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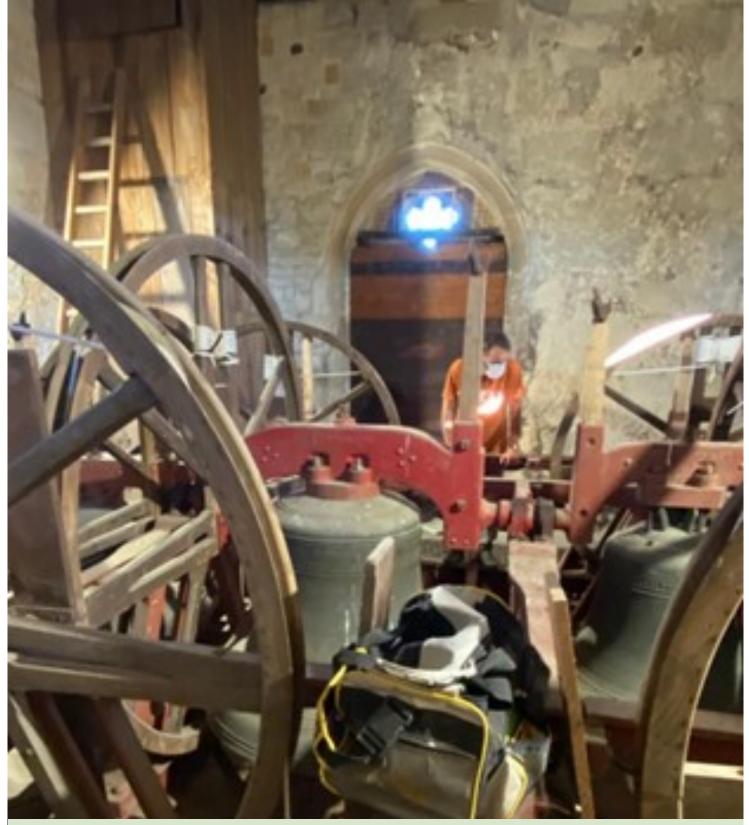
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St Mary's Northchurch Newsletter





Church enquiries to: Revd Jonathan Gordon 01442 871547 revjagordon@googlemail.com



Inspecting the church bells in the tower—see page 4.

Keeping in touch

I've been keeping in touch with some old friends over the past few months. All of which have not been able to get out of the house without help. Many without a visit anywhere but the hospital or the clinic. Yet they are so grateful for that letter posted through their door, as if it were a ray of sunshine and thankfulness that someone has been thinking about them from a distance.

One of my letters went to my Primary School Headmaster who is in his Nineties now, still living at home with his wife and having the advantage of living just a few doors away from their eldest daughter. I never lost touch with him because he was that person who always gave me encouragement, even though it could be harsh sometimes. It taught me never to give up.



As I read his return letter, I remembered all those school reports of long ago and that lovely handwriting that has hardly changed over time. Those reports weren't always great academically, but they were always encouraging which spurred me on to try even harder for the following year. It felt a great comfort to see he still has such encouragement to give to the recipient and never to give up, even when times were tough. For both of them, times are very tough these days. Both walk with Zimmer frames and need all the help they can get to stay independent for as long as they can.

We all can take refuge in the fact that God never gives up on any of us, even when we feel life is so traumatic, so hard that we don't know which way to turn. God is our strong foundation and will never fail us. When we realise how much we can trust in Him for all our needs, we will be able to achieve and workout situations that we never thought we would be able to do.



As we travel through Lent this year, it's not always about giving up something, it's about starting something, or finishing something we started. Have the patience to keep going, even though it might be tough. It's such a sense of achievement when we finish something and someone says to, "That is lovely, you are so clever" or just giving something to someone as an act of kindness and see their face lighten up with a smile.

This couple, all those years ago, showed me the way to Jesus, and I'll be forever grateful for this. Jesus has given us so much more than we could ever give him, and so we will celebrate with gratefulness our Easter time this year.

Peggy Sear



Reading the Gospel of St John throughout Lent

What an achievement for a book to remain close to the top of the world's reading chart for 2,000 years. John's Gospel has done it. What makes this very short book, of less than 19,000 words, so special?

This is not a biography of Jesus, but a gospel, whose purpose is clearly stated: "so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, you may have life in his name."

The source is the 'disciple whom Jesus loved'. He is mentioned at least 6 times, but is not necessarily the one who last held the pen. That person is not identified ('John' was added later, reflecting a tradition). Peter, the leader of the early church, is treated with great respect, but there are hints that the beloved disciple was quicker to grasp what was going on.

It may help to think of two parallel worlds, like timelines, one above the other. The upper one, occupied by God, runs from eternity to eternity; the lower one, in which we find ourselves, endures from creation until the last day. At the beginning of John, God 'comes down' from the upper to the lower line: "the Word was made flesh", the incarnation. On Good Friday, Jesus is 'lifted up' from the lower line towards the upper as, exalted on the cross, he reveals himself, the nature of true kingship and the love of God for his creation, and resumes his glory. This striking picture led one eminent commentator to remark that John makes the resurrection seem almost superfluous.

The shape of the gospel is clear enough:

- the prologue, which covers much of chapter 1, sets themes which constantly recur;
- the book of signs (from chapter 1 through 12) relates, through a series of signs, encounters and striking verbal exchanges, the public ministry of Jesus as a challenge to believe in him;
- the book of glory, centred on the Easter events, and on Jesus' teaching about them to his closest disciples, relates how the glory of Jesus was displayed to the world (chapters 13 into 20); and

- the conclusion, in which the risen Jesus empowers his church with the Holy Spirit and sends them to the world (in chapter 20).
- This is followed by an epilogue, in chapter 21, which may have been added later.

John is very different from the other gospels:

- its style and language make it easy to read (as anyone learning Greek soon discovers);
- the story-line is built around a series of Jewish festivals in Jerusalem and person-to-person encounters, rather than a ministry in Galilee leading on to Jerusalem, as in the other gospels;
- in vain will the reader who thinks of Jesus as a great teacher seek for material like the Sermon on the Mount. Ethical teaching is largely absent. And where are the parables that we know so well?
- it does not relate some of the most familiar events of the other gospels: there is no Nativity; no institution of the Eucharist (although there are echoes);
- there are lots of themes, expressions and patterns unique to John. Several come in groups of 7.

For a variety of reasons, most scholars regard John as the last of the gospels to have been written down. Yet the Rylands papyrus, the oldest extant record of the New Testament, dated about 100 years after Jesus, is a fragment from John 18.

The gospel writer knows how selective he has been. The world, he says, could not hold the books that would give a full account of all that Jesus said and did. I have a friend, a university professor, whose passion is John's gospel. That short work has stimulated so much writing that the professor's house is overflowing, creaking under their weight.

We have been reading John together through Lent. Join us, daily, on Facebook www.facebook.com/ stmarynorthchurch.

David White 4th March 2021

PARISH PANTRY @ St Mary's



Food needs for March

The following items are in short supply as we meet the needs of our community through March.

Can you help, please?

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Bleach
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Tinned vegetables
Tinned fruit
Tinned/packet soup
Tinned custard
Stock pots
Tinned Rice Pudding
Coffee
Pasta sauces

The donation box can be found on the table just inside the side door of the church.

The Coronavirus has changed our country and our church in ways we could have never anticipated.

The Church of England, being present in every community, is well placed to lead and co-ordinate efforts to help those who find themselves in need.

2021 will be a time of adaptation and innovation for the church and we all need to be part of it.

Northchurch Bells during Lockdown

For the first time since World War Two, church bells across the UK have largely fallen silent due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The various lockdowns which have come and gone over the past year have meant that bell ringers across the country have been unable to visit their bell towers in order to ring.

Bells have always played an important role throughout history. The sound of church bells is part of our heritage and our cultural soundscape. They play an important part in people's lives, not only calling the faithful to worship, but also to celebrate significant events in people's lives like weddings, jubilees, coronations and the millennium, to name but a few. At the end of WWII the bells rang out to announce the end of war and to declare peace. Sadly during the last year we have been unable to ring for several important occasions — Easter and Christmas and the 75th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day.

Throughout the pandemic the ringers have continued the winding of the clock mechanism so that the hourly chimes of the largest bell can continue to keep some sort of continuity in these uncertain times.

Briefly during last summer the ringers were able to ring 4 bells for the Sunday morning service on a rota basis. Guidelines agreed by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, the C of E, and Public Health England meant that only alternate bells could be rung whilst wearing a mask



and maintaining social distance at all times. Also the ringing room had to be kept well ventilated and hand sanitiser used of course!

However, since there had been no ringing for a while, and before any recommenced, the ringing room was given a spring clean by Anne Robinson, Rosemary North and Vivienne Beaumont. The tower captain and steeple keepers also went up into the belfry to carry out a safety inspection of the bells before any ringing resumed.

During the inspection it was discovered that several birds had taken up residence in the tower and so when empty, the nests had to be removed and the entry holes closed off. The bell mechanisms and ropes were fully checked, and some minor repairs carried out. In all, three evenings were needed by Michael Robinson, Ian Grant and Jonathan Waters to complete this and ensure it was safe to resume ringing.

So what else have Northchurch ringers been doing during this pandemic when they have been unable to climb the stairs in the tower to the ringing chamber to practice the art of ringing? Well for starters they have kept in touch socially with each other via email and social media.

Furthermore, since bell ringers have not been able to physically ring in any church tower they have looked into using technology to help maintain at least their mental skills. To this end two bell ringers with computer skills from Boston, Massachusetts, have developed a web based virtual ringing room to enable ringers to continue ringing with one another from the comfort of their own homes (and even with each ringer residing in a different county or even country). In fact this virtual ringing room even made it on the BBC News!

https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=71G7jjRwCrM&feature=youtu.be

During lockdown a small group of Northchurch ringers have been trialling this virtual ringing room out whilst simultaneously video calling. It is quite different from actually ringing in a tower, but it does seem to be helping people with developing their mental skills for ringing. New skills are being developed and new methods (tunes) experimented with whilst keeping in touch. It is going to be interesting to see how this all helps us when we are allowed to return to a physical tower, and we are all looking forward to that opportunity.

If anyone would like to find out more about the ancient art of bell ringing, or would like to get involved in the future when the pandemic allows us to be in the tower again, please contact us at northchurchbells@outlook.com

Michael Robinson

Who Would Live in a House Like This? Woodcock Hill – Part 2

Following Frank Moore's death in 1885 the Woodcock Hill Estate was purchased by Alexander Edward Campion Streatfield, a wealthy magistrate, who seems to have spent little time living at his new property, spending more time abroad due to his ill health. He died in 1887, and Woodcock Hill was left to his eldest son, Alexander McNeill Streatfield Moore, also a magistrate. Not long after becoming the owner, Alexander negotiated the closure and diversion of two old footpaths that crossed the estate with the local Parish Council. In exchange, Alexander agreed to the widening of the main road between Northchurch and Gossoms End on the southern boundary of his estate.

The 1891 Census shows 27-year-old Alexander living at Woodcock Hill with his 55-year-old mother together with his two younger brothers, Kenneth, an orange grower with a plantation in Florida, and Edward, a university student, and his sister, Lilian. At that time the family were employing nine people to work in the house including a butler, page, coachman, cook and house and ladies' maids. Ten years later

however, only Alexander and three servants were still living at Woodcock Hill. Not surprisingly, within four years the estate was up for sale again.

In 1905, the estate was purchased by William Dwight of Berkhamsted who intended to own it for only a short period of time before re-selling it at a profit, either as a whole, or in parts. Two years later the majority of the estate was sold to biscuit and cake manufacturer, Robert McVitie for £9,700. Box Cottage (now known as Northchurch Place), which stood on the High Street, together with its adjacent grounds, was not included in the deal and was sold separately.

To be continued ...

Richard North



Box Cottage—now known as Northchurch Pl;ace.

Ronald William Slough 03/03/1921 to 01/07/1978.

3rd March 2021 was the 100th anniversary of Ronald's birth. It was commemorated by the laying of flowers on his grave in St Mary's churchyard. At noon, the Tower Captain chimed a bell in the tower 100 times.

Ronald Slough lived in The Meads, with his wife June and three children Martin, Robin and Judith, from 1958 until February 1978. During that time, he was employed by the Equitable Life Assurance company in London and Aylesbury as Branch Manager and National New Business Manager. He was dedicated to St. Mary's, serving as a churchwarden and member of the PCC as well as being a regular on the bottle stall at the annual school fete. He and June moved to Mixbury in Oxfordshire in February 1978, but he was sadly involved in a fatal accident in June 1978 and died on July 1st. His funeral was conducted by family friend and ex-rector of St. Mary's, Canon Revd. Bernard Hughes, who returned from retirement in Cornwall to conduct the service. He is interred in the churchyard at St. Mary's.





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The Parish Pantry

St Mary's Church runs one of the Northchurch Community Pantry venues and is open daily for donations or if you need help.

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Update from Appledown Rescue and Rehoming Kennels







During lockdown there has been no rehoming taking place, but abandoned and unwanted dogs still continue to arrive. It's a very challenging time for a small charity that relies on donations and fund-raising, especially as we have not been able to hold our usual events. We need to ask generous dog lovers and supporters to help us get through this difficult time and to continue to provide the high level of care our dogs deserve. It's easy to make a one-off donation of £3 simply by texting APPLE to 70111, or donate via Paypal using the 'DONATE Support a Cause' option and search for Appledown Rescue. Donations by cheque are very welcome too. Thank you from Gypsy, Lola, Mark and all our dogs!

If you are interested in offering a dog a loving home when we reopen, all the relevant information and an application form can be found on our website. Viewings are now by appointment only.

Appledown Rescue & Rehoming Kennels, Harling Road, Eaton Bray, Beds LU6 1QY 01525 220383 (10am-1pm & 2-4 pm)

e-mail: appledown.kennels@btinternet.com
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March 2021 Page 9

Hello from everyone at St Mary's Northchurch and we do hope that everyone is safe and well. Please do remember that we are here to help and support our community. If you or anyone you know is experiencing difficulties during this time, please do get in touch. St Mary's Church runs one of the Northchurch Community Pantry venues and is open daily for donations or if you need help.

- Our Sunday morning service is at 10am every Sunday morning, and on Facebook afterwards.
- Every evening at 10pm, we have a short Night Prayer (Compline) service on Facebook.
- Both services are subtitled. Both will be available to watch afterwards.

Look at our Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/stmarynorthchurch for these services and for more information.

CAP Money Course

Local residents are being given yet another chance to get control of their finances with CAP Money offering to run another popular free course in the first half of 2021 if there is sufficient demand for it.

The courses are run to empower people to fight poverty *before* it hits. Locally all of the churches in Berkhamsted support the work that we do in running the courses and we also work very closely with the CAP Debt Centre based at Liberty Tea Rooms in Hemel Hempstead.

The CAP Money course is run over three sessions and is aimed at helping the local community to best handle their finances. Its aim is to debt-proof people's finances, giving people tools to

ensure that they get their bills paid as a priority, save for the future and know what their disposable income actually is.

Courses are useful for newly retired people, soon-to-be students, mums dealing with mounting bills, families saving for a wedding and everyone in between. The CAP Money course isn't just for people with debts. It's for everyone. Learning how to set a budget and stick to it helps to debt-proof people in the long term.

If you are interested in attending the course or would like to know more then telephone Mike Wallis on 07891 760244 or email him on

michaelawallis@yahoo.co.uk.

Contacts for the Newsletter: Currently we are only able to publish online.

Editorial by email to the Editor, Jill Hipson Jill.hipson@live.co.uk. Copy date is 25th of each month.



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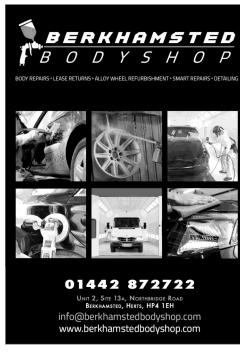
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A candle prayer

God. Wherever you are, I have no words to pray. I am in the darkness, Aching, Lost, In pain.

As I light my candle, I reach out to you, For my family and friends, For the world around me, For myself. Give me strength To face another day. Shine your light into my dark places And help me to know I am not alone.

Amen

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