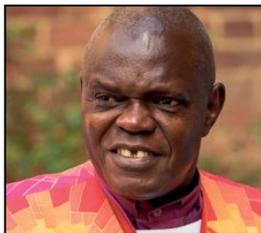


**Christy Wimber:  
 our views on  
 mental health  
 need to change,  
 p8,9**



DIGEST

York Consultation



With a year to go until the retirement of Dr John Sentamu, a public consultation is being held in York on 17 June to hear about the needs and qualities required in the next Archbishop of York.

The 7.30pm event, which is open to the public, will hear from the Prime Minister's Appointments Secretary, Edward Chaplin, and the Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments, Caroline Boddington, who jointly support the appointment process.

Views expressed at the meeting form part of a wider consultation that will feed into the Crown Nominations Commission, which in turn will recommend a name to the Prime Minister to submit to the Queen.

**Ethical fashion first**

Project Cece, a Dutch tech and fashion start-up founded by three young women from Amsterdam, is launching in the UK.

Project Cece is an online search engine that collects sustainable clothing from ethical webshops in one online site. Project Cece (which stands for Conscious Clothing) hopes to help consumers find ethical clothing of their choice.

PRICE £1.50 / €2.00 / \$2.50



# Oil companies 'can be low carbon and profitable'

IT IS possible to have a business strategy that is aligned with the need to transition to a low carbon economy, while also ensuring that the company is financially successful.

That was the message from the Church of England Pensions Board.

Adam Matthews, Director of Ethics and Engagement for the Church of England Pensions Board, made his comments as he was addressing the Royal Dutch Shell AGM in The Hague.

Matthews commended the oil company on its leadership, acknowledging that Shell's commitments that formed the basis for the Joint Statement between Shell and Climate Action 100 on tackling climate change, 'are transforming the debate between investors and oil and gas companies on climate change'.

Climate Action 100 is a collaborative engagement initiative of over 300 institutional investors and more than \$33 trillion in assets under management which encourages ambitious action on climate change.

"Shell's approach is beginning to demonstrate that it is possible to have a business strategy that is aligned with the need to transition to a low carbon economy, while also ensuring that the company is financially successful," he said.

He said that Shell's approach also establishes important principles including clarity of purpose, accountability to investors and wider society and internal accountability for delivery through inclusion of climate change targets into remuneration.

He said that the Joint Statement 'was a ground-breaking agreement that required vision from both the company and

investors to align our long-term interests to manage a complicated multi-decadal transition'.

"We believe that the Joint Statement presents a framework for other oil and gas companies and would strongly encourage them to follow suit – specifically in outlining of targets covering all emissions," he said.

The Church Commissioners also addressed BP's Annual

General Meeting in Aberdeen about net zero emissions.

Edward Mason, Head of Responsible Investment for the Church Commissioners, said they support BP's agreement to set out a strategy consistent with net zero emissions.

He asked BP to indicate a date by which it is planning to achieve net-zero emissions across its operations and products.

A climate change shareholder resolution was also passed with the support of 99.14 per cent of shareholders. The binding resolution, filed by investors acting as part of Climate Action 100, means the company will now need to set out a business strategy consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change. The resolution had received the support of the BP board.

## Choir's joy at Britain's Got Talent experience



THERE WAS joy amid the disappointment last weekend as the Truro Cathedral Choristers heard that they were not to proceed to the live semi-finals of *Britain's Got Talent*.

The week before they received a standing ovation and four yesses from the judges. Roger Bush, Dean of Truro, said: "The music our choristers make speaks to people – and the reaction of the audience and judges demonstrates that. It is very traditional, but it has the power to move people and that's something very special indeed."

The director of music, Christopher Gray, said: "We wanted to perform on *Britain's Got Talent* to connect with people beyond our usual boundaries, but also to give our boys and girls this once in a lifetime experience."

Benji, the 13-year-old Head Chorister, said: "Stepping on the stage was an amazing experience and the atmosphere was incredible, like nothing I have ever experienced before."



## Diocese of Portsmouth

Worshippers will mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day with a series of services, events and concerts.

Christ Church, in London Road, Widley, has a unique role in the history of D-Day. The commander-in-chief of the British Second Army, Lt General Miles Dempsey, had his main headquarters at Fort Southwick, and was supervising the build-up of hundreds of ships and landing craft in Portsmouth's Naval Base and in the Solent, as well as military equipment across south Hampshire.

He chose Christ Church as the venue for an Eve of Battle Dedication Service with senior officers and headquarters staff. The Vigil Service was arranged for the evening of Sunday 4 June. For reasons of secrecy, locals weren't allowed to attend, but the church was full to overflowing with soldiers.

So at 7pm on 4 June, 2019, Christ Church will recreate that historic service 75 years on, in tribute to the British, Commonwealth and Free French soldiers of the Second Army. Worshippers will use hymns, prayers and readings that were used in the 1944 service.

They'll also see the two memorial stained glass windows that were donated by Gen Sir Miles Dempsey as a thanksgiving for prayers answered. He returned to Christ Church on 6 June 1948 to unveil them as a permanent legacy of the church's role in D-Day.

## Diocese of Leeds

People from across the Diocese went out during Christian Aid Week to raise funds for the national charity, which works to support sustainable development, stop poverty, support civil society and provide disaster relief.

All Saints' Church, Kirby Hill, hosted a variety of activities, such as a five-km walk, a Christian Aid Lunch, coffee morning and door-to-door collections.

The Rev Alison Askew, incumbent for Kirby on the Moor and the surrounding benefice, said: "The small congregation of All Saints' in the village of Kirby Hill lived up to its reputation of being a generous church.

"A tiny but enthusiastic band worked amazingly hard to raise an incredible £1,400 for Christian Aid.

"Our strapline as a church is 'Reaching up to God: Reaching out to others' and we are committed to showing God's love in action through generosity and social concern."

The Eldwick Church managed to raise £500 by hosting a special Christian Aid Bread and Cheese Lunch.

## Diocese of Birmingham

The diocese and the Cadbury Centre are collaborating on the Minority Anglican Project, a large-scale research project that aims to explore and learn from the experiences of minority ethnic Anglicans in the Church.

The team are looking for participants to fill out a questionnaire that will help them gather information about the experiences of both clergy and laity within the Church. To pre-register for the questionnaire contact: [theminorityanglicanproject@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:theminorityanglicanproject@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

## Diocese of Chichester

On Friday 5 July around 60 walkers will be arriving in Brighton as they prepare to embark on a five-day walk from Brighton to Hastings.

This year the walkers will start from Brighton and walk to Lewes, then on to Alfriston. The walk then continues to Eastbourne where the Bishop of Lewes, Richard Jackson, will join the pilgrims' route through to Bexhill, to arrive in Hastings on the afternoon of Wednesday 10 July.

The walkers will stay overnight in church or village halls and every evening

invite the community to come and hear stories of those who have experienced life as a refugee or asylum seeker.

## Diocese of York



Vicar of Dunnington, Holtby, Stockton-on-the-Forest and Warthill, the Rev Nick Bird will be celebrating his 50th birthday by running 50 miles. This is not only to celebrate this milestone birthday, but also in order to raise money for Carecent – and the 50 homeless people for whom the charity provides clothes, friendship, and a place to wash.

On 7 June, Nick will be running from Witby to Dunnington, a challenge that will see him run the length of just under two marathons.

Speaking on the charity, Nick said: "It's salutary to hear stories of those who once had houses, jobs and families, but, because of various troubles, have now

slid to a lower rung on the social ladder. Like the game of snakes and ladders, it can be a short move for any of us."

Six mornings a week, Carecent provides breakfast, clothes, a place to wash, and friendship for those on the margins of society from its city centre location in the Central Methodist Church. The charity also does trips out, and connects those they help with agencies to strengthen support in the community, and aim to get people back on their feet.

To support the charity contact [revnickbird@gmail.com](mailto:revnickbird@gmail.com).

## Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

The Bishop's Council has taken to the road to engage with and learn from other organisations serving in the community.

Hosted by Rural Enterprise East at the Otley Campus of Easton and Otley College, members were given a tour of the campus to see how the college specialises in land-based studies by offering students a learning environment where they can study practical trades, modern technology and academic degrees.

Rural Enterprise East is the home of the administrative hub for Growing in God in the Countryside – the diocese's pioneering £2million project to be present in every rural community in the county.

The Ven Sally Gaze, Archdeacon for Rural Mission, said: "We were privileged to be the first community project to host the Bishop's Council. Growing in God in the Countryside is all about sharing God's love in rural communities. Plans made in partnership with the college include developing chaplaincy and Germinate Enterprise which helps people to start their own rural businesses."

The project will see venues such as cafés and tearooms host mini church services in a bid to tackle rural isolation and deprivation.

# THE DIARY

Send your events to [cen@churchnewspaper.com](mailto:cen@churchnewspaper.com) or Tweet @churchnewspaper

## 31 May

5.43am Prayer for the Day, Radio 4  
7.48am Thought for the Day, Radio 4  
9.45am Daily Service, Radio 4 LW

## 1 June

5.43am Prayer for the Day, Radio 4  
11am Coffee concert at St John's, Upper Norwood with Sylvan Ensemble. Free.

## 2 June

5.43am Bells on Sunday, Radio 4  
6am Good Morning Sunday, Radio 2  
6.05am Something Understood, Radio 4  
7.10am Sunday, religious and news and current

affairs programme, Radio 4

8.10am Sunday worship, Radio 4

9.30am Heart and Soul, BBC World Service

1.15pm Songs of Praise, BBC1

3pm Choral Evensong, Radio 3

8pm Compline by Candlelight, St Mary's, Farleigh. Ven Moira Astin on St Hild of Whitby

## 3 June

5.43am Prayer for the Day, Radio 4

7.48am Thought for the Day, Radio 4

9.45am Daily Service, Radio 4 LW

4.30pm Beyond Belief, Radio 4

6.30pm The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah's good news with Dr Robin Plant. £15, Trinity House, Southwark. Call: 01732252656.

## 4 June

5.43am Prayer for the Day, Radio 4

7.48am Thought for the Day, Radio 4

9.45am Daily Service, Radio 4 LW

12.15 Munch with Music at St John's, Caterham.

Free, donations welcome.

1.10pm Lunchtime concert, Chichester Cathedral, free.

## 5 June

5.43am Prayer for the Day, Radio 4

7.48am Thought for the Day, Radio 4

9.45am Daily Service, Radio 4 LW

3.30pm Choral Evensong, Radio 3

## 6 June

5.43am Prayer for the Day, Radio 4

7.48am Thought for the Day, Radio 4

9.45am Daily Service, Radio 4 LW

1.10pm Lunchtime concert at St Matthew's, Redhill.

## 7 June

5.43am Prayer for the Day, Radio 4

7.48am Thought for the Day, Radio 4

9.45am Daily Service, Radio 4 LW

1.10pm Lunchtime recital, Croydon Minster. Free, donations welcomed.

7.00pm 'Perform International' Choral Festival Tour

Gala Concert. Conductor – Dr Pearl Shangkuan Composer – Dr Dan Forrest Ensembles from across the US and the UK join together in Winchester to perform works by Dr Dan Forrest, scored for choir and with orchestra. Collaborating with an English Choir-in-residence, participating ensembles will take part in a 5-day festival experience led by Dr Forrest and supported by Dr Shangkuan. The Gala Concert, held at Winchester Cathedral, will mark the end of the festival tour. Organised by Perform International.

## 8 June

5.43am Prayer for the Day, Radio 4

10am Waterloo Music Festival, St George's Church. Continues until 16 June, performances in the daytimes and evenings.

## 9 June

5.43am Bells on Sunday, Radio

4 6am Good Morning Sunday, Radio 2

6.05am Something Understood, Radio 4

7.10am Sunday, religious and news and current affairs programme, Radio 4

8.10am Sunday worship, Radio 4

9.30am Heart and Soul, BBC World Service

12noon #Trafalgar Prayer: the culmination of Thy Kingdom Come in London's Trafalgar Square. Family festival noon-4pm, Main service 4-6pm.

1pm Big Prayer Picnic. Portchester Castle. See [www.portsmouth.anglican.org/thykingdom](http://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/thykingdom)

1.15pm Songs of Praise, BBC1

3pm Choral Evensong, Radio 3

8pm Compline by Candlelight, St Mary's, Farleigh. The Rev Tim Pike on Sts Cyril and Methodius.

## 10 June

5.43am Prayer for the Day, Radio 4

7.48am Thought for the Day, Radio 4



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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Australian law change

The Government of Western Australia is to change the law later this year to make it a legal requirement for ministers of religion to report child sexual abuse, even if the information is gained under the Seal of the Confessional.

Mandatory child sexual abuse reporting laws already apply to doctors, teachers and police in the Australian state.

### Theology decline

New figures from the British Academy reveal that the number of higher education students taking theology or religious studies at degree level has almost halved since 2011. That year there were over 14,000 students taking the courses but last year that figure dropped to 7,585. There has, however, been a rise in those taking philosophy courses.

### Devon Saint



Devon County Council has backed calls for St Boniface to become the Patron Saint of the county. There are now hopes that a 'Devon Day', marked on June 5, could now follow.

St Boniface (680-754) was born in Crediton, and is known in Church history as the Apostle to the Germans. Some regard him as "probably the greatest missionary since St Paul" for his extensive travels and successful evangelization efforts in modern-day Germany.

### Coventry concert

A special classical music concert is to be held in Coventry Cathedral tomorrow (1 June) to mark the 60th anniversary of the formal link established in 1959 when Coventry and Dresden became twinned cities.

### EU change welcomed

Bishop Paul Butler has joined politicians in welcoming a decision by Home Secretary Sajid Javid to drop a requirement that EU migrants will have to earn at least £30,000 following Brexit.

# Charity 'surprised' at Vicar's opposition

AN ORGANISATION that supports children and young people who are transgender and/or gender diverse said they are 'surprised' that a Church of England rector is 'complaining' about their training in a Church of England school when they are included in Church guidance on support for transgender people.

While the Church in its document 'Valuing all God's Children' only suggests and does not recommend the organisation Mermaids, it is included under 'helpful resources'.

The organisation said they are 'disappointed' after a school governor made a covert recording of their training and publicly denounced it.

The organisation said this is partly because the organisation's presentations are 'not held in secret and all of the scientific and legal information they offer is publicly available and well-tested'.

Mermaids offer training talks to schools promoting 'an inclusive and informed approach to trans children and those who support them'.

Mermaids was offering a talk at a school where there is a trans child and a school governor attended a training session for teachers.

The trainer visited the school at the request of staff of the Church of England school where they said 'a clandestine recording (was) made of the session by the school governor, a local clergyman'.

They also claim that 'the governor insisted on attending the session but did not challenge the points made during the talk' and 'only at the end did he make his comments'. Mermaids also noted that 'following our training, we received an email from the school offering sincere thanks for our informative, helpful and fun presentation'.

The organisation has challenged the selection of quotations from their talk that was covered in a story in *The Mail on Sunday*. They claimed that the newspaper 'has not provided the full transcript or audio recording' and there is 'a risk that the quotations are taken out of context'.

"The queries are about the

law and the science relating to transgender children. Both are subject to controversy, and there are a range of views and opinions. It is not news that this is the case," they said.

"We understand that the *Mail on Sunday* have been provided with critical opinions. Mermaids is constantly reviewing scientific literature and research, and will continue to do so, whilst maintaining an affirmative approach to treatment in line with World Professional Association on the subject."

Mermaids was brought in after staff were informed that a child wished to transition.

However, the Rev John Parker commented: "Given the Christian ethos of the school, and the fact that a certain percentage of parents have sent their children to a CofE school because they sought for their children a Christian education in line with their own beliefs, the issue needed to be handled with those sensitivities in mind, and it has not been."

He said that 'there was no pro-

ocol set within the school for how this matter would be announced or handled'.

"Many parents may well hold the view that sex and gender is fixed at birth and may wish to educate their children in line with those beliefs. Instead trans ideology was forced on their children as fact and without their knowledge," he added.

Following this Mr Parker quit his role as governor and clergyman in protest.

The Rev Tim Elbourne, director of education for the Diocese of Chelmsford, said: "Church of England schools are inclusive environments which nurture pupils to respect diversity of all kinds."

"Our schools must comply with the legal requirements of the Equalities Act 2010. Additionally, the Church of England, through its policy Valuing All God's Children, gives guidance for Church of England schools."

A spokesman for the school said: "We understand the concerns and convictions of the people on our governing body and we are very sorry he has left us."

### Minority boost

THE CHURCH of England took an important step this week in developing the role of minority ethnic Anglicans into its leadership.

Some 13 senior clergy completed the inaugural Bishop Wilfred Wood Leadership Programme, which aims to position experienced Black, Asian and minority ethnic clergy for senior roles in the Church of England.

Led by the Diocese of London, it complements existing initiatives working to transform the Church's leadership 'to better reflect the communities it serves'.

A spokesman said that the importance of development was highlighted by the



last census, which showed an increase in the number of people of Black and Asian minority ethnicities identifying as Christian. Despite this, in the Diocese of London

currently just five per cent of clergy and priests responsible for parishes are from BAME backgrounds, a figure reflected across the country.

## Church leaders pay tribute to Theresa May

FOLLOWING the announcement of Theresa May's plans to stand down, the Bishop of Birmingham, the Rt Rev David Urquhart, said: "Theresa May has given dedicated and committed public service to the country during very difficult times. I wish her and Philip well as they prepare for life beyond Downing Street."

Bishop Urquhart said he is 'especially grateful' to the Prime Minister for 'the priority she has given during her time in Government to addressing the evils of modern slavery, and for a focus on global freedom of religion and belief'.

"Theresa May reminded us of the importance of compromise. Now more than ever we need political leaders and Parliament to focus on what unites us, especially when it comes to a way forward with Brexit."

"That will be the biggest task facing our next Prime Minister. My hopes and prayers are for an orderly transition and for all those who continue to give themselves to public service in national and local life."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said the Prime Minister 'has shown determination, resilience and a sense of public duty that has

never wavered... a service to us all that deserves our admiration and gratitude'.

"As Mrs May prepares to stand down from office, this is a moment to pause and pray for her and her husband, Philip, whose support has been unwavering, and for all those around them working to ensure a smooth transition into new leadership," he said.

"Every day in churches across the country, we pray for our political leaders. We pray that they be guided and strengthened in wise leadership that strives for the common good. We pray too for their pro-

tection, safety and wellbeing in the roles they take on for the benefit of our communities and our nation. We also pray for their families who with them carry the burden that being in public life brings" he added.

"In these critical times in our shared national life, people of faith should commit to pray for all those who lead, all those who are led, and work together with all of goodwill, especially for those who are vulnerable and on the margins. As Christians we pray that our society would be shaped around Christ's hope-filled vision of abundant life for every person," he said.



# Bishops meet campaigners over Trans liturgy opposition

ORGANISERS of an open letter raising concerns about the bishops' guidance on transgender liturgy are still calling for withdrawal of the guidance after their meeting with bishops.

Organisers said after their meeting with the Bishop of Coventry, Dr Christopher Cocksworth, the Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt Rev Christine Hardman and the Bishop of Exeter, the Rt Rev Robert Atwell, that 'it was illuminating to hear of some of the complexities involved' in compiling the guidance.

The organisers of the letter include Dr Ian Paul, theologian Associate Minister at St Nic's, Nottingham, Archdeacon of Hastings Dr Edward Dowler, Vicar of All Saints, Ealing, the Rev Rachel Marszalek, and the Rev David Baker, an incumbent in the Diocese of Chichester.

They said that part of the problem with the guidance is

'the problematic wording'.

"There was agreement that a particularly pressing set of questions, both nationally and within the Church, surround the issue of assisting or encouraging children to undergo gender identity transition," they said.

They said they 'appreciated the clarification that had been given after the initial report was published, as well as the bishops' further assurances at this meeting, that the provisions of the guidance, even in adapted form, were totally inappropriate for those under the age of 18'.

However LGBT Faith UK said in response to the organisers' subsequent statements after the meeting that 'there is a great deal of what the writers said and much less of what the bishops said'.

Ann Redcliffe said of the statement, that 'no justification is given and it needs an explanation'.

"It may be as straightforward

as complying with UK policy, which is to delay gender surgery until a person is 18. There may be other reasons and it would have been helpful to avoid misunderstandings and ambiguity if the reason was given.

"After all, not everyone who transitions has gender surgery," she added.

In their statement, the delegation said there was 'concern that some responses to the open letter had been highly emotive in tone, and had failed to engage with the points that had actually been made'.

Moreover, they were concerned that 'parish churches served by both ordained and lay signatories of the open letter had subsequently been listed as ones that trans people and parents of trans children might want to think twice about attending'.

Redcliffe said that having chosen to list parishes and dioceses alongside the names of

the letter's signatories, it was 'naïve' of the organisers not to expect this.

"The letter organisers chose what information to ask people to disclose when they signed the letter.

"The organisers chose how much of that information to put in the public domain on the open letter website," she added.

Redcliffe argues that while the writers of the open letter argue that they want the guidance withdrawn, 'as the request for the guidance was produced by General Synod in response to a diocesan motion, if the writers want it to be withdrawn then the most appropriate way would be for them to ask General Synod to change their mind'.

"I must say that having reread the original open letter, I am led to wonder if the complaint is more about opposition to gender transition itself than to the actual guidance from the House of Bishops," she added.

## Alexa, say a prayer for me



WHY BOTHER going to church when you can ask the virtual assistant developed by Amazon to say your prayers?

This appears to be the trend as only seven per cent of the users of virtual assistant Alexa asked where their local church is, according to the Church of England's statistics on the use of the device.

Worshippers might be left bemused as to how the Church of England's use of digital media is ultimately encouraging people to its churches, particularly when Alexa is designed to integrate with A Church Near You, the Church of England's tool for people to find and connect them with the nearest church.

In a typical week people ask the following questions by topic area:

- Say a prayer – 40%
- Explore the Christian faith – 31%
- Read today's daily 'EasterPilgrim' reflection – 16%
- Where is my local church? – 7%
- Share a grace before a meal – 6%

## Churches Conservation Trust celebrates 50 years

THE CHURCHES Conservation Trust celebrated its 50th anniversary last week when supporters joined the charity's officers and representatives from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to celebrate the organisation's work.

Peter Ainsworth, chair of the trustees, said that while some people view old buildings as a 'bit of a bore', "We call them places of social value that bring real joy both through the real beauty that they offer but also through the numinous sense that they convey of something very spiritual to us all."

The Rev Duncan Dormer, a recently retired trustee, said that the charity's work was 'deeply impressive'. He suggested churches could learn from the charity in terms of looking after buildings, being innovative and being at the heart of their communities.

The chief executive, Peter Aiers, pointed out that the recent fire at Notre Dame in



Paris proved that buildings are important for communities.

"It would be a terrible loss if we were to deem these buildings irrelevant for the

future," he said.

"I would argue that historic parish churches mean the same to the place that they are in as Notre Dame does to Paris."



## Call for prayers after tornado storm

THE EPISCOPAL Church is calling for prayers after at least 29 tornadoes touched down in the Midwestern United States last week, including one that tore through Jefferson City, Missouri, destroying buildings and taking down power lines.

Three people have been killed as a result of these storms and at least 20 people have been injured.

Donations to the US Disaster Fund will help Episcopal Relief & Development respond to this emergency.

## Home Office begins review into asylum process

THE HOME Office has commissioned a review to investigate the way asylum claims based on religious grounds and LGBT+ are assessed.

According to the Home Secretary, the Home Office has been working closely with the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Asylum Advocacy Group (AAG) to help improve their approach to religious-based claims.

They worked with them recently to develop and produce

a specialist training package.

The Asylum Learning and Development Team started to deliver this training on religious claims on 8 April, and it will be mandatory for all asylum decision-makers.

The aim of the course is to ensure that where religion or belief is raised in an asylum claim, decision-makers 'appropriately consider' all the available evidence in accordance with international, European and domestic law and Home Office policy, when interviewing asylum seekers and making decisions on their claims.

According to the Department, the aim and approach of the Review will be to ensure that empathy and religious literacy is considered by decision-makers when assessing these 'highly complex claims, acknowledging the impact of their decision whilst ensuring appropriate rigour is applied as these routes can be open to fraudulent claims'.

Humanists UK's Director of Public Affairs and Policy Richy Thompson commented: "We welcome the Government's review into asylum claims on the basis of religion or belief

persecution and LGBT+, the acknowledgement that they involve very vulnerable people, and the acceptance that decision-makers must better consider the evidence on religion or belief persecution, as well as empathy, in response to asylum applications.

"The right to asylum for those facing persecution is a matter of life and death and it is important that decision-makers recognise that non-religious beliefs such as humanism are equally protected under human rights law," a spokesman said this week.



## Welcome for Indonesian President

CHRISTIANS in Indonesia have welcomed the re-election of their President Joko Widodo, whose second term was announced on 22 May.

Some 190 million people cast their ballot on 17 April, the largest one-day election in the world. As well as choosing a President, electors also voted in new members of parliament and local legislators.

Widodo won the support of Christians in areas like Papua, North Sulawesi and Nusa Tenggara Timur, while his opponent, Prabowo Subianto, found support in conservative Muslim areas such as Aceh and West Sumatra.

The Christian charity Open Doors said that local Christians explained why they were supporting the candidate.

"He has been developing the infrastructure in Eastern Indonesia, where most Christian-majority regions are located. Many of these places were ignored and under-developed during previous regimes," they were told.

International observers suggested that Widodo's second term will include a heavy focus on the economy, continuing his emphasis on infrastructure spending, social welfare programmes, and efforts to turn Indonesia into a manufacturing powerhouse.

Despite support from local Christians, Widodo has been criticised for not protecting the rights of the minorities, for keeping silent about church closures and the criminalisation of religious cases.

One of the most prominent cases was that of Ahok, the former governor of Jakarta, who was accused of blasphemy and sentenced to two years in jail in May 2017.

Since a law of 'religious harmony' was passed in Indonesia in 2016, more than 1,000 churches have been closed or prevented from being built in the country. Since then minority faiths have had to secure the support of the local majority group before building places of worship.

The 32.4 million Christians in Indonesia make up 12.1 per cent of the total population of 266 million.

The majority of the population are Muslims.

Although Indonesia's constitution promotes religious freedom, Islamic extremist groups are becoming more influential. The country's Aceh province adopted Islamic law (Sharia) in 2001, which poses a threat to Christians and other religious minorities.

# Church leaders welcome Modi victory, but concerns remain

CHURCH LEADERS have welcomed the re-election of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister of India, but campaigners warned that his nationalist stance could leave Christians vulnerable.

The recent election, which took place in seven stages, saw 900 million people eligible to vote.

The turnout at 67 per cent was the highest ever in an Indian general election and it also saw the highest participation by women.

The main opponent of Mr Modi and his BJP party, Rahul Gandhi's Indian National Congress and the United Progressive Alliance failed to secure the 10 per cent of the seats needed, meaning that India is without an official opposition party.

Archbishop Joseph D'Souza, on behalf of the Good Shepherd Churches in India and All India Christian Council has congratulated His Excellency Shri Narendra Modi on his historic landslide win.

The Archbishop said that the members of the All India Christian Council and their churches would be praying for Shri Narendra Modi and his government 'as he governs the nation with challenges ahead of him'.

However, other Christian groups were more circumspect.

Prime Minister Modi has appealed to a sense of Hindu nationalism, prompting concerns from other religious communities.

Some observed that the tightening nationalist grip on India was concerning Christians, who are suffering increasing violence at the hands of extremists. Evangelical Christians warn that religious polarisation in the country is now at an all-time high.

The Christian campaigning group Release International said that attacks against India's Christian minority have more than doubled since the BJP came to power in 2014. That year, Christians suffered 147 attacks. But by the end of the BJP's first term in office, that number had risen to 325.

The Evangelical Fellowship of India said that in 2018 violence against Christians had soared by 57 per cent.

"Indian Christians fear this further shift towards nationalism could lead to even more attacks against their community," warned Paul Robinson, the CEO of Release International, which supports persecuted Christians around the world.

"For years now, Indian nationalist extremists have been fostering intolerance towards Christians, which is increasingly spilling over into violence. At worst, that attitude holds that to be Indian is to be Hindu - and that minorities, including Christians, will no longer be tolerated."

While he sent his congratulations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he added his concern: "Mr Modi, please



guarantee the security of your Christian community, who fear your party's success could lead to further violence.

"Please make it absolutely clear that aggression in the name of nationalism or religion will not be tolerated."

Some Christians in India fear the new government will come under pressure to drop the secular constitution that underpins the world's largest democracy, and instead establish India as a Hindu nation.

Paul Robinson observed: "Such a backward step could do untold damage to community relations in India." He called on Mr Modi to make it clear that he will uphold India's secular constitution 'and the guarantee of religious freedom it extends to

every Indian citizen'.

Those concerns are well founded. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom said recently that hate crimes in India are rising. The Commission said that one third of Indian states were enforcing anti-conversion laws.

Out of the country's population of 1.3 billion, only 26 million are Christians.

Evangelicals have been reporting increasing attacks, with the bulk of these taking place in Uttar Pradesh. Although the number of Christians there is 'tiny' the number of attacks has been rising steadily since last September and locals say that the disruption of church services is common.

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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## Prayer call

Sir, As we approach the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of D-Day I think we should be reminded of the prayerful way in which the troops were prepared by the vigil in Christ Church, Portsdown, on the Sunday before the invasion. In those days the importance of prayer to Almighty God on significant occasions was not ignored.

I have been waiting in vain for a call from senior figures within the Church of England that the nation should be led humbly to approach the Throne of Grace seeking Almighty God at this time of confusion and paralysis. I know there have been churches and organisations that have held their own services but we are a Christian nation with a monarch crowned most solemnly before God and the people.

Perhaps the outgoing prime minister, seen weekly attending church, could approach the Archbishop of Canterbury to arrange such a National Day of Prayer with Her Majesty The Queen leading the way in Westminster Abbey. What a wonderful close to her otherwise disappointing period in office.

**Philippa Clark,**  
*Pontyclun*

## Brexit bias

Sir, Andrew Carey's Brexit bias strikes again (24 May), misquoting Sir John Major and Michael Heseltine, as if they had called all Brexit supporters "extremist".

He seems oblivious to Nigel Farage's calling MPs "enemies of democracy" (for wanting another democratic vote) and Theresa May's calling anyone with a bigger view of the world than our British citizenship "citizens of nowhere".

Political discourse may be at an all-time low, but I don't think he'll find any particular high ground on the Brexit side.

**The Rev Canon Steve Parish,**  
*Warrington*

## Place of the Bible

Sir, In her 24 May letter, Serena Lancaster denigrates those faithful to the Bible for making it a 'Paper Pope.' When the alternative is the arbitrary Liberal fascists' impositions by majority rule, I much prefer to submit to the unchanging moral standards God has revealed in Scripture.

Without comparing Scripture with Scripture she trots that "we are made in the image of God and so each one has an innate dignity and worth." Is this truth without any limit or qualification? Certainly Adam was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) but then that image was marred.

In view of this Fall and the plan of redemption, Paul tells us of an elect whom God "did foreknow, ... did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). If all were already conformed to the image of God the Son, this would be unnecessary?

Looking at a coin bearing the image of Caesar our Lord delineated his Kingdom which he declared and counselled us to give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar's Kingdom while giving ourselves to God as his image bearers.

## Encouragement

Sir, I was greatly encouraged by two articles in *The Church of England Newspaper* on 17 May. Firstly a phrase from Richard Bewes: 'Prayer doesn't merely support the work; prayer is the work'. Secondly, an exegesis of Matthew 16 by Habib Badr of Beirut, saying 'The gates of hell will not prevail' against the church.

Dr Badr said that Hell's gates are not to let their armies attack, but to keep the church from invading it. It reminds me of CT Studd, who wanted to "run a rescue shop within a yard of hell". I feel that prison chaplains are operating in such an establishment. Furthermore, the prayers of the Church assist us in our work. I don't naturally talk either of heaven or of hell; a prison is a secular place. However, it is also part of the Kingdom of God, where the creator and saviour is changing hearts and lives to do his new work. I believe we have a better offer than the drug dealers, and a power beyond theirs.

Please ask the church outside the prison gates to pray, that God liberate men inside from any lingering destructive habits.

**The Rev Philip Tyers,**  
*Church of England chaplain, HMP Liverpool*

Yet our Lord asserted of some: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44). Are such reflecting the image of God?

Are not the godly who are God's image bearers, who share God's attribute of Justice required to punish such murderers with capital punishment: "for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). Does not God's Old Testament justice also require capital punishment for those living in incorrigible rebellion against God's standards? Or is God, as Serena implies, now pleased to bless such rebellion?

**AB MacFarlane,**  
*Stoke-on-Trent*

## Creation ordinance

Sir, One is left with the impression, after reading the letter from Serena Lancaster (24 May), that Almighty God is indifferent about how we humans use our sexuality.

Nothing is further from the truth. Right at the beginning, in Genesis, God laid out his creation ordinance for marriage and sexual relationship. This was confirmed by Our Lord Jesus Christ as recorded by Matthew.

Contained in the Scriptures of Leviticus, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy are to be found the teachings against homosexual activity. The biblical witness for normal marriage, and against aberrant sexual activity, is hardly "selective quotes from sacred texts".

The current situation concerning Relationships and Sex Education Regulations must be of grave concern when one reads that the Peter Tatchell Foundation, backed by the actor Stephen Fry (both antipathetic to Christian morality), wish to promote explicit teachings in schools about same sex activity with the promotion of safer alternatives to "intercourse" such as encouragement to "oral sex" and "mutual masturbation". Is this really what young children should be exposed to?

Almighty God set boundaries on sexual activity for very good reasons. When will people like Serena Lancaster, and indeed some of our bishops, wake up and stop conflating love with aberrant sexual activity?

**Alan Minchin,**  
*Stratford-upon-Avon*

## New blog

Sir, I want to make readers aware of my new blog

site, Advice for Authors. It's already attracting a lot of interest. Those who subscribe get a free copy of my new book, THE HERO (only available to A4A subscribers), in which I introduce the Hero's Journey to a new generation of readers.

Have a look and, if you like it, please point others who are writers or budding writers to it too. It's going to be full of free goodies. Already is!

[www.advice4authors.com](http://www.advice4authors.com)  
**Dr Mark Stibbe,**  
*Author*

## Bishop's stance

Sir, It is very worrying when a bishop does not give support to a vicar who backs up his understanding of the teaching of the Bible with biological fact, and therefore allows a church school to be influenced by contradictory modern liberal teaching. The church must stand by scripture, especially when scientific evidence is in agreement. False teaching, however well-intentioned or following misunderstanding of legislation, all too often undermines what God wants for individuals, families and society.

**J Longstaff,**  
*Buxted, E Sussex*

## YOUR TWEETS and POSTS

**Bentley Browning** @bentleybrowning  
Want to put more humour into your sermon? Comedy for Clergy - Sat 1st June. Will be filmed by BBC.2pm [comedynovices.com/comedy-for-clergy](http://comedynovices.com/comedy-for-clergy)... Tweet me to register. Free Event.

**Diocese of Norwich** @DioceseNorwich  
Whatever the #EUElectionResults we can still see Christ in those we disagree with. [ow.ly/G0bd30oPBbA](http://ow.ly/G0bd30oPBbA)

**USPG** @USPGglobal  
We had a great time at @BigChurchDayOut, if you want to find out more about us visit our website [uspg.org.uk](http://uspg.org.uk) #BCDO

**Tim Farron** @timfarron  
Stonking result for the Lib Dems, but who are the 8% massochists in Gibraltar voting for Brexit? I assume they aren't planning on living there for long...

**Durham Cathedral** @durhamcathedral  
Due to exhibition changeover, Durham Cathedral Library will be temporarily closed from 4.30pm on Friday 31 May and Open Treasure will be closed from 5pm on Saturday 1 June. Both will reopen at 10am on Tuesday 11 June. Apologies for any inconvenience. [buff.ly/2JF27Zt](http://buff.ly/2JF27Zt)

## MEME of the Week

Jesus: "table for 26 please"  
Waiter: "but there are 13 of you"  
J: "yes but we're all going to sit on same side"



## Engage in debate, but don't insult, smear or attack opponents

Whatever the outcome of the Brexit turmoil engulfing the nation, every citizen has the duty to uphold the process of democracy, a most precious gift and legacy hard won by our forebears.

In this context the phenomenon of people hurling large milkshakes at others whose views they disagree with is disturbing. Evidently this has become fashionable and spread through social media as a justifiable practice to damage the victim's credibility. Nigel Farage had this done to him, causing him to gain more publicity and no doubt gain him far more sympathy than the opposite.

An elderly teller at a polling station wearing his Brexit Party rosette, a man with a distinguished record of military service, had the same treatment meted out to him. Janice Turner discussed this practice in her *Times* article: "Lefty activists, like smug cyclists and selfish parents, wrongly believe they are so superior that they can set the rules."

She argues that a certain category of person believes themselves to be on the moral high ground and therefore justified in committing criminal acts against others. Cyclists can scream at pedestrians and ride on pavements, vegans can occupy restaurants and terrify the diners, parents might change a dirty nappy on a restaurant table, activists can attack their political opponents. She calls this 'moral licence', which makes perpetrators exceptions to the normal rules of law.

What is perhaps even more disturbing is the indulgent attitude of senior figures to such behaviour. Sir Vince Cable chided Nigel Farage for pressing charges against his milk-throwing assailant as being 'precious'. To that Farage replied that Sir Vince had taken as his campaign slogan 'B...ks to Brexit', an inflammatory term. Would Sir Vince volunteer to get the same treatment, ruining an expensive suit and causing shock and fear? Zoe Williams called the attack 'playful', again a disingenuous justification and even encouragement to others. So far the one major political figure who has outrightly condemned the aggression is Tony Blair, who said that while Farage was a political opponent he had every right to give his views and not be assaulted.

Janice Turner rightly agrees with Tony Blair, and points out that this self-justification for assault and damage could know no limits, indeed the Guido Fawkes Blog reports a senior left wing charity boss regretting that the milk was not acid thrown at Farage – a truly reckless statement – possibly hate crime – and encouraging serious criminal grievous bodily harm.

Why should anyone consider themselves morally superior so as to justify breaking the law? Presumably the same sort of attitude that ignores serious debate with opponents and instead resorts to insult and smear.

The Christian message teaches the very opposite: we must engage in self-criticism, take the beam out of our own eye, and reach out to tribal opponents as did the Good Samaritan. Politicians might well look back to the Scottish Labour leader John Smith, who openly based his politics on Christian principles. Disdain and contempt have no place in a mature democratic process.

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## Peter Mullen

# Music to end by

We've known for a long time that some funny things go on at funerals, and some of the funniest are the musical choices. When I was ordained – just after the Norman Conquest – the favourites were such as O God our help in ages past and Abide with me. But in a survey published a couple of weeks ago, these stalwarts were shown to have been supplanted by a pop version of *Bohemian Rhapsody* and Freddie Mercury's *These are the days of our lives*. Other popular choices were Robbie Williams' *Angels* and the anthem of the Liverpool Kop *You'll never walk alone*.

Though I can't imagine why any Christian should request John Lennon's nihilistic doggerel which goes:

*Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try,  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people living for today*

That recent survey revealed that many – "mourners" doesn't seem the right word somehow – want "something to make us giggle" when we are saying goodbye – or hopefully au revoir – to our loved ones. An old lady in the parish of St Mary, Oldham, where I was once curate, asked for George Formby's *When I'm cleaning windows* and a colleague told me of someone else who had If I knew you were coming I'd have baked a cake. So that's what the messianic banquet is all about, is it?

I recall one particularly hilarious apocalypse at the crematorium – I'd better not say which crematorium in order to protect the innocent. I was warned that when you pushed the button at the end of the service there would be a nasty surprise. The mechanism was old and crabby. I pushed the button for the coffin to start its mechanical journey through the curtains and into the beyond. There was a great CHUNG! And everyone looked up, startled. But that little disturbance was only for starters...

The coffin was supposed to pass through the curtains and on to a trolley placed in the anteroom by the two cheerful necrophiles who acted as vergers. Supposed to. Only this time they had forgotten.

So off goes Uncle Fred through the crack of doom. And suddenly there's an almighty CRASH! Followed by the loud utterance of two words from what I suppose we must call the other side – the second word was hell! The first word is altogether unmentionable! The congregation were paralysed, no doubt thinking that those two words were Uncle Fred's first disapproving comments on the life of the world to come. I went behind. What a scene: imagine the dead Scrooge in his nightshirt, the vergers' copy of *The Sun* having fallen across his face.

When I was a country parson in North Yorkshire, the two local pubs – The Boot & Shoe and The Spotted Ox used to vie for business in the funeral trade, each determined to outdo the other in the choice and quality of the baked meats. These repasts were sumptuous but the professional fees meagre. I remember mine was six quid and my pal Tim Tunnard the organist got four. This was our beer money, which Tim gratefully referred to as our "beer money."

The funeral director – though he was merely the undertaker in those more modest days – was the tall, elegant Denis Backhouse, immaculate, back straight as a guardsman's and his metronomical tread from the lych-gate to the church porch smart as anything you can see at The Trooping the Colour. His presence was massively



reassuring. As Margery Firth, landlady of The Boot & Shoe told me more than once over the pints of valedictory Sam Smith's ale: "It'll be a sheer pleasure to snuff it, knowing I can have Denis in charge of proceedings."

But back to the choice of music: I don't think we should be hard and fast about what people are allowed and what not. Tastes vary. What one would describe as beautiful solemnity, another would reject as a mere dirge. And one man's irreverent pop jingle is another's cheerful tribute. Anyhow, here's my own modest contribution:

*Our funeral music used to be  
Amazing Grace, Abide With Me;  
Serious anthems went down best  
When we went to our last rest.*

*But now they sing a different tune,  
Roll Out The Barrel or Blue Moon;  
A crematorial surprise  
Is hearing Smoke Gets In Your Eyes.*

*And we saw off our Uncle Ben  
With Will Ye No Come Back Again?  
(Ben's wife then begged us to cremate her  
To See You Later Alligator)*

*At old Aunt Florrie's swinging wake,  
If I Knew You Were Coming, I'd Have Baked A  
Cake;  
And when our granddad was a goner,  
Something raunchy by Madonna.*

*And some there be complete life's toils  
And shuffle off these mortal coils  
While all the consecrated ground  
Pulsates to hear the Mersey Sound.*

*By all means rest from all your labours  
To that maudlin theme from Neighbours;  
But is it seemly to peg out  
Amid the shrieks of Twist And Shout?*

*So what's the tune requested most  
By them that do give up the ghost?  
Crimond? The Ending Of The Day?*

*No. We boast I Did It My Way*

My own choice would be from two or three pieces by Mozart: Porgi Amor sung by Suzanne Danco, Dove Sono with Miah Persson or the Agnus Dei from his Coronation Mass. Then I'd know I'd arrived in heaven!



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Christy Wimber explains in her new book how her thinking about healing, and its relation to mental health, has changed

# A question of Healing

By Colin Blakely

The issue of mental health has risen to the top of the agenda in recent years. Last year the Government changed the way the National Health Service deals with the issue, with Prime Minister Theresa May saying that the disparity between how physical health and mental health are treated was an 'historic injustice'.

But the subject gained an even higher profile with the launch of Heads Together — a mental health initiative spearheaded by the Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and The Duke and Duchess of Sussex.

This combines a campaign to tackle stigma and change the conversation on mental health with fundraising for a series of innovative new mental health services.

And last month Prince William took part in Royal Team Talk, a documentary that saw him chatting to sports personalities such as Thierry Henry, Gareth Southgate and Peter Crouch.

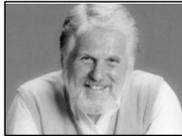
The subject has also been addressed by an array of Christian writers and the latest to do so has a unique perspective.

Christy Wimber is internationally known as a leader in the charismatic movement, having grown up in her father's Vineyard church. But while healing was the 'normal way of life' there in John Wimber's church, she found her views being reshaped.

In her new book, *Wholeness*, she is joined by Katharine Welby-Roberts to explore the key issues surrounding mental health and the attitudes of the churches.

She told me that writing the book had been 'a bit of a journey' for her. And what she began to understand was that her previous views were based on 'poor theology'.

"I began to encounter



John Wimber

different things where I felt like the Lord was getting my attention and I looked at some of the ways that we were ministering in church, praying for people, and at the same time really learning more about mental health."

One of the things that surprised her was how prevalent mental health issues were in the life of the Church. Not only in the lives of some of the key figures in the Bible, but in influential church leaders down the centuries.

"Somebody asked me the other day in my cell group about this and I said 'we've always had mental health. You can't go through the scriptures and you cannot

**The church can be a judgemental place, myself included, which is why I share my own prejudices that I had**

read your church history and not realise how many people had poor mental health."

But for us, she points out: "Most of the time people don't think about mental health until it begins to fail, so we should all be aware of this all the time."

In her book she quotes a survey that found 48 per cent of evangelicals thought prayer alone could overcome mental illness.

That statistic frightened her. "I found it frightening and I found it frustrating. Because if somebody has suffered from it the view is that you should just pray more. That's a bit of torture," she said.

People would question a person's level of faith. "I've heard that thousand times over: I must not have enough faith because I pray and this isn't changing." But, she observes, this just 'creates more anxiety'.

From a faith perspective, she believes that the situation facing those suffering from mental ill-health is worse.

"If you take medicine for your heart we wouldn't say anything about it. We would think, of course take medicine for your heart if

you need it. But when it comes to the brain somehow that's different and it is stigmatised, but it's no different.

"If you need to take a bit of medication for your heart, or diabetes, or pain medication that's one thing, but if something's broken in your brain well then of course if you need medication then take it!"

But she adds: "For some reason we've correlated something with the brain and making it a faith issue rather than a health issue."

And it was partly this judgemental approach in the churches that caused her to rethink her views.

"The church can be a judgemental place, myself included, which is why I share my own prejudices that I had and my old judgements because I think it's important that you know the sort of journey I have been on myself."

Although she concedes that 'some belief systems are just not right and very unloving', she maintains that this is 'mostly unintentional'.

"We like things to be fixed and when things aren't fixed — and people aren't fixed — it disrupts our world and we don't tend to like that. When people don't become like us we are really good at telling them."

She adds: "I think that judgement causes people to isolate and to feel more ashamed and I think that the church has done a bit of damage feeling like it is their responsibility to fix people and that's not what Jesus meant."

She encountered a bit of the reality of this during the

Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand. Although she had experience of earthquakes herself in America, what she encountered there was on a different scale, literally and metaphorically.

"I was only there a couple days after the massive quake and then I was flown home. But nobody back home understood what I thought we'd been through."

While those back in Christchurch had each other for support, the shock was something that left her feeling isolated. "There's an element of that which affected my mental health of course and so sometimes the body will physically act out what's happening with us emotionally. That's really kind of what happened to me."

She did seek medical help and was

prescribed anti-anxiety medication but she didn't want to take it.

"I so struggled with it because I felt this should be something I should have control over. It felt so uncontrollable and I felt like this was something that actually wasn't fixing this, and I found that really frustrating and really challenged my faith."

The church leader stresses: "We all have mental illness in some form or other, because if you really study it, which is what I've done the last several years now, it's so vast, it is massive. There is no health without mental health

and if you were to really look at what



mental health means, then it affects each and every one of us. The important aspect is to know that the things we grew up with, or the traumas we have encountered, all of these affect our body, soul and spirit. Acknowledging those things can help us become whole."

In the book she writes that 'you may have no control over what happens to you but you

do have control over your own emotional healing'. What did she mean by that?

"We are going to go through all kinds of things in this life and we don't get to pick what happens to us in a lot of ways but I think there is an ownership and healing when it comes to how we deal with it."

"To pray for healing is a command in the scriptures so

I think as a believer there's some aspect of our faith where we trust God and we ask God to heal us.

"I think it is ownership and taking responsibility when it comes to our physical, emotional and spiritual health that I become as whole as I can this side of heaven."

"Becoming whole emotionally means I have to acknowledge that I'm an

emotional person. I have feelings and there are times where you have to get some help."

She believes that it is important that the church gets better education in the area. "It is becoming more and more prevalent where mental illness is coming to the fore."

And the clergy (and other church leaders) have a responsibility to change their tone and be more understanding.

However, she also cites research that 50 per cent of the clergy will suffer with mental health problems.

"The number one problem among clergy is loneliness and the other one is mental ill-health; if you combine those together that's pretty tragic. If you're isolated and alone and struggling, that's a recipe for disaster."

She adds: "I think we have a culture where we create leaders that are superheroes rather than human and this is not realistic. This leaves no room for church leaders to be human and church leaders are, at the end of the day, still human."

"I realise that in church we tend to put people on pedestals. I think of them as above heartache and above hardship and above sickness and pain but that's not the reality."

And the woman who married charismatic leader

John Wimber's son has a clear message.

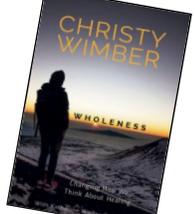
"What I would like to see is the church becoming more open. We cannot expect people to come into church if they fear retribution and judgement."

And there is a direct call. "I think if people ask me what is the most important gift that God has given to us as the church I would say it is kindness, because it is God's kindness that leads to repentance and disarms people."

"That's really what Acts 10:38 talks about: Jesus went around doing acts of kindness and it is a powerful kindness."

She concludes: "The most loving thing you can do is actually learn more about what people are living with because the one thing we don't get back is our time."

*Wholeness by Christy Wimber with Katharine Welby-Roberts is published by Monarch, price £9.99*



What does church life look like from the perspective of a female Vicar's partner?

# Mr Clergy Spice

By Dave Eldergill

Five o'clock in the morning and a phone is ringing. That's never good! A telephone phone call in the middle of the night is unlikely to be someone ringing for a friendly chat.

Struggling to both wake up and not panic at the same time I realise it is my wife's mobile, which is penetrating my dreams, and not her personal mobile but her church phone. Sensibly, she has two telephones, one for family and one for church business. That is the number emblazoned on the church notice board, the number which on this cold and dark winter's morning is still ringing and needs answering.

I can relax, there is obviously no crisis with the children or grandchildren, I don't need to mount the white charger and rush off to the rescue, I can stay beneath my warm duvet and go back to that lovely dream, somewhere sunny and hot that I was in the middle of enjoying.

I overhear the conversation; it's not the anxious relative of a dying parishioner but the local police. The church door is wide open and the lights are on, they have been in to check and can't see anybody inside, but in case anything is missing, they leave an incident number and pass the matter over to my wife. Obviously she needs to make the short journey to the church and investigate and also obviously I am not going to let her go out in the freezing, dark night on her own. Resigned I get dressed, put on a warm coat and walk down with her to the church.

It turned out that the last person to leave the day before had forgotten to turn out the lights and to close the large wooden door but fortunately nobody had been in and stolen the silver. However, it made me think about what it means to be married to clergy. To consider how my life has changed in ways I could not have possibly imagined when back on that day in the cathedral, I had watched the Bishop lay his hand on her head and her new role as a curate began.

I am not keen on labels and the term "atheist" seems to me as though it has an almost pejorative ring to it. Nevertheless I don't have a belief in God. I'm quite happy to sit on the fence and declare that "I just don't know". If I must have a label, then I suppose agnostic will do. And yet here I am, married to a Vicar in the Church of England with all the cake baking, fete attending and



handshaking with a smile, expectations that such a position involves.

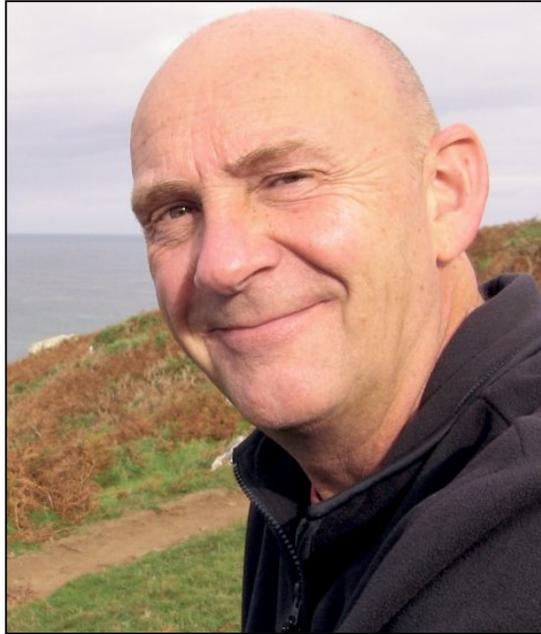
My background is from a non-conformist tradition and my only knowledge of the Church of England was gained from either twee 1970s television comedies or the more up to date but equally unrealistic "Vicar of Dibley". I had been to a few traditional church weddings and had also been along to social events at the church my wife attended before ordination, which, as it was very evangelical in it's outlook, didn't seem too dissimilar to the churches I had known as a younger man.

Following ordination, Sharon began her role as curate in a far more traditional church to the one where she had just left. It was a church where the worship was a lot less like the hands waving in the air, imitation of a contemporary music concert, a sort of Coldplay lite, if you will but something much more similar to what I had seen on television's "Songs of Praise".

And so her spiritual journey and growth continued and as the vocation is hers alone, ours is not a joint ministry, I have tried to find where it is that I fit in. There may have been a time, back when ordained ministry was the preserve of the men, that congregations naturally assumed that they were getting two for the price of one. It was expected that the Vicar's wife could and should, of course, have a role in her husband's ministry. That wifely role might include Sunday school teaching; women could be trusted to instruct the young, just woe betide them if they ventured to have a leadership role over men.

They could possibly run a midweek ladies Bible study, or take charge of the flower rota and if they were musical then the church would also get a new organist for free.

Fortunately those days are largely a thing of the past. Women now represent nearly a third of ordained priests in the Church of England and this change in the gender of clergy has had an effect on the expectations made on clergy



spice, (I do like that term by the way, so much more affirming and jolly than Vicar's husband).

These days it would seem I'm not even expected to attend church regularly, which is a great relief to me as the prospect reminds me too much of childhood Sundays sitting quietly in my short trousers and polished shoes, listening to terribly long sermons. I do, however, go to important events, such as the service when the Bishop licensed Sharon, as this is about showing support and about me also being part of the community.

When I do attend an event or service, then everyone at the church is very welcoming and pleased to see me without the expectation that I will convert. There is no proselytising pressure, which for me is definitely better than my memories of being made to feel guilty at an evangelical meeting when I didn't want to sign on the dotted line.

I do however have a little rebellion when I am there and always pass the offering plate on. I don't like to feel as if I should have to put money into the collection. My wife is a non-stipendiary minister or, to use the current terminology, is self-supporting in her ministry. As she has no income this in effect means supported in her role as Vicar by my income. I feel no need to put any more in the collection plate.

One of the first ways her new

position impacted on me was because of the uniform. In the Church of England, because the clergy wear a dog collar and they are identifiable in a crowd, everyone can see who they are. When we are out together, I get lumped in to the expectations of the role by default.

People will approach and talk to clergy, whether they are known to them or not and for my wife this visible aspect of being part of the community is very much an integral part of her ministry. The collar does not embarrass me but it can be a little frustrating that a five-minute walk to the pub will usually take a good half an hour or more. There is always someone who needs to talk to the Vicar and if it is of a personal or private nature then I have to try to blend into the background, study the contents of a shop window and try not to listen.

I am also handy to be called upon to move chairs and tables, which in our more equal and liberated world, still seems to be expected of me because I'm a man. Equally though, I have done my fair share of making cups of tea and washing dishes.

I often wonder how Prince Phillip felt about his role as the Queen's consort, playing second fiddle as she attended all the great events of state, only there because he was married to the office as well as the person.

With the connection that still exists between church and state, the Vicar has a secular as

well as spiritual position in the local community and I, like the aforementioned Prince, have had my share of hobnobbing with the local dignitaries.

And also like Phillip, I have had to try and find a role for myself in the community, which is not contingent on being married to someone with such a high profile. I have interests and skills in visual arts and music and have therefore been able to follow my own path, which is equally as important to helping to maintain the community in which we live.

There is the sense that both our lives are lived under a degree of scrutiny, the moral high ground that clergy necessarily have to inhabit also extends to their families. I don't believe I have any skeletons in my closet waiting to be exposed but I am more conscious now to avoid the minor indiscretions that previously would not have been quite such an issue.

Getting a speeding ticket is hardly a hanging offence but nevertheless I am now much more aware of when a 40 mile an hour limit changes to a 30 mile an hour limit and therefore much less likely to receive the points on my licence than ever before. Being known in a small community has its downside as well as the many benefits.

It would seem to me as the husband of a priest that the historical notion of the male Vicar and his obedient wife ministry team is a thing of the past. The church reflecting the changes we have seen in society in general, albeit slightly lagging behind in implementing them.

I quite expect that the attitudes that exist now towards the position of the LGBT community in the life of the church will also eventually catch up with the more inclusive and less prejudiced way individuals live their lives outside of the church environment.

I can see this happening now in more and more churches but radical change takes time. There are still those who will not accept communion if given to them by a woman and I am sure there will be those who will not accept the same from a gay priest.

As someone who is not part of the church community but keenly observes all that goes on from the margins, I believe that all these disagreements and controversies are in fact fairly meaningless if everyone just follows the most basic tenet of the faith and loves their neighbour as themselves.





# Paying tribute to Theresa May

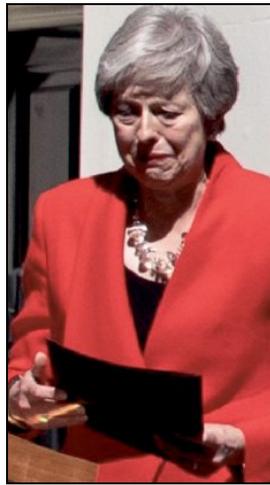
There has been some ugly, grotesque and self-righteous reactions to Theresa May's resignation from many of her critics in press and politics, but all those who were close to her and have worked with her talk about a person with an unwavering sense of devotion and duty.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, who has got to know her extremely well over the past three years through regular meetings and many chance conversations at state events, reflects much wider public sympathy for the Prime Minister.

"... Theresa May has shown determination, resilience and a sense of public duty that has never wavered. That is a service to us all that deserves our admiration and gratitude."

And although his personal warmth towards the Prime Minister is clear the Archbishop makes no further remarks on the Prime Minister's qualities and instead goes on to comment on the need to pray for political leaders.

And this reveals much about Theresa May. She was an intensely shy and private person with few close friendships among her peers. Though she was admired, she



was never known, and certainly not loved.

These qualities of hard work, devotion and stubborn unclubbability won much admiration in her early days of office. After years of Etonian bonhomie, the public wanted change. They wanted serious, Spartan leadership – someone who would just get the job done.

But if the Prime Minister, who traded on the virtues of industriousness and stability,

failed the test of competence – in the 2017 General Election and her disastrous negotiations with the EU – the Prime Minister couldn't fall back on her personal charm and ability to communicate because these qualities were absent.

Her last six months in office became a series of attempts to prolong the process and kick the can down the road. She was in office to buy more time as her withdrawal agreement failed time and time again. And this reliance on process rather than principle, on managing rather than leading is what led to her downfall.

## The Anglican Way

It's depressing therefore to hear some of her putative successors talk again about process rather than leadership as they approach future talks with the EU. Jeremy Hunt, another committed and devout Anglican, seems convinced that a new negotiating team including Brexiteers, the Democratic Unionist Party, could achieve what a team of civil servants couldn't – a better withdrawal agreement.

Rory Stewart argues for a 'citizen's assembly' as though a

facilitated talking shop of 500 citizens was more worthy of taking decisions than a plebiscite or a Parliament (what is that if it is not a citizen's assembly?).

After three failures, the withdrawal agreement is truly dead. It is dead because the British side in the negotiations caved in to EU demands. The EU shares in this failure because it completely overplayed its hand. Remainers and Brexiteers all believe that the Withdrawal Agreement is worse than the current arrangement.

A change of Prime Minister is therefore unlikely to lead to any substantial change unless the EU is prepared to open negotiations again.

My remarks about this however are as much about the Anglican nature of these compromises as they are about the politics of the matter. Although the English Reformation took place with much bloodshed and martyrdom, there was often a self-conscious attempt at compromise at play.

For example, the emerging Church of England retained aspects of Catholic order whilst rejecting suspect elements such as 'transubstantiation'. It became an increasing part of

the 'Anglican way' to mediate itself between Catholic and Protestant wings. Anglican thinkers and scholars were, for the most part, liturgists and apologists and not great systematic theologians. The Anglican Communion's attempt to present itself as a worldwide body was not based on a confession or a magisterium but on 'instruments of unity' – the office of Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates' Meeting, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council.

I am trying to illustrate the fact that Anglicanism prized itself as being about 'process' rather than dogma. It was a 'way' rather than a destination. It was a 'via media', a synthesis. And 600 years after the first major break with Europe, the United Kingdom's approach to Brexit has more than a whiff of Anglicanism about it. We are seeking a way of mediating between two extremes, a via media, rather than a destination.

The problem with this approach is that it hasn't recently worked for the Church of England or the Anglican Communion, so why should the via media work for the UK's relationship with the European Union?



LIZ HOARE

## thespiritualdirector

By the Rev Dr Liz Hoare

**The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of seeds but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.**

*Matthew 13:31-2*

May and June are wonderful months, full of colour and joyous abundance. It seems as though the whole world has woken up and is shouting about it for all its worth. Jesus spoke almost entirely pictorially and his parables were down-to-earth real-life stories. The people who heard him talk about the mustard seed would have seen the shrubs growing and the farmers sowing their seeds.

So often Jesus began by saying 'The

kingdom of God is like...' and went on to use a homely image to describe it. But these images were meant to make an impact beyond the everyday. They were, and are, invitations to look at the world with fresh eyes and see it from a different perspective. Parables subvert the way things are and disturb us out of our complacency in order to transform us. They are about enabling us to live from the perspective of the kingdom of God.

Many of Jesus' parables are about growth and the mustard seed is no exception.

The kingdom grows secretly, steadily, quietly and powerfully. From a small and insignificant beginning, the seed is transformed into something large and magnificent that brings benefit to others. The emphasis is on mystery.

We know a great deal more about soil and seeds than the people of Jesus' day, but how tiny seeds are transformed into huge plants is beyond our doing. Every child who has ever planted a bean in a jam jar and waited for it to sprout is awed by what takes place, though they may have to be helped to be patient while it gets going.

The kingdom of heaven is mysterious in the way that it grows and transforms people and situations so that God's life and energy flow. It may not be obvious, at least at first, but there is divine energy at work and there will be a harvest in God's own time. The change that comes about is both qualitative and quantitative.

There is both transformation and increase.

Think of Jesus and his little band of

unlikely followers and now 2,000 years later, the Church is still growing worldwide. Perhaps you are involved in something that you hope will produce a harvest for the kingdom of God or you are praying for a seemingly intractable situation. Like the cross, the mustard seed is a challenge to human perceptions of things and how things ought to be.

We see through a glass darkly and fail to recognize the seed growing in its mysterious God-inspired way. As we go about our daily lives the kingdom of God is still growing just as the fields and flowers are reminding us that they have been growing under ground all these months.

This parable, like all parables, invites us to reconfigure the way things are and respond with our whole being.



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## The Light of the World

By J John

Holman Hunt's painting *The Light of the World* inspired me in my journey of faith when I first saw it as a student in London in 1975 and continues to inspire me today. I frequently give those making a decision to follow Christ at our meetings a postcard of the painting.

Holman Hunt (1827–1910) was a Christian and in *The Light of the World* he produced a painting that was openly and unmistakably Christian.

The painting reveals a night scene set in an orchard, a figure wearing a crown of thorns and carrying a lantern knocks on a closed door with rusty hinges and overgrown with ivy. The title of the picture refers to Jesus' words in John 8:12: 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'

The text behind the painting is that of Revelation 3:20: 'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.'

Every detail in this picture counts. Christ is dressed, not just as the crowned king of

Revelation, but also as an Old Testament priest bearing the breastplate of the 12 stones representing Israel (Exodus 28:30). The closed door lacks a handle and can only be opened from the inside. There are apples on the floor reminding us of the story of the Fall. There is a hint of light in the sky that Hunt himself said reflected Romans 13:12, 'The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.'

This, then, is a painting intended to tell a message. In fact, Hunt said he painted the picture because he felt he was commanded to. How deeply he felt about what – or who – he had painted was revealed a century ago when, during repairs on the frame of the first version, the phrase 'Don't pass me by, Lord' in Latin was discovered under the top of the frame. He seems to have been overcome by what he had painted.

There is much that could be said about this painting but let me draw your attention to three features about it that strike me as an evangelist.

The first feature of this painting is its reality. There is a painstaking solidity of the figure Hunt has painted; an authentic man standing in a real world. Behind this compelling physical and tangible realism is a spiritual one. What better picture could there be of the human heart without Christ than this closed door overgrown with weeds? What clearer depiction of the plight that people find themselves in than this painting's night-time gloom? The Christian gospel is about a real Jesus come to deal with our real problems.

The second feature is its authority. It is a measure of Hunt's skill as a painter that he has somehow managed to create a Christ who conveys both gentleness and humility with an extraordinary strength. So, while Jesus' hand is knocking on the door there is no sense of hesitancy in his face, only authority. In this depiction of both 'meekness and majesty' Hunt echoes the biblical depiction of a Christ who was and is both servant and king. In this painting I see a Christ who both requires our allegiance and deserves our love.

The final striking feature is the opportunity depicted in the picture. One of the strengths of this painting is the extraordinary tension within it. Jesus is knocking on the door but his feet show that he is already on the point of turning away. The sky reveals that dawn is not far away. This is a decisive moment of opportunity and the picture poses a question: will the door of the heart be opened in time? Is this opportunity to receive the King going to be accepted or rejected?

Of course, the bigger question the painting asks is this: what is your response? Will you open your heart to the one who is the light of the world?

Holman Hunt's painting *The Light of the World* may be the greatest evangelistic sermon ever painted.

(Scripture quotes are from the NIV.)  
The Rev Canon J. John is Director of the Philo Trust  
[www.canonjjohn.com](http://www.canonjjohn.com)

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## BIBLE CHALLENGE

**Day 151** – II Chronicles 4-6, Psalm 122, Romans 13  
**Day 152** – II Chronicles 7-9, Psalm 123, Romans 14  
**Day 153** – Enjoy hearing the Scriptures read aloud in church  
**Day 154** – II Chronicles 10-12, Psalm 124, Romans 15  
**Day 155** – II Chronicles 13-15, Psalm 125, Romans 16  
**Day 156** – II Chronicles 17-19, Psalm 126, I Corinthians 1  
**Day 157** – II Chronicles 20-22, Psalm 127, I Corinthians 2

## APPOINTMENTS

### New Bishop of Huntingdon

**The Rev Canon Dr Dagmar Winter**, Rector, Hexham (St Andrew), and Bishop's Advisor for Women In Ministry (Newcastle), to be Bishop of Huntingdon, (Ely).

**The Rev Dr Tom David Atfield**, Team Vicar in Dudley (Worcester); to be Vicar of Shrewsbury Holy Cross (Lichfield).

**The Rev Christopher Bessant**, currently Vicar of St Lawrence Chobham with St Saviours Valley End, in the Diocese of Guildford, has been appointed Rector of Haslemere and Grayswood, in the Diocese of Guildford.

**The Rev Timothy John Gordon (known as Tim) Brampton**,

Vicar, Marks Gate, St Mark, to be Priest-in-Charge, Basilston St Martin of Tours (Chelmsford).

**The Rev Michael Cecil Bridgewater**, Curate of the Bucknall Team Ministry; to be Assistant Curate (Assistant Minister) (Lichfield).

**The Rev Sarah Elizabeth Burton**, Rector of Whittington and West Felton with Haughton (Lichfield); to be Priest in Charge of Vyrnwy Area Mission Team (St Asaph).

**The Rev Dr Jeffrey Charles Cuttell**, Rector of Asbury and Smallwood (Chester); to be Chaplain to HMYOI Werrington (Lichfield).

**The Rev Tim Eady**, Vicar of Christ Church, Bangkok (Singapore), to be Assistant Curate (Resident Minister) in Penn Fields (Lichfield).

**The Rev Darren Edge**, PtO; to be Team Vicar in the Bucknall Team Ministry (Lichfield).

**The Rev Genevieve Sarah Evans**, Vicar of Oxley, The Epiphany and Wednesfield Saint Gregory the Great (Lichfield); to be Rector of Strathearn Churches (St Andrew's, Dunkfield and Dunblane).

**The Rev Ilse Ferwerda**, Assistant Curate of Northleach with Hampnett and Farmington, Cold Aston with Notgrove and Turkdean and Compton Abdale with Haselton Benefice, to be Part Time Stipendiary Priest in Charge of Deerhurst and Apperley with Forthampton and Chaceley, Tredington, Stoke Orchard and Hardwicke Benefice (Gloucester diocese).

**The Rev Kevin Grumball**, Minister of Bidford-on-Avon, Binton, Exhall w Wixford, Salford Priors, and Temple Grafton Benefice, Coventy Diocese, to be Non-Stipendiary Associate Priest of Vale and Cotswold Edge Team Ministry (Gloucester).

**The Rev Canon Peter Leslie Holliday**, PtO; to be Canon Emeritus (Lichfield).

**The Rev Elizabeth RA Hudson**, Assistant Curate Cramlington (Newcastle), to be also Adviser for Counselling and Wellbeing (Newcastle).

**The Rev Reid Thomas Humble**, Assistant Curate - St Mary Walkley and Associate Chaplain at The University of Sheffield (Sheffield), to be

## ANGLICAN CYCLE OF PRAYER

**Friday, 31 May.** Nebbi (Uganda): The Rt Rev Alphonse Watho-kudi (Diocesan Bishop); Akoko (Nigeria): The Most Rev Gabriel Akinbiyi (Diocesan Bishop); Akoko Edo (Nigeria): The Rt Rev Jolly Oyekpen (Diocesan Bishop); Iowa (The Episcopal Church): The Rt Rev Alan Scarfe (Diocesan Bishop)

**Saturday, 1 June.** Nebraska (The Episcopal Church): The Rev Scott Barker (Diocesan Bishop); Akot (South Sudan): The Rt Rev Isaac Dhieu Ater (Diocesan Bishop); Irele - Eseodo (Nigeria): The Rt Rev Felix Akinbuluma (Diocesan Bishop)

**Sunday, 2 June.** Pray for La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico. The Most Rev Francisco Moreno - Presiding Bishop of La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico & Bishop of Northern Mexico

**Monday, 3 June.** Nelson (Aotearoa NZ & Polynesia): The Rt Rev Victor Richard Ellena (Diocesan Bishop); Akure (Nigeria): The Rt Rev Simeon Borokini (Diocesan Bishop); Isial-Ngwa South (Nigeria): The Rt Rev Isaac Nwaobia (Diocesan Bishop)

**Tuesday, 4 June.** Nevada (The Episcopal Church): The Rt Rev Dan Edwards (Diocesan Bishop) Alabama (The Episcopal Church) The Rt Rev John McKee Sloan (Diocesan Bishop)

**Wednesday, 5 June.** New Busa (Nigeria): The Rt Rev Israel Amoo (Diocesan Bishop); Alaska (The Episcopal Church): The Rt Rev Mark Lattime (Diocesan Bishop); Albany (The Episcopal Church): The Rt Rev William Love (Diocesan Bishop)

**Thursday, 6 June.** New Guinea Islands, The (Papua New Guinea): Vacant (Diocesan Bishop); Algoma (Canada): The Rt Rev Anne Germond (Diocesan Bishop)

Priest-in-Charge - Southchurch Holy Trinity (Chelmsford).

**The Rev Patricia Ann Jackson**, Curate of Mow Cop; to be Assistant Curate (Assistant Minister) (Lichfield).

**The Rev David John Lower**, Associate Priest: Holland-on-Sea St Bartholomew, to be Vicar: Clacton St Paul (due to a lifting of suspension) Associate Priest: Holland-on-Sea St Bartholomew (Chelmsford).

**The Rev Sarah Lunn**, Priest in Charge, Chollerton with Birtley & Throckington (Newcastle), to be also Joint Bishop's Rural Affairs Adviser (Newcastle).

**The Rev Michele Jane Marshall**, Associate Priest at Woodham Ferrers St Mary & Bicknacre St Andrew; Associate Priest at South Woodham Ferrers Holy Trinity; Lead Chaplain (Essex) at St Andrew's Healthcare, Essex, to be Priest-in-Charge (House for Duty) of East and West Tilbury St Catherine and Linford St Francis Remaining as Lead Chaplain at St Andrew's Healthcare, Essex (Chelmsford).

**The Rev Gillian Mary Moore**, Associate Priest - Lawford, St Mary; Little Bentley, St Mary the Virgin and The Bromleys and Full-time Chaplain - St Helena Hospice, Colchester, to be Team Vicar - North Hinckford Team Ministry Alphamstone St Barnabas; Belchamp Otten St Ethelbert & All Saints; Belchamp St Paul St Andrew; Belchamp Walter St Mary; Bulmer St Andrew; Foxearth St Peter & St Paul; Great & Little Henny St Mary; Lamarsh Holy Innocents; Liston & Borley; Middleton All Saints; Ovington St Mary; Pentlow St Gregory & St George; Twinstead St John the Evangelist; Wickham St Paul All Saints (Chelmsford).

**The Rev Stephen James Nicholson**, Curate of Oswestry Holy Trinity; to be Priest in charge of Selattyn and Hengoed with Gobowen (Lichfield).

**The Rev Bernard Noghuu**, Associate Priest at Leyton Emmanuel, to be Assistant Curate - St Mary the Virgin, Prittlewell (Chelmsford).

**The Rev Kenneth Ronald Perkins**, Assistant Curate - Gidea Park St Michael, to be Associate Priest - Cranham Park St Luke (Chelmsford).

**The Rev Josephine Frances Pestell**, Curate at South Cheltenham Churches, to be Vicar of

Gloucester, St Catharine (Gloucester).

**The Rev David Nwabueze Nwogbe Peterson**, Assistant Curate - All Souls, Harlesden, London, to be Team Vicar in the Grays Thurrock Team Ministry (Chelmsford).

**The Rev Christopher Precious**, Curate of Alrewas with Fradley and of Wychnor; to be Rector of Kinnerley with Melverley, Knockin with Maesbrook and Maesbury (Lichfield).

**The Rev Dagmar Wilkinson**, Assistant Curate, Christ Church with St Peter, Gleadless, Christ Church, Hackenthorpe and St James, Woodhouse (Sheffield), to be also Associate Anglican Chaplain, University of Sheffield (Sheffield).

**The Rev Mark Nash - Williams**, Vicar, Alston Moor (Newcastle), to be also Bishop's Advisor for the Environment (Newcastle).

**The Rev Joanne Wood**, Curate of The Peel Parishes; to be Curate of Brereton and Rugeley with Armitage (Lichfield).

**The Rev Emma Clare Anna Wylie**, Assistant Curate at Langdon Hills St Mary & All Saints and St John, to be Priest-in-Charge - St Andrew Boreham (Chelmsford).

## RETIREMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

**Captain Gordon Banks**, Stafford Area Mission and Growth Partner (Lichfield); will retire from 30th June 2019.

**The Rev Richard Peter Burton**, PtO will cease to be Associate Minister in Whittington and West Felton from 30th June 2019 (Lichfield).

**The Rev Stephen Carter**, Vicar of Maldon All Saints w St Peter and Priest-in-Charge of Woodham Mortimer St Margaret w Hazeleigh and Priest-in-Charge of Woodham Walter St Michael, resigning as Priest-in-Charge of Woodham Mortimer St Margaret w Hazeleigh and Woodham Walter St Michael, remaining as Vicar of Maldon All Saints w St Peter (Chelmsford).

**The Rev Irene Elizabeth Nicholls**, PtO ceased to be Healing Ministry Enabler for Lichfield Archdeaconry on 29th March 2019.

**Mr John Polhill**, has retired as Diocesan Environmental Officer (Lichfield) from 26th March 2019.

**The Rev Philip Alan Roberts**, Team Vicar, Southend Team Ministry (St John, All Saints, St Mark, St Alban (Chelmsford), to retire from 3 July.

**The Rev Anthony John Rose**, Vicar of New Thundersley St George (Chelmsford), to retire from 12 July.

**The Rev Peter Anthony Shaw**, Assistant Curate (Associate Minister) in the Deanery of Wrockwardine (Lichfield); has retired from 2nd May 2019.

**The Rev Jo Whitehead** stepped down as the Diocesan Enablement Officer (Derby) with effect from 1st May 2019.

## LAY & OTHER APPOINTMENTS

**Mr Peter Walton Hardy**, to be Lay Rural Officer, Stafford Episcopal Area (Lichfield).

**Mrs Lynsay Jennings**, has been appointed Lead Christian Distinctiveness Adviser for Christian Character Education (Lichfield).

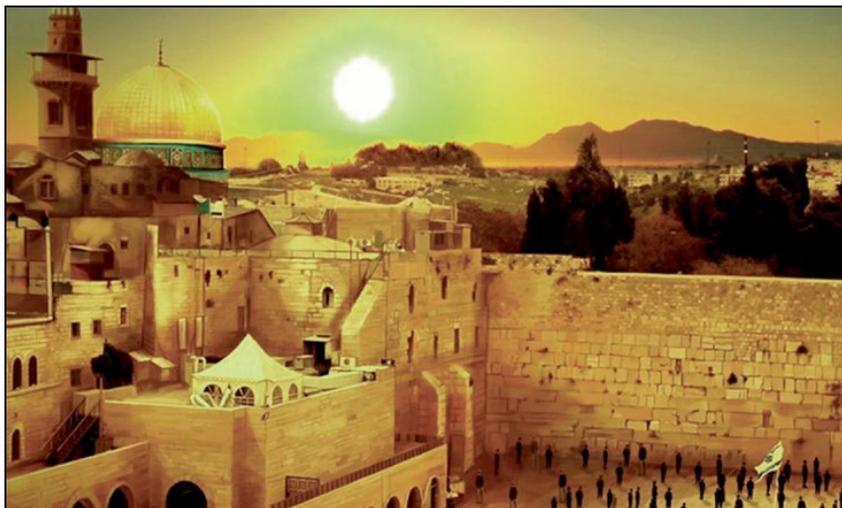
**Mr Giles Standing**, has been appointed DAC Secretary (Lichfield).

## DEATHS

**The Rev Charles Henry Brash Bonsall**, Retired priest in Birmingham Diocese died on 26 April.



# Exploring the Holy Land



THE OXFORD ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF  
THE HOLY LAND

Robert G Hoyland and HGM Williamson  
OUP, hb, £30.00

As the editors acknowledge in their introduction, the part of the world they describe as 'the Holy Land' is also known by different, controversial names. They have chosen a name that appears on no map but which is still widely used in popular parlance and indicates the predominantly religious and cultural interest of their work. Their desire to steer clear of political controversy also leads them to conclude their survey at the beginning of the 20th century.

But if the editors largely avoid political controversy they know they cannot avoid theological debate. In their introduction they warn readers that the Biblical account of history of Israel needs to be revised in the light of greatly increased knowledge of the ancient world that has followed archaeological discoveries and from newly discovered texts of ancient Israel's neighbours.

They state they have asked contributors to write 'with consideration for those for whom a strictly historical approach may be unfamiliar'. When I read this I worried that contributors might fail to face critical questions but my worries proved groundless. The two chapters on the Birth of Israel and on Iron Age Israel are masterly accounts of their topic and provide excellent introductions to contemporary historical discussions while still making links to the biblical accounts.

Avraham Faust shows how groups came together in the Judean and Samaritan hills of Palestine to form a collection of independent tribes ready to unite when it suited their purposes. A group of Shasu were part of this tribal gathering and it was probably they who brought belief in Yhwh. This spread throughout the other tribes and may have helped provide a sense of unity.

In some ways the critical approach is helpful to faith. There was probably little conflict with the Canaanites and some groups of Canaanites may have joined the Shasu. There was an ethos of simplicity and egalitarianism that contrasts with Canaanite and Egyptian societies. The arrival of the Philistines from outside the region did bring conflict and probably led to a stress on circumcision and a ban on pork to reinforce an Israelite sense of identity. The Phoenicians ate pork and were probably not circumcised.

Lester Grabbe argues that there is a historical core to the traditions about Saul and David. Questions have been raised about whether Saul and David interacted or whether there were two separate traditions, one from the Samaria in the North and one from Judah. Grabbe suggests that David was probably a usurper, a tribal leader from Judah, who did take over Saul's kingdom.

The story of Solomon is among the more problematic stories in the 1 and 2 Kings. Legends have gathered around him but Grabbe follows most historians in accepting his existence but rejecting the biblical image of a great empire.

As HGM Williamson points out, one of the most significant features of Israel's history is that it was able to survive conquest by Babylon and the exile that followed for many Israelites. Other nation states like Moab and Edom are just names in history books 'but somehow enough of Israel and Judah survived in a transformed state to become the fountain head of the three great monotheistic religions of the world today,' Williamson writes.

After covering the biblical period, chapters go on to examine a 'Christian Holy Land 284-638', 'The Coming of Islam', the Crusaders, Mamluk and Ottoman rule, Napoleon and the impact of British and French influence in the region. Three final chapters look at pilgrimage, sacred spaces and the emergence of 'scripture', Jewish, Christian and Muslim.

Robert Fisk comments that: "God, in his various manifestations, seems always to have had a baleful influence on the birthplace of the world's great monotheistic religions."

As the quotation from Williamson makes clear, this has not always been true but it is a sad fact that many times religion has helped to provoke violence in the Holy Land. In 1099, for example, we are told there was a massacre by the Crusaders of the local population of Jews and Muslims in the coastal towns. The crusaders in their turn faced massacre at the hands of the invading Khwarazmians who also caused devastation in Jerusalem.

Napoleon (who was not particularly religious) ordered the execution of 4,500 Turkish prisoners and boasted he had cut off heads in Cairo at the rate of 'five or six a day'.

Saladin was an exception to this tale of violence and was widely praised for his refusal to exact vengeance. For many Jews he was 'a second Cyrus.' His example makes the behaviour of Napoleon and the Crusaders all the more blameworthy.

Paul Richardson

## SUNDAY SERVICE

### Whit Sunday (Pentecost) - Sunday 9 June

Genesis 11:1-9

Acts 2:1-21

John 14:8-17, 25-27

The readings for Pentecost remind us of God's mighty deeds, particularly in the sending of his Spirit.

In Genesis 11 we find a united humanity trying to make a name for itself, proclaiming their own mighty deeds. As Noah's descendants are going about to fill the earth, in obedience to God's command (the process we see as a whole in Genesis 10), they pause in this flashback incident to construct a city and a tower. Stronger, and bigger, and higher they build to concentrate and magnify their own greatness, rather than continuing to disperse across the world as God had said. Humanity is dedicated to sin, not just individually but as a society: Genesis 11 is the logical conclusion to Genesis 3.

Yet God is dedicated to overthrowing sin, and he makes our attempts to elevate ourselves look foolish. We cannot reach God by our efforts — however hard we try, he must still "come down" from heaven, when he comes to visit. The epitome of fruitless self-assertion is the place of primeval human confusion; "that is why it was called Babel."

Acts 2 sees a kind of reversal of Babel. The remnant of the disciples are all gathered in one place, and so are God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. It is from here that they will fan out across the world to be Jesus' witnesses and to go into the harvest as labourers for God (Acts 1:8; Matthew 9:38). As the Spirit comes down not to judge but to rest on the disciples, they begin to proclaim the wonders of God, and his greatness, in the native tongues of all the visitors. This is not alcoholic babbling, but Spirit-empowered boldness, the point of which is to declare that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" in these last days which have now arrived.

Later, the disciples would have reflected on what had happened. They would remember the upper room where Jesus said to them, "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." He had told them in Acts 1 that they would go out and be his witnesses once the Spirit came. But he had also told them this Spirit of truth would be with them and help them. And they would need all the help they could get, because the world in rebellion against God neither knows nor accepts the Spirit.

And yet, Jesus had also said that with the help of this advocate they would "do even greater things" than Jesus himself had done. Some have taken this as a promise of miracles, "signs and wonders" which would accompany the spread of the gospel. And indeed, the apostles did many great miracles that confirmed and testified to the truth of their message. But did they do anything greater than raising the dead, walking on water, feeding 5000, calming a storm, healing by a word?

They did, however, carry the gospel beyond the borders of Israel (to places Jesus has not physically been, since he is now "with the Father", until he comes again in glory). And they preached it with clarity and openness to all the nations (whereas Jesus was sent primarily to the lost sheep of Israel, and often spoke to them in parables). How much greater than a temporary reprieve from death, such as Lazarus enjoyed, is the new birth into a living hope enjoyed by all who now trust in Christ through the apostolic gospel! So let us do the greater work of taking that gospel out, in the power and with the help of the Spirit.

Dr Lee Gatiss is the Director of Church Society ([www.churchsociety.org](http://www.churchsociety.org)) and author of *FIGHT VALLANTLY! CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH IN THE BIBLE AND IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND*.



## HYMN SELECTION

We have a gospel to proclaim  
Holy Spirit, living Breath of God  
Breathe on me, Breath of God  
Filled with the Spirit's power  
Holy Spirit, come, confirm us

All books reviewed on these pages are available from [www.churchnewspaper.com/shop](http://www.churchnewspaper.com/shop). In case of difficulty please call 020 7222 2018



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# The story of the boy from Pinner

*Rocketman* (cert. 15) is a rarity, a musical biopic of a living subject. Last year director Dexter Fletcher gave us *Bohemian Rhapsody*, mostly the Freddie Mercury story, and now it's Elton John (Taron Egerton) getting the treatment.

As Sir Elton's husband David Furnish is a producer, and Fletcher says Elton told him personally that nothing was off-limits, it clearly has the imprimatur, but it pulls few punches. Indeed, it's all set in the flashbacking context of a rehab clinic discussion – though having one member of the group in a firebird costume must be a first.

His childhood as Reginald Dwight on a Pinner council estate is portrayed as an awkward one with an emotionless father (Steven Mackintosh) and disinterested mother (Bryce Dallas Howard). It's left to his grandmother (Gemma Jones) to offer support, not least when young Reggie (Matthew Illesley), then Kit Connor in his teens) gets a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music.

His talent is highlighted with an audition scene where he plays from memory a piece he's only just heard. The classical interest was supplemented by stints on the piano in a local pub.

## FILMS OF THE WEEK

By 1962, aged 15, he had formed a band called Bluesology, who backed American soul singers on tour, and then in 1966 backed Long John Baldry. The film has "Elton" nicked as a name from another member of the band and "John" as a nod to Lennon.

A music agency connected Elton with lyricist Bernie Taupin (Jamie Bell), and the rest is history, and ongoing collaboration. The baddie, if there is one, is John Reid (Richard Madden), who became Elton's manager and lover.

Elton's success in America in 1970 seems to pass over that he'd already had a hit LP, but it's his live performances that rapidly earn him the "superstar" label. With wealth, fame and fortune come the addictions (alcohol, cocaine, sex).

His sexuality is obviously an issue, and his marriage to sound engineer Renate (Celine Schoenmaker) only lasted three years – longer than the three minutes in the film –



and the story finishes before he met David Furnish, now his husband, in 1993. Apart from depicting the problems of coming out as gay, and one bedroom romp with Reid, the subject is underplayed.

The choice of songs (sung by Egerton) is quite clever – not all his most well-known, but often apposite, so his managing to come through problems is accompanied by "I'm Still Standing". Recreating the concert performances, and the outfits (costume design by Julian Day), keeps the pace going if the story flags, though it rarely does.

Occasional fantasy sequences – kicking his legs behind him at the piano turns into a levitation

scene – add to the fun (while a fantasy drowning highlights more sobering issues). The cast is superb, Egerton must be in line for awards, and it fits nicely with "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" – Elton's global last concert dates.

*Aladdin* (dir. Guy Ritchie, cert. PG) is the latest live-action remake of a Disney animation. After some criticism of the 1992 cartoon that it was culturally insensitive (making Arabia out to be both glamorous and barbaric, with a so-white voice cast), this is rather more diverse.

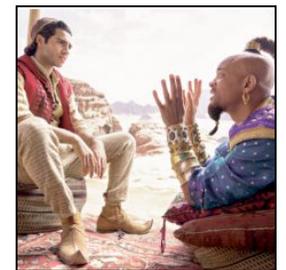
Aladdin is played by Mena Massoud, his love interest Princess Jasmine by Naomi Scott, the Sultan by Navid Negahban, the bad Vizier Jafar

by Marwan Kenzari, and Jasmine's handmaid Dalia by Nasim Pedrad. The big casting question was who could replace Robin Williams as the Genie, and the marvellous answer was Will Smith.

He's a big blue CGI genie, but it's when he's in "normal man" mode that Smith really shines, and, having taken a shine to Dalia, he'd like to stay normal. The only way for that to happen is if Aladdin uses one of his three wishes to make that happen.

There are songs from the original and some new ones, and some great song and dance routines, and it's over two hours long compared to the 1992 animation – but it will keep the kids' attention. The corruption of wealth and power is an unmistakable lesson, along with tests of loyalty, so it's a bit of a morality tale as well as super fun.

Steve Parish



## Music Choice



### The Frank Burkitt Band

#### RACONTEUR

The Frank Burkitt Band's website shows a picture of them winning Best Folk Artist 2019 at last week's New Zealand Music Awards, and that would be due to the music on this album.

Its opening track shares the words of a nameless man met in a bar, his homespun philosophy boiling down to, "If you're happy with a little, you don't need to work so hard." Such a casual approach to life, avoiding consumerism and the rat race, comes through in the easy-going style found on this well-recorded release (and in titles like "Breathe Slow" and "Too Much Noise").

During the song comes a break led by flute and wordless vocals, and when the words come back in, they are joined by a brass backing. That's done with great subtlety.

A similar thing happens with the second track "Simple," where strings add a smooth layer of warmth, and on the title track, where a lone trumpet – again, oh, so smoothly – adds some colour without in any way detracting from the song. The added instruments (mandolin, clarinet, cello, lap steel and drums) do their job and don't stay longer than they need to.

Throughout the album, the focus is on Burkitt's songs – most of them strong – and his appealing, easy-on-the-ear tenor vocals. With such a gentle pace and unobtrusive style, it feels like he is singing to an old friend, which makes it a very pleasant album to play.

Then just as you feel that you have the measure of this collection, right in the middle Burkitt goes for a jazzier, light-hearted burst of energy. "Paint the Town" runs on a track of upbeat banjo and its raspy trumpet has more in common with New Orleans than New Zealand; while "The Gypsy Barber" is more of a '30s-style take on a travelling barber ("He's got many kinds of Brylcreem for any fringe that misbehaves").

In another twist, the album ends with an à capella duet, featuring Burkitt and his partner Kara Filbey, whose tone and harmonies are so well-matched to his throughout the album. It's a lovely way to wind down the disc.

Derek Walker

## WINE OF THE WEEK



### Calvet Prestige

Sauvignon Blanc 2018  
Tesco, £9

Just released in the UK is the latest bottle from Calvet, the biggest wine company in Bordeaux, though owned by Les Grands Chais de France (which has the capacity, in one of its locations elsewhere, to bottle a million bottles of wine a day!) though this was bottled at Landiras, 33 kilometres south-west of Bordeaux. It is the French brand with the largest sale in the UK, mostly reds.

Here we have a white, Sauvignon Blanc. In the glass, water-clear. On the nose a refreshing combination of sweet and savoury notes. The palate found at first an invigorating controlled hints of sharpness, immediately opening out with more fruitful notes, recalling those of the first green apples of summer in terms of a balance of flavours (though there was nothing of apples on the palate). The finish glowed. Held in a light body, this, chilled, is the wine to have ready for the hottest approaching day of summer. Then, the perfect aperitif, to accompany savoury hors d'oeuvres.

Alcohol by Vol.12%. Calvet seems to make small changes to the word arranging on its bottle label every year, but retains the crowning street scene in old Bordeaux.

Graham Gendall Norton





# A message for all who want a sense of hope

It's everywhere, and *Rocketman* is on a different planet to other recent biopics. Why am I talking about this in a column about health and wellbeing? Because it's a must-see, in my opinion, for anyone who wants hope that there is a way out of whatever situation they are in.

The film is set against the backdrop of Elton's addictions. In a group therapy session (where Elton, played by Taron Egerton, sits resplendent in a devil's costume complete with huge feathery wings and a cap with horns) reveals that he is an addict. The scenes, interspersed of course by spectacular clips of Elton performing, take us back to his childhood where his mother is strangely distant, his father is seemingly not interested in

him, and only his grandmother seems to want to nurture the burgeoning piano playing talent.

This lack of affection means Elton is painfully insecure and it's not until he changes his name and creates a new identity for himself that he can really feel successful, but as life spins out of control he is eventually forced to take a rain check on the partying and head for rehab.

I was struck by the anxiety portrayed in this film: despite the immense wealth and notoriety he was deeply unhappy. He was finally able to reinvent himself though and has been sober for 28 years. He said in an interview that six months before he got sober, he gave away or sold all his



possessions, he said he must have had a premonition that his life was going to change.

Change it did and Elton said in a recent interview about the film: "It's a film about

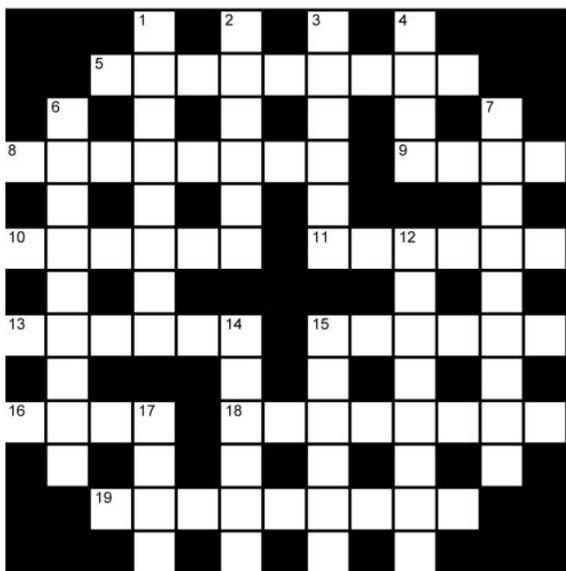
redemption, about asking for help. I was ashamed of myself, but didn't want to live like that, I wanted to become a good person, the person I didn't know. The message is if you are in a bad way, ask someone for help. It's difficult asking for help, but my life since I got sober has been quite the most amazing journey, I don't have to wake up feeling like I don't want to wake up."

It's a story of reinvention passion and a sort of salvation and as the final song — *I'm still standing* — says he's a 'true survivor'.

If the movie encourages one person to ask for help for their anxiety, addiction or depression it will have done an amazing job.

*Rocketman* (15) is out now

## PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 1155 by Axe



**Across**

- 5 Christianity's uniform branch, perhaps? (5,4)
- 8 One of a devilish disposition (8)
- 9 'Because of this —, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant' [Heb/NIV] (4)
- 10 Parts of churches appropriated to the singers (6)

- 11 '— the one whose faith is weak, without quarrelling over disputable matters' [Rom/NIV] (6)
- 13 Song of praise to God, a saint or a nation (6)
- 15 Name shared by a man cured by Peter [Acts] and Virgil's pre-Roman hero (6)
- 16 'Go up into the Abarim

- 17 Range to Mount — in Moab...and view Canaan... [Deut/NIV] (4)
- 18 Patron saint of Russia and children whose feast day falls during Advent (8)
- 19 King of Zobah defeated by David [2 Sam; 1 Chr] (9)

**Down**

- 1 False prophet denounced by Jeremiah (8)
- 2 'I called to my — but they betrayed me' [Lam/NIV] (6)
- 3 '— answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." [John/NIV] (6)
- 4 Oblong pulpit with steps at each end (4)
- 6 Bartholomew, maybe, an alternative name for this apostle [John] (9)
- 7 'And I baptized also the household of —' [1 Cor/KJV] (9)
- 12 'They comforted and — him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him' [Job/NIV] (8)
- 14 '— got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, "Are you the man who talked to my wife?" [Judg/NIV] (6)
- 15 'The — will not stand his ground, the fleet-footed soldier will not get away, and the horseman will not save his life' [Amos/NIV] (6)

- 17 Son of Judah who denied Tamar children [Gen] (4)

**Last week's solution**

- Across: 5 Nazarenes, 8 Zeus, 9 The Koran, 10 Lucifer, 12 Barak, 14 Nahor, 15 Damaris, 17 Pelagius, 18 Ahaz, 19 Oratorios.

- Down: 1 Mars, 2 Matthew, 3 Negev, 4 Jehoiada, 6 Jerusalem, 7 Samaritan, 11 Idolatry, 13 Samsara, 16 Ninth, 18 Amon.

The first correct entry drawn will win a book of the Editor's choice. Send your entry to Crossword Number 1155, The Church of England Newspaper, 14 Great College Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 3RX by next Friday

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