

Parish Life Magazine

Parish of Cirencester
with
Watermoor and St Lawrence

February 2020

£1



Crib to Candlemas
2019-2020

Parish of Cirencester with Watermoor and St Lawrence (Chesterton)

Useful contacts:

Vicar of Cirencester: Revd Canon Graham Morris

vicar@cirenparish.co.uk

Tel 01285 659317 Office 239655 Vicarage

The Vicar is very happy for you to contact him directly
for matters of concern pastorally or spiritually.

Associate Priest

Assistant Curate (NSM)

Revd Katie Richardson

revkatie@cirenparish.co.uk

Revd Julian Wilson

fr.julian17@gmail.com

Churchwardens

Ros Dolton

rosdolton@gmail.com

Peter Flaherty

peterflaherty@cirenparish.co.uk

Organist and Choirmaster

Hugo Kennard

hugo@cirenparish.co.uk

Howard Gray (PCC Secretary)

howardgray@cirenparish.co.uk

Sarah Marshall and Emily Winstanley (Parish Administration)

The Parish Office, Corner Stone, 3 Dollar Street, Cirencester,

GL7 2JA 01285 659317

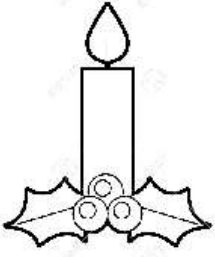
Email: office@cirenparish.co.uk

Website: www.cirenparish.co.uk

Parish Magazine articles (submitted by 16th day of previous month)

cirparmag4@gmail.com

For other officers please see the website's 'who's who'



Hope for tomorrow.....What can I give him?

Begins the last verse of Christina Rossetti's hymn, In the Bleak Midwinter.

Where do I begin?

Perhaps by looking back first, at Christmas, and the lead into Christmas, it was incredible. The number of events in the Parish Church and across this Parish at Holy Trinity and St Lawrence, both religious and secular, the attendances at our Christmas services, the commitment of church members and staff as seamlessly, but not without considerable effort, the combined contribution made our celebrations fantastic.

If love is about anything: then I believe that I not only saw it, but received it through the myriad of examples of **Practical Christianity** that was going on all around me from my clergy colleagues, my churchwardens, my friends and parishioners of this parish, and my family. '**Give my heart**', concludes the last verse of the hymn. I saw giving in so many ways and it was humbling to be part of it, even more so to be on the receiving end of such generosity, not in financial terms but in terms of real commitment and care.

We moved offices, yes, the week before we broke for Christmas! The Team must have printed and collated loads of carol services and pew sheets in anticipation of any hiccoughs fraught with the process of moving. **Everyone was fantastic in joining in and assisting.** So good in fact the Office was operational by the end of the first day of moving, and by the close of the week, colleagues established and ready for the Christmas break.

The Epistle to the Ephesians is a pastoral letter offering much encouragement, and in chapters 1.3-14 and 4.12-16 we draw close to appreciating the unfolding mystery of incarnation in and through the person of Jesus Christ...we see something of the Body of Christ being built up.

Ephesians 1:3-14 New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and

blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ff

We reach out for unity in faith and knowledge of the example that is freely given to us through the incarnational activity of God breaking into our world and our lives. Who needs New Year's resolutions when we have Christ himself to guide us? If we live by the truth, and in love; we shall grow completely into Christ. That is how the Body grows until it has built itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:12-16 New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)
*¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴ We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ **But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,** ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.*

To belong to this body is such a privilege, and to receive its gift in the form of unconditional love I can't help but wonder why so many fail to seize it! Over the Christmas period we received so many visitors into our churches, it was humbling to see the numbers attending, clearly seeking something of the spirituality that we were able to offer, through our ministry of hospitality and care.

Where have all the visitors gone.....long time passing.

Where have all the visitors gone.....since Christmas time.

Where have all the visitors gone,...waiting for your invitation, everyone...

When will we ever learn, when will we ever learn.

We have so much to offer through the life of this parish and the great encouragement comes when others look at us and say, "I would like to come and join you, can we be part of what you are doing?" Joe and his family preparing to

move to be our Assistant Curate this coming June. To date, two candidates looking at the Associate Vicar's job. I am confident that the right person is waiting for the nudge, and we will know when we see him or her. A goodly number of people expressing their interest in confirmation, baptisms, and weddings and of course our commitment to providing ministry at the end of life. We have so many opportunities in this parish to show what it means to be working in this Body of Christ. Loving, caring and living our faith.

Jesus said... **“I have come that you may have life, and have it in all its fullness”**. It doesn't get any better than this! When we embrace the Love of Christ and give of ourselves, yes in giving our heart we commit ourselves to the outpouring of God's love not just for you and me, but for those who do not yet belong. They came to see us at Christmas, and the challenge is to find a way of drawing them back again, again and again.

This Spring I want us to focus some of our time on Stewardship.....not just the financial aspect but probably equally if not more important the missional aspect where we go out of the way to make Christ's love known in this place.

Christianity is taking a real bashing, not just in our town but the world over. What are we doing about facing up to the challenge? Do you talk to others regularly about the love you receive from your church and the great comfort you glean from your faith? Bishop Mervyn Stockwood suggested, Christianity is caught not taught! What are we doing about being infectious for God?

Paul frequently talks about outdoing one another in matters of faith, and pastoral outreach. These are the very building blocks of any good stewardship scheme, which our vision for mission must be founded upon indeed, the great principle of being sent out, confident in our faith and excited and enthusiastic about all that is going on in the life of our church family is what will capture the curiosity of the on looker.

For me; time and time again it comes back to Practical Christianity. What can I give him? Give of myself.

I leave you with some words of Thomas Merton to reflect upon, as we give thanks to God for what has been, and we pray with a real openness for what is to come....

The times are difficult.
They call for courage and faith.
Faith is in the end a lonely virtue.
Lonely especially where a deeply authentic community of love
is not an accomplished fact,
but a job to be begun over and over,
as in all Christian communities in general.
Love is not something we get from the breast of Mother Church
as a child gets milk from the breast:
it also has to be given.
We don't get any love if we don't give any...
Christmas is not then just a sweet regression
to breast feeding and infancy.
It is a serious and sometimes difficult feast.
Difficult especially if for psychological reasons
we fail to grasp the indestructible kernel of hope that is in it.
If we are just looking for a little consolation
we may be disappointed.
Let us pray for one another,
love one another in truth,
in the sobriety of earnest Christian hope,
for hope, says Paul,
does not deceive.

Thomas Merton (1915-1968)

Thank you for all that you do to make this parish great...**Thank you.**

Canon Graham.

A New Start in 2020 for Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust

Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust will step into 2020 with a new website www.ghct.org.uk that beautifully showcases the work of the trust and it is also looking for a new Chair to lead the charity.

The trust provides around £150,000 of grants each year for renovation and maintenance to help historic churches. The grants help these buildings remain active centres of community life and landmarks of architectural heritage. The new website highlights the achievements of the Trust and how to apply for a grant while featuring some of the wonderful churches that it supports. The new chair will have the opportunity to build on this new infrastructure and set out the future strategic direction of the Trust.

Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust Current Chair Nick Talbot-Rice comments, “We are looking for someone with strategic leadership and governance skills, with an interest in church buildings and a broad understanding of the Church world. Ideally the person will have had previous experience of working with a charity and of chairing a board.”

The Trust is an independent non-profit organisation raising funds and providing grants to help over 620 historic churches, chapels and meeting houses in Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and North Bristol. The Trust aims to assist those responsible for the care of places used for public worship which belong to a Christian religious body and make funds available to help with repairs and improvements to the fabric of the buildings and their contents, as well as their surrounding churchyards.

For more information about the role of the chair and how to apply please visit www.ghct.org.uk/were-looking-for-a-new-chair. The chair is a voluntary role with reasonable expenses paid. For an informal discussion about the role telephone our present Chair Nick Talbot-Rice on 01285 720822. The closing date for Chair applications is 31st January with interviews expected to take place on 13th February.

Andrea Sexton

EPIPHANY

Dreamcoat Alpacas from Stroud were kind enough to bring along two alpacas to be our 'camels' for our Epiphany All Age Service. The children were asked to come dressed as kings/wisemen and the congregation followed the star, journeying with the wisemen and their camels until we found baby Jesus.

Fiona Hawes



Longfield Community Hospice, Minchinhampton – please can you spare a few hours a week volunteering?

We have been providing **free** community hospice care in Gloucestershire for more than 30 years. We believe everyone touched by a life limiting illness should benefit from free hospice care. We support people and their loved ones to live well and when the time comes, we enable them to have a choice of dying in the comfort of their own home. We offer not just a helping hand but a listening ear and a warm welcome to families in need in the community, supporting them to cope better with the impact of their illness on their lives and bereavement.

One of our volunteer van drivers and Trustee, Brian, expressed his thoughts with us recently. When his wife Jan died of breast cancer Brian had one to one counselling and attended group sessions. It was here that he met a new partner, Sue. Sue was passionate about Longfield and was also a regular volunteer. Sue sadly fell ill with lung cancer and Longfield were able to support her offering her a wide range of services. After Sue died, Brian wanted to give something back to Longfield and he became a regular volunteer.

As Brian said, “Longfield is there for everyone, whether you are a patient, carer or a loved one. Please do what you can to help support its work”.

So please would you consider become a volunteer? Without the support and commitment of our amazing volunteers, Longfield would not be able to deliver the services that Brian spoke about. Not only would you be helping a very worthwhile organisation, it would also be an opportunity for you to meet new friends, develop and learn new skills but also have some fun. Whether you are a mum wanting to return to work or are retired and have some free time and would like to meet some new friends, please get in touch.

We have volunteering opportunities across the whole organisation. Perhaps retail volunteering may be your interest, dealing with customers, working on the till and organising stock rotations? May be you fancy working on our vans, visiting our shops and warehouse, dropping off and picking up stock? Alternatively, some volunteers enjoy helping to bring our patients to site for their day therapy. Many volunteers help us provide hospitality to our patients and other volunteers help in our back office functions such as Finance or Fundraising. At Longfield, we have a beautiful garden and many volunteers spend time keeping our garden in order, planting and weeding, pruning and mowing.

No matter how much or how little time you would like to volunteer at Longfield, all help is gratefully received. We can fit around your availability as we know your time is very precious. If you are interested in volunteering, please either call the Hospice (01453 886868 and ask to speak to Volunteer Services), email us at volunteer.services@longfield.org.uk or else look at our website (www.Longfield.org.uk) for further details of opportunities.

Your local Hospice needs you. Without your support, we could not provide free care at the end of life to patients, carers and families. (507)

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Volunteers are a critical to our ability to provide our services. Brian is one such volunteer. He had counselling when his wife Sue died of breast cancer. After a period of time attending Longfield he met a new partner, Sue. Sue was passionate about Longfield and was also a regular volunteer. Sue sadly fell ill with lung cancer and Longfield were able to support her offering her a wide range of services. After Sue died, Brian wanted to give something back to Longfield and he became a regular volunteer and trustee.

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The Sermon on the Mount



This year most of the gospel readings at Sunday morning services will be taken from Matthew's gospel. At key points in his gospel, Matthew introduces blocks of teaching that are not found in Mark. The first of these begins in chapter 5. It is delivered to those disciples fit enough and committed enough to follow Jesus to the top of a mountain. Jesus is already seated by the time that the last stragglers get there. He begins his teaching with the words: 'How blest are you.' To those prepared to make the effort and sacrifice to keep in training Jesus now reveals the blessedness of their calling. The Greek for blest is a word full and rounded with meaning, "Makarios". It had the sense of prosperity, good fortune, being enriched with the good things of life. It was notably used by the ancient writer of guide books, Pausanius, to describe Cyprus because it was an island with everything: fertile, blessed with a fine climate, a place of wealth and happiness. Perhaps the famous Archbishop Makarios adopted that name as his identification with the blessings of Cyprus as well as the blessings of Jesus. Typically, in his teaching, Jesus stood this worldly wisdom on its head: surely there was no hint of blessedness in being 'poor in spirit, those who mourn, gentle (meek), hungry and thirsty, the merciful, pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted and those reviled.' Indeed the unassuming, those who longed to see right prevail, and particularly those who were merciful, found their forgiving nature was frequently being exploited by those on the make who would happily stoop to dishonesty to feather their own nests; those who worked hard to come to the peaceful resolution of divisive issues and above all those who were persecuted were frequently those whom life seemed to leave behind. They were not usually those blessed with villas in Cyprus. The ethic Jesus had set himself in his confrontation with the devil in the wilderness is now being spelled out to his closest followers. Life was not to be about possessions, the word 'blessed' had to be redefined. The prosperity cult of popular parts of the Old Testament was to be abandoned as a life ethic and in its place would be put that of the suffering servant also deeply rooted in the Hebrew scriptures, most notably in Isaiah.

In Jesus' reinterpretation those who are blessed seem to fall into two categories:

those who choose the difficult or holy option, like the pure in heart, and those who are forced into it through no choice of their own; those who are reviled and persecuted. Some fall into both categories. Those who mourn might be those whose circumstances lead to tears, but it is also likely to refer to those who weep over an alienated culture, the apparent absence of the kingdom, or the failure of God's children to behave like sons. Those poor in spirit may include those who choose to live with the humility and simple lifestyle of the poor as well as those who have poverty forced upon them. Throughout, there is the sense of rewards for those who want to see a reversal in the status quo: those who strive for peace, those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail. Those disciples who made it to the top of the mountain were to be the agents of the kingdom both by being part of the community, like salt, and separated from it like light. For salt is useless unless thoroughly incorporated in the mixture, where it becomes invisibly part of the texture. Light, on the other hand, is useless unless it is placed in the open on a lamp-stand. The kingdom comes when disciples are both fully totally mixed with the world in which they live, and distinct and separate from it by their lifestyle. In a sense it is easy to be either light or salt: to be holy by living in monastic isolation, or to be invisible by being totally incorporated in worldly living. Jesus was notable for being both salt and light. He mixed with the sick and sinful: with the rich and poor; with the educated and the simple and seems to have blended well with all of them. The group with which he clashed most often was the pharisees who deliberately kept themselves separated from society. Yet at the same time he lived uniquely and powerfully, and ultimately was separated out and lifted up on a cross by a thoroughfare.

His disciples were called to be one with the poor and humble. Yet they would stand out so that they would be reviled and persecuted. They were not to be downcast and intimidated but were to yearn with all their being for a better world; sometimes they would be marked out by their compassion, their tears, and their desire for justice and peace. Always they should be marked out for the purity of their lifestyle. Without their presence the world would perish. Darkness can never overcome light. The deeper the darkness the brighter the light shines. Light destroys darkness. The suggestion here is that disciples will always be a minority. But better a pinch of salt than a sack of dust, better a small light well displayed, than a multitude of lamps burning themselves out in a barrel. Those called to be

disciples need to be true to their calling. Thus the disciples' righteousness needs to exceed that of the pharisees who were certainly like cities set on hills: they prayed on street corners, they carried the longeurs of their fasting in the length of their faces and they gave to the poor in such a way that everyone knew about it. The disciples were to be just as rigorous in lifestyle yet without letting that rigour separate them from those among whom they lived.

Yet they also had to be distinctive. Not by being out of touch or 'holier than thou', but by being known as those who love enemies, living lightly with possessions, going beyond the call of duty in being generous to those in need, praying with integrity and intensity, making sure that such treasure that is stored up is of eternal significance. What was needed was a whole new framework of values: righteousness is not just an issue of lifestyle. It is a matter, as Paul put it, of 'mind-set'. Righteousness is not just a minimalist keeping of commandments, but neither is it a loose broad-brush adhering to the spirit of them: it is an inter-penetration with the mind of God who framed them. For example, it is not just a matter of good discipline for disciples to refrain from murder and adultery: that kind of behaviour should be totally alien to their whole way of living. So, a life of righteousness flows naturally from a person who is totally immersed in the life of God. And so - quite literally - the disciples were to be authentically Christian in the way that Jesus himself was. He was both immersed in God and world, so he acted like salt and light.

To be immersed in God is to be God-breathed: to become God-breathed is to pray oneself into God's life. Prayer and living are not to be compartmentalised. Prayer is the means by which the mind-set is framed. Prayer is the process of inter-penetration. So, prayer becomes the source of righteousness. When Jesus starts talking about ethics he ends up talking about prayer. A prayer is that which you desire with all your being. It should not be just a shopping list of virtues let alone a desire for material prosperity, or a means of twisting the arm of God. It is yearning for his kingdom to come and his will to be done in one's own life and in the world, the kernel of the prayer which Jesus gave us at the centre of this teaching.

Bob Gardiner

M.G.

Our next MG meeting will be held on **Tuesday 4 February 2020**; arrival from 7.45pm, for 8.15pm start, as usual. The venue will be the upstairs function room at Somewhere Else, 65 Castle Street, Cirencester, GL7 1QD.



Our speaker will be **Michael Spittle**, who will be talking to us about *Chedworth Roman Villa: its Mysteries and Discoveries*. We very much look forward to seeing you there!

Looking ahead to future meetings:

3 March 2020 - Chris David Storer (television and stage actor)

7 April 2020 - Steve Kaufmann (Chair, Home-Start Cotswolds)

5 May 2020 - Canon Graham Morris (talk on Ghana)



Mothers' Union Letter February 2020



Dear Fellow Members

At the start of a New Year for the Mothers' Union here in Cirencester we look forward to welcoming women and men into membership of the MU. As yet we have no date but hopefully, our Vicar can find a suitable Sunday soon. They are joining a movement of over four million members, working and witnessing to the practical concern for families in 84 countries. Last year 750 thousand lives were transformed by MU projects and the members who respond daily to the immediate and pressing needs of people in their communities.. Our prospective members understand that attendance at meetings is not a condition of membership. Those of us able to support the afternoon meetings enjoy a "sandwich", Worship, a speaker to enthuse, encourage and inspire us in our membership, and of course fellowship! One new member said recently " I have joined to support the ideals of the organisation and the projects that

evidence practical Christian concern and that give credence to its stated aim to support families worldwide". I hope that all members will warmly welcome those joining in the near future.

February begins with the glorious Festival of Candlemas, when we recall those words uttered by Simeon when our Lord's parents took Him to the Temple. I so miss the Prayer Book words of the Nunc Dimittis. Hopefully Cirencester MU members will support the Deanery Candlemas Service in Holy Trinity Church on Monday, February 3rd at 2.30pm. There will be a bring and share tea.

Folk sometimes find it hard to look forward to an AGM! However such presentations are obligatory as Financial Reports have to be presented. Fortunately Cirencester MU keep it short and this year Pauline Farman will entertain us with her 'Posie of Poems' following the business meeting.

Peter and Kathie transported us at our January meeting to warmer climes with their presentation of their cruise and visit to South Africa. We thank them for an interesting afternoon.

With my love & prayers

Pat Harris.



Diary Dates

Feb 3rd Deanery Candlemas Service, Holy Trinity Church . 2.30pm.

Feb 5th AGM Poems by Pauline Farman. 2.30pm

Feb 26th Ash Wednesday

March 4th Speaker: Tony Dickinson "No added sugar - Community Artists"
2.30pm.

March 6th Women's World Day of Prayer.

March 22nd MOTHERING SUNDAY



The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it (John 1 v5)

On Monday morning we lit a candle and gathered round to pray for our brothers and sisters who live out their Christian faith in some of the darkest places in our world.

‘Every prayer is a powerful weapon’, as the song says, and we know that is true, as we hear news of answers to those prayers each time we meet.

At the beginning of this new year we listened to an interview with Ron Boyd-Macmillan, the Director of Strategic resources for Open Doors International, who gave us an informative picture of global persecution trends as they see them at the present time.

They see 5 big trends which over the last year have stayed mostly the same -

1. Civil wars in the Middle East, and Sunni/Shia tensions put a lot of pressure on the church in those areas
2. Islamic extremists have gained another hub over the last few years in sub-Saharan Africa, which makes it the primary place where you are likely to die because you are a Christian. In Nigeria in 2018 4,300 Christians were killed.
3. The Chinese leadership are very worried about the growth of the church in their country, and are cracking down, with more intrusive surveillance. This is the largest church in the top 50 with about 100 million Christians and growing – they calculate that in the next 10 to 15 years there could be 2-300 million, so they are very worried.
4. Hindu extremists are feeling more confident after the second election victory of Narendra Modi, and are likely to increase anti-Christian and anti-Muslim persecution, particularly in the Northern Gangetic Plain, which extremists view as sacred.
5. South and Latin America – here narco gangs are out of control and use extreme violence, making it very hard for the church when it stands against them.

So, there is not a continent where persecution is lessening, since 2014 it has been getting worse. Nowhere in the world is it getting better, which it had been doing up until then.

So, plenty to pray for!

But there is good news! We are living in an amazing time, when so many Muslims are coming to Christ, and a new kind of church is being born. A new family of faith is coming into being, that of Muslim Background Believers, who expect to live out their faith daily as a group wherever possible. So for that we give thanks!

We would be so glad if you would like to come and pray with us. We meet at Holy Trinity on the second Monday of the month at 10.30a.m.- 11.30a.m.

Jill Wilkinson



Clay Pots



Clay pots, cracked pots,
Are you a Christian crackpot
With as many holes in as a kitchen sieve?
And do you wrestle with the thought
That you're a chosen vessel that's been bought,
With a price that's far beyond
What the world can give?

Then the one who came and paid the price,
Says to you, "Hey! you look nice!
How's about you come and follow me,
Spread my light and love around,
Pour water on some thirsty ground
And give the opportunity
For dying things to live."

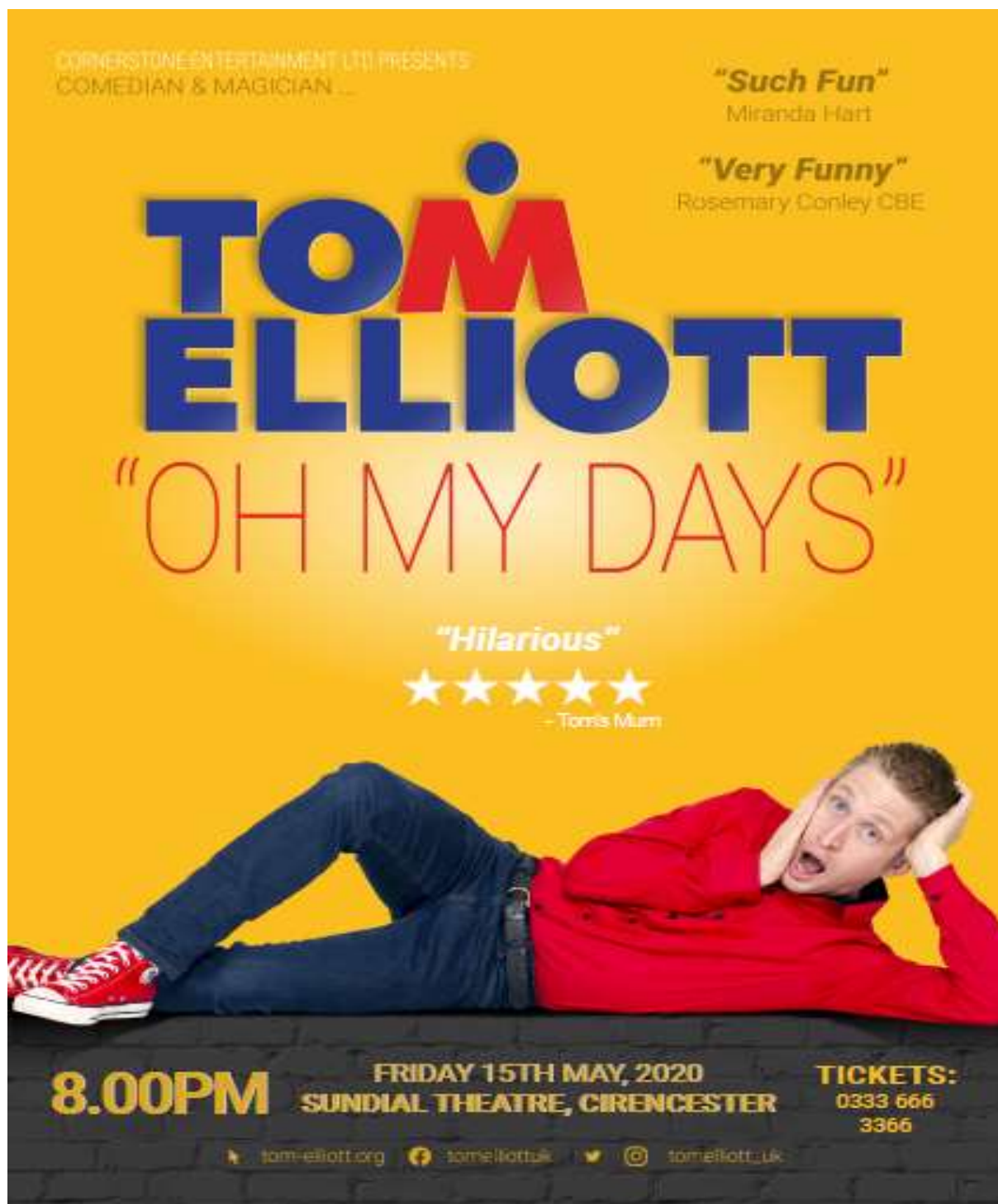
You laugh and say, 'Ex-cuse me!
I'm full of holes, can't you see?
I can't be of any help to you.
This bit's broken, that bit's bent,
Then there's this enormous dent,
But when I'm fully mended
Then I'll see what I can do.'

Then Jesus said, "Now just think,
You're in a desert desperate for a drink,
So much so your life is almost up.
You're offered water from a battered tin,
Do you gladly drink it in,
Or do you say, 'No thank you,
I prefer a china cup'?"

"I came to rescue broken souls
And I know that you are full of holes,
And I'll do some healing on the way.
I'll use others to bring help to you,
But I need you to be a helper too,
So then how about it,
Will you follow me today?"

"Clay pot, cracked pot,
I'm not looking for the jackpot,
All of my vessels are very dear to me,
I am the master potter
You're my precious clay,
Put yourself into my hands
And follow me today."

John Mockett



Tom Elliott, one of the UK's most exciting comedy magicians and a member of Minchinhampton Baptist church in Stroud, is performing a preview of his new show, 'Oh My Days', at the Sundial Theatre in Cirencester, ahead of his run at Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Described by Miranda Hart as 'Such Fun', Tom rarely performs locally and so don't miss out on his brand new touring show.

Friday 15th May | 8pm | www.sundial-theatre.co.uk | For a limited time, the discount code MAGIC will save you £4. This is being filmed for updated showreel and invitations

Black Jack is coming back!

Except that he may not be black. For the past year a small group has been working on restoring the statues to the northwest and south west niches of the Parish Church tower. The statues were taken down in 1963 (see photo of the Wilts and Glos Article) with a promise that at sometime they would be put back.

Following the guidelines for commissioning church art the project group have held a national competition to help design statues for the niches. A call from Expressions of Interest attracted national attention and from the responses five artists were chosen to provide initial designs. All the artists had a national reputation and had been involved in major projects. A display over the Heritage Open Weekend allowed us to see the range of styles under consideration.

All the artists spent some time in Cirencester visiting the church including attendance at services , trips up the tower and speaking to local people. The five designs were considered by a panel of experts in December.

The criteria for the project asked that the design

- Showed an understanding that the Parish Church *stands at the spiritual heart* of the community
- Is sympathetic to the surrounding environs, enhancing the fabric of the church now and for future generations
- That the design was sympathetic to the fabric of the building and to the local environs
- Is visually engaging, exciting and of high quality in terms of both creative design and proposed material output)

The artist chosen was Rodney Munday. His proposal is to create the two statues in bronze. He says he had originally intended to present St John as a rugged figure bearing a staff, but discussions with the vicar and members of the congregation changed his thinking. His statue of St John the Baptist now has the saint holding out a lamb. His statue of the Virgin Mary shows Mary holding a child who is inquisitively looking down into the Market Place.



The designs are at an initial stage and Rodney will be visiting Cirencester regularly over the coming months to engage with the church congregation and the wider community to refine his ideas, so that the finished statues truly reflect the aspirations of the church.

Rev Graham Morris, who was part of the selection group said “I am really thrilled that we are having the statues back. It is a project that is dear to the heart of many people. The designs reflect both the theological and ecclesiastical aspirations that I had, plus the wider sense of community engagement. I am confident that we will have new works of art that really do justice to our church and congregation”.

The chosen design was approved by the PCC in December and has been submitted to the Diocesan Advisory Board for approval. Hopefully in February there will be the go-ahead to take this project to the next stage.

Next month in the Parish Magazine we will feature Rodney Munday and his work, but you can find out more about his work by looking at his website. An example of a national project he completed at Plymouth Minster can be found on “Art at the Minster” (Plymouth). This shows how he worked with the congregation on St Andrew the Fisher.

Meg Blumsom

INVITATION TO A TALK

Rodney Munday,

Artist and Sculptor on Sunday 2nd February

**PROJECT
BLACKJACK**

11.15 – 13.00 Cirencester Parish Church

Mr Munday is the artist who has won the commission to produce statues of St John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary which are to be reinstated in the northwest and southwest niches of the tower in Cirencester Parish Church. He will talk about his life and work and his aspirations for the two statues. He will answer any questions and has expressed a wish to meet as many members of the community and church congregation as possible.

Attendees are invited to join the congregation for coffee at 11.15 for the talk to start at 11.45. There is no charge but it will be a chance to meet the artist and to share your ideas about this exciting project.

"BLACK JACK" STEPS DOWN

"Black Jack", a Cotswold stone statue, made his first move in 500 years yesterday (Thursday).

With the aid of four workmen, a squad of firemen and the largest turntable escape ladder in Gloucestershire he was helped from his niche, 80 feet up on the north-west exterior of the 180 foot high tower of Cirencester parish church.

Two hours earlier a figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary was moved from its niche on the south-west corner of the tower, and lowered to the ground in two halves.

Both statues, weighing half a ton each and standing six and a half feet tall, were removed because they had become dangerous to the public after being severely damaged by the winter weather.

"Black Jack" is actually a statue of St. John the Baptist but he was given the nick-name because of the black grime which covers the head and face.

It is assumed that the statues were incorporated in the tower when it was erected, in the region of 1470. Throughout the years the weather had taken its toll of the soft stone and now the statue of the Virgin Mary is unrecognisable.

Attempts to move the statues met with an early setback. The plan was to bring them down from the tower on the escape ladder, but it was then found that the ladder couldn't get near enough to them because of other protruding stonework.

Consequently workmen Fred Monteith and David Gowan were lowered 100 feet from the top of the tower. They fastened a steel cable round the statues, and then lowered them to the ground.

Both statues will be stored in the church until such time in the future that funds are available to have replicas sculpted and used to replace them.

Press Release from Wilts and
Glos 1963

Trinity Kids Sunday School at Holy Trinity Watermoor raised £96.79 for The Family Haven in Gloucester last term! The Family Haven is their chosen charity for the year. **Fiona Hawes**

See November 2019 issue page 20 for details (Ed.)



Dates for February

Sundays	8am	Holy Communion at the Parish Church and Holy Trinity
	10am	Eucharist at the Parish Church and Holy Trinity
	10.30am	Eucharist at St Lawrence
	6pm	Evensong at the Parish Church



2 Feb, Sun Candlemas

11:15am	Rodney Munday Meeting	Parish Church
2:00pm	Baptism (Parish Church)	
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist with Christingle	Parish Church

3 Feb, Mon

2:30pm	MU Candlemas Service	Holy Trinity
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4 Feb, Tue

4 – 5pm	Spend time with Benedict	Parish Church
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Parish Church

5 Feb, Wed

9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
10:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
1:30pm	Thanksgiving for Cecily Larner	St. Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity Church

6 Feb, Thu

6 – 7pm	Sing It!	Parish Church
7:30 – 9pm	Parish Church Choir Practice	Parish Church

7 Feb, Fri

11:00am	Funeral of David Smeeton	Holy Trinity
1:00pm	Funeral of Albert Ogden	Parish Church

9 Feb, Sun

7 – 8pm	Evensong	Parish Church
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11 Feb, Tue		
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity Church
12 Feb, Wed		
9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity Church
7.45pm	PCC Meeting	St Lawrence
13 Feb, Thu		
6 – 7pm	Sing It!	Parish Church
7:30 – 9pm	Choir Practice	Parish Church
16 Feb, Sun		
4 – 5pm	Restore @ 4	Holy Trinity Church
6 – 7pm	RAU 175 ANNI	
17 Feb, Mon		
7 – 9:30pm	Croome Memorial Lecture	Parish Church
18 Feb, Tue		
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity Church
19 Feb, Wed		
9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity Church
20 Feb, Thu		
6 – 7pm	Sing It!	Parish Church
7:30 – 9pm	Choir Practice	Parish Church
23 Feb, Sun		
6 – 7pm	Evensong	Parish Church
24 Feb, Mon		
7:30 – 9pm	Quarter Peal	
25 Feb, Tue		
11:45am	'Pancake Bell' Ringing	Parish Church
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity Church
26 Feb, Wed		
All day	Ash Wednesday	
9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity Church
27 Feb, Thu		
6 – 7pm	Sing It!	Parish Church
7:30 – 9pm	Choir Practice	Parish Church

Becoming who I am

Our consumer society bombards us with images of the sort of people it says we should be. Advertisements tell us that this car or that perfume or these clothes or that plastic surgery will deliver fulfilment. They work just enough to get us hooked. We keep buying the products. We crave the glamorous lifestyle that the advertisements offer and believe it is the way to happiness. But the pursuit of self-fulfilment often ends in disappointment. These clothes, this car, this body are just not good enough. We long to be someone else: someone rich, someone beautiful, someone successful.



The Christian faith says that human beings are made in the image of a creative and loving God. This means that the essence of being human carries the fingerprint of a God who made us out of love. It means that God is at the centre of our lives whether we have realised it or not.

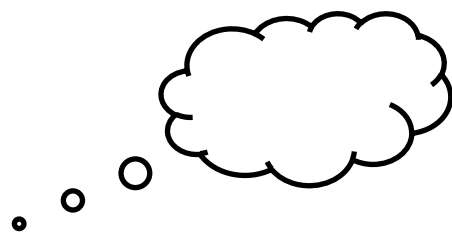
The Christian faith also proclaims that God in Jesus Christ became a human being and shared our human life. God knows what it's like to be human; he knows what it's like to feel disappointment, sadness, pain. He knows the temptation to put something else at the centre and he comes to put this right by restoring us as God's children. We are made to live as God's children. This is where fulfilment, happiness, and peace can be found. The joys we experience in our lives – and our lives contain both joy and sadness – will be magnified when we experience them as gifts of God.

Jesus shows us how to be ourselves. Jesus says that it's okay to be who we are. In fact, he says it's more than okay – it's what God wants. We are precious and beautiful in God's eyes. We don't need to try to find happiness by trying to become someone else – that is the empty message of the world – rather we can learn to become our true selves through Jesus Christ. God wants us to change – but not into someone else. God wants to change us into ourselves. God has a picture in his heart of the person we are capable of becoming.

In Christ we can become this person. Jesus demonstrates God's love and commitment. Jesus breaks the downward spiral of disappointment, of frantically seeking what will let us down, and delivers the message that we are loved and accepted as we are. He does this through the most astonishing demonstration of love that the world has ever seen: he dies for us.

Jesus shows us what real humanity is like. Jesus' life and his teaching become the model for a new humanity. Loving God and real love of self and a selfless love of others become the way to self-fulfilment. We discover the amazing paradox that it is in losing our lives – letting go of self-centredness – that we find our true selves.

Jesus opens up our way to God. Jesus' resurrection is the sign that all the barriers which separated us from God, from each other, and from ourselves are broken down. We have the promise of an eternal life that begins now. Loved, accepted, and forgiven by God, we can be ourselves and allow God's Spirit to make us more like Jesus. This new way of being human is celebrated week by week in the feast of the Church which is called the Eucharist. There we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus and celebrate the joyful fact that we are welcome at his table, that the only entrance qualifications needed are his death on the cross and our own loving acceptance of the invitation to become fully alive, fully ourselves in him



Thought for the Month : How do we invest in eternity?

A rich woman died and arrived in heaven to be shown by a welcoming angel where she would be spending eternity. She marvelled at the splendour of the streets and lovely imposing homes that stretched seemingly to infinity. As the angel led the way through the beautiful city the woman looked confidently at the mansions that they passed. 'That one will be mine,' she whispered as a pillared doorway came into view. The angel's step never hesitated and they walked on by.

Gradually the large houses gave way to smaller dwellings. 'Oh, well,' she thought, 'I suppose I can downsize.'

Right on the outskirts of the town they stopped at a tumble-down shack and the angel waved his hand towards the ill-fitting front door.

'But, this can't be mine,' the woman protested.

The angel regarded her sadly. 'I am afraid it is,' he confirmed. 'Throughout your life, these are the only materials you bothered to send.'

From William Barclay's commentary on Luke

Wreath Making

On 19th December 2019 four members of the Parish Church Flower Guild arrived at 'Somewhere Else' in Castle street laden with foliage , fir cones, ribbons, baubles and all the usual basics of flower arranging in order to fulfil a request to lead a Christmas wreath making class. We were invited by our Rev. Katie Richardson to undertake the task for 'Belles' the outreach group for women in the town.

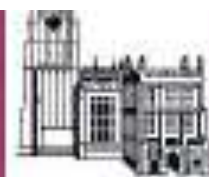
This was a new experience for us and despite our misgivings turned out to be an



enjoyable and worthwhile venture. Everyone went home with a lovely wreath they had made to hang on their door and we went home feeling satisfied and also with a generous voucher in our pocket for coffee and cake at 'Jacks' cafe in Blackjack street.

Thanks to all involved.

Julia Hope-Simpson (organiser)



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