after a county town.

5. A small round pie made from flaky pastry and loaded with currants and named after a town in North Lancashire.

6. A small roll made from yeast dough with sugar crushed on top. (I'm also called a Sally Lunn bun.)

7. A tart made from evaporated milk, muscovado sugar and pastry. I originated from Kent.

8. A light cake made from two sponge cakes separated by a layer of cream and jam. I was possibly first made in the Renaissance Period, maybe in Spain and named after a Queen.

9. A traditional sweet bread - also called bake-stones or pics. Popular since the C19th with the addition of fat, sugar and dried fruit. (They are associated with a particular area of Great Britain).

10. A light sponge cake in different coloured sections, held together by jam and covered in marzipan. When cut into cross-sections it is easily recognized. It was created as a wedding gift for Princess Victoria, the grand-daughter of Queen Victoria and her husband.)

11. A cake made distinctive by my pink topping icing and sprinkling of white coconut - the pink colouring obtained from mulberry bushes in that area of London.

12. Not a cake as such, but a peppermint flavoured glucose sweet which originated from a town in Cumbria. Widely used now-a-days by fell-walkers, climbers and mountaineers as a source of energy.

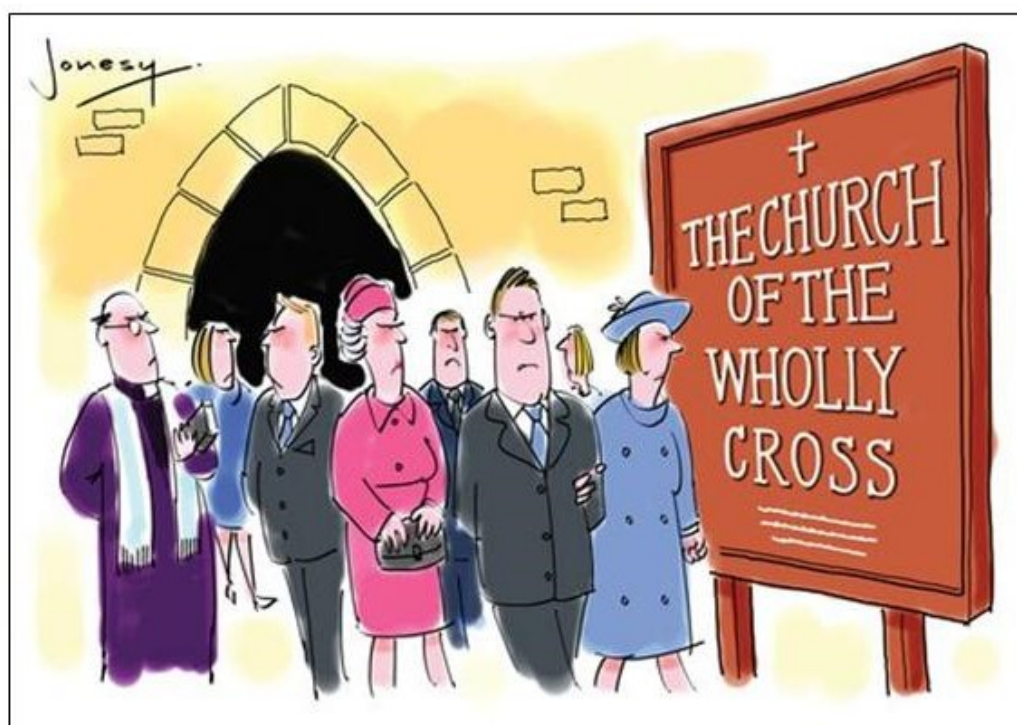


Answers to Competition No. 59 Breads of the Earth

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Ciabatta/Italy | 2. Damper/Australia | 3. Bialy/Poland |
| 4. Bing/China | 5. Bammy/Jamaica | |
| 6. Pumpernickel/Germany | 7. Soda Bread/Ireland | |
| 8. Zucchini Bread/United States | 9. Aish Baladi/Egypt | |
| 10. Chapati/East Africa | | |
| 11. Brioche/France | 12. Bannock/Scotland | 13. Dosa/Southern India |
| 14. Injera/Ethiopia | 15. Tortilla/Mexico | |



We look forward to your answers - send them either by email to jbirch1821@gmail.com or by post to J. Birch, Pantgwyn, High Street, Borth, Ceredigion, Wales SY24 5HY



WORDSEARCH: MONTHS AND SPECIAL DAYS

Y	A	F	S	G	O	O	D	F	R	I	D	A	Y	D
A	I	S	R	Y	A	S	O	S	R	T	P	L	D	E
D	E	A	H	P	A	C	E	E	Y	A	U	Y	O	C
S	F	A	R	W	T	D	B	P	L	J	A	S	H	E
E	P	I	S	O	E	M	I	M	T	D	P	R	R	M
N	L	E	B	T	E	D	S	L	S	E	I	I	N	B
I	J	E	N	T	E	U	N	E	O	S	M	Y	G	E
T	R	U	P	T	N	R	U	E	T	H	R	B	A	R
N	M	E	N	D	E	T	E	M	S	A	K	U	E	
E	S	A	A	E	E	C	A	B	U	D	G	N	P	R
L		Y	R	V		S	O	N	M	U	A	A	A	
A				O	C	D		A	S	S	E	E	Y	M
V		R		A	H	J		T	T	L	V		A	
T	H		Y	R	A	U	R	B	E	F		O	Y	
S	M	O	T	H	E	R	S	D	A	Y			N	

APRIL ASH-WEDNESDAY AUGUST BANK-HOLIDAYS
 CHRISTMAS-DAY DECEMBER EASTER FEBRUARY GOOD-
 FRIDAY JANUARY JUNE JULY LEAP MARCH MAY
 MOTHERS-DAY NOVEMBER OCTOBER PALM-SUNDAY
 PENTECOST SEPTEMBER SHROVE-TUESDAY ST-
 VALENTINES-DAY

*Put the remaining 14 letters together to find what is important about
 20th March*

Compiled by Rosemary Birch

Answer: The first day of Spring

JUNIOR WORDSEARCH: ARCHERY

Y	R	E	H	C	R	A	D	L	E	I	F
T	I	D	E	S	R	E	V	I	U	Q	L
E	L	A	S	T	I	C	Y	O	J	M	E
G	Z	E	N	R	H	O	O	D	P	E	T
R	H	E	T	I	P	M	X	S	E	R	C
A	A	W	L	N	B	P	S	U	V	R	H
T	L	O	N	G	B	O	W	S	R	Y	I
S	F	R	I	A	R	U	R	S	U	M	N
E	H	R	K	C	U	N	L	H	C	E	G
J	P	A	X	E	T	D	A	O	E	N	S
R	I	A	F	U	N	S	W	O	R	R	A
S	P	O	R	T	H	U	N	T	I	N	G

TARGET ARCHERY
FIELD ARCHERY
SPORT/HUNTING
BOWS/ARROWS
ELASTIC STRING

SHOOT ARROWS
SHAFT
ARROW HEAD/TIP
FLETCHINGS
QUIVER

CROSSBOW
LONGBOW
RECURVE BOW
COMPOUND BOW
ROBIN HOOD



Compiled by Liz Alsford

DIARY

Monday 10.30am to 11.30am Study

Group resuming after Easter

Wednesday 10am to 12 noon Toddler and
Parent/Carer group

Saturday 10.30am to 12.30pm West End
Café open

Thursday 6.30pm to 8.00pm Choir Practice March 8th and
March 21st



Audio - Visual Live streaming

Sunday Services and Friday Concerts are usually live-streamed on YouTube and these will remain on the Church's YouTube channel. If you are in the building, there is a chance you might appear on camera.

Seating in the side aisles is never filmed and the Stewarding Team can assist you if you would like a seat out of shot of the recording equipment.

MARCH

Friday 1st	2pm	World Day of Prayer – Venue to be confirmed
Sunday 3rd	11am	Family Communion service led by the Minister
Sunday 10th	11am	Family Service for Mothering Sunday led by Rev Ewan King
Sunday 17th	11am	Family Service led by the Minister followed by Church Meeting
	6.30pm	Contemporary Worship Service led by the Minister
Friday 22nd	1pm	Friday Lunchtime Concert - Violin recital given by Andriana Cristea
Sunday 24th	11am	Palm Sunday – Family Service at 11am led by the Minister
		N.B. Meet in the Square at 10.30am for procession with St Jude's

- Thursday 28th** 7.30pm Maundy Thursday - Quiet service of reflection with Communion
- Friday 29th** 11am Good Friday – Service remembering the crucifixion of Jesus
- Sunday 31st** 11am Easter Sunday – Christ is Risen! Family service led by the Minister

APRIL

- Sunday 7th** 11am Family Service led by the Minister
- Sunday 14th** 11am Family Service led by Revd Jon Dean
- Sunday 21st** 11am Family Service led by the Minister
4pm Annual Church Meeting followed by Communion
- Friday 26th** 1pm Lunchtime Concert – Piano recital given by Antonio Morabito



NEWS AND VIEWS



PRODUCTION
DISTRIBUTION
EDITORIAL PANEL
TYPESETTER
EDITOR

John Ditchfield
Jill Purdie and others
Joan Holton and Marion Ditchfield
John Ditchfield
Marion Ditchfield

The next edition of News and Views will be a double issue for April/ May and will be published on Sunday 7th April. Articles should therefore be delivered to the editor, Joan Holton or the typesetter, John Ditchfield, (john_ditchfield@hotmail.com) by Sunday 24th March.

We welcome articles, as well as reviews of books, films, plays etc. from members and friends. These will not always represent the views of the editorial panel or of the Church. Publication is at the discretion of the Editors.

Remember - we are on line at www.hgsfreechurch.org.uk where you will find past issues of News and Views.

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