



St Mark's Parish Magazine
February 2022

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Your Views & Contributions

Next issue will be available from Sunday 6 March 2022
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LETTER FROM THE VICAR

Dear Friends,

As I settle down at the computer to write to you, I am aware that today is Holocaust Memorial Day. We cannot be but saddened when we think back to the atrocities of the Holocaust to the millions murdered, the millions of lives destroyed and families torn apart forever, and then to think of the many atrocities since, even today, as women are raped and murdered along with their menfolk in Ethiopia and the world is uninterested. It would be very easy to mire in the darkness of the world today, the lies of politicians, increasing poverty, the lack of care for our planet, it would be too easy in this wintertime which doesn't even feel like winter, to lose hope, to let go of the light.

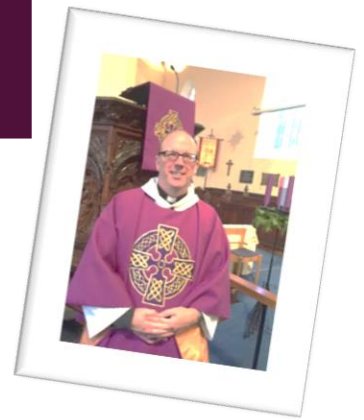
Here we are still in the aftermath of Christmas, still the glow from the star, the noise of the animals in the stable, the joy of those singing and dancing shepherds and the single cry of a new-born child that breaks the night and rises up to chase the darkness away. We must never let go of the memory the reliving of that moment when one is born who not only brings the light into the darkness but brings it with singing and dancing and joy.

Yes joy. Something that we are not very good at, yet we are called to be joyful. Joyful, not just on the good days but in the bad, bringing the light with every joyful word we utter and every joyful step we take.

Today, on Holocaust Memorial Day, there is solemn mourning but also quiet joy in those who kept the faith, those who gave their lives, those who never gave up, the many who put their lives in danger to help, in the smallest and the most life changing of ways. So many people who were not Jewish who sacrificed themselves to save those in danger, who became engaged with the idea that whatever this Holocaust was it was evil, and it was of the darkness, and it should be stood against.

As I look out on the world tonight, I see so many things in which we are not engaged: the atrocities in Ethiopia, the war in the Yemen, are we even engaged in what is happening in Afghanistan or the streets of London? Edmund Burke said a long time ago that for evil to exist it only needs a good man to keep silent. Yet silent we seem to be. If I ask anything of us all this year it is that we will no longer be silent and that when we speak, especially against evil, we shall do so with joy of the child born in a manger, born in our hearts.

With All God's Richest Blessings.



Church News

Fr Martin's new responsibilities

Congratulations to Fr Martin for his appointment as Area Dean for the next five years. St. Marks will continue to have 'first call' on his time but this new responsibility is a great opportunity to work more closely with the local churches and find out about the great work that is happening across the deanery.

Garden Tidy Sessions

Our thanks to everybody who joined us in tidying the church gardens in 2021. The grounds and war memorial looked really well-cared for after the many volunteer hours spent on the two Saturday mornings, so we plan to organise the same sessions just before Easter and Remembrance Sunday this year. The dates are 9 April and 5 November from 10.00am – 12 noon. We look forward to seeing you on those days – no experience necessary! Tea, coffee and cake provided.

Patricia Bird and Elizabeth Davis

Solar Panels

We now have a confirmed date of the 17 February for the installation of the solar panels for the hall roof. This should be completed within a day and we should be up and running straight away. We will share more on this and the impact of our Green Sunday services in future magazines.

The Heart of the Matter

Fred met Bill on a shared professional course about a year ago. They had hit it off and now met sometimes on a Friday at lunch time for a beer and sandwich. Fred was an Immigration Officer, Bill a Social Worker. Fred felt a bit guilty about these meetings as he usually ate a sandwich at his desk working through his lunch hour to try to keep up with his workload. But it brought a wider perspective. Fred was saying, "I really can't distinguish between immigrants fleeing from political persecution and those fleeing from the effects of climate change. Both are trying to preserve the lives of themselves and their families and hoping for a better future."

The young boy was just six and was the first child of what should have been comfortably off parents, for his father owned the land they lived on and what it produced used to be enough not only for their needs but a small marketable surplus to buy those few extras. Two years ago came the floods which washed so much of the top soil away and it had not rained since. The ground was like concrete, too hard to farm.

Then there were the nomads who now came with their cattle looking for fodder. After them came the soldiers who destroyed everything, burnt huts and took away many of the women and some children. His mother had escaped and returned after two days of great anxiety.

At school the boy noticed many of his friends were often hungry and some were getting quite thin. Others were absent from school. At first he thought it was illness but then their round huts were empty and no one seemed to know where they had gone. So, it was not altogether a great surprise when one early morning his mother woke him in the dark, helped him dress and put a small bag with spare clothes on his back. She walked gracefully with a huge bundle on her head and his father had a big pack and used an old spear to help him walk. They set out towards the town some miles away, where he had never been before.

His first sunrise was a joy. Gradually the night brightened as the sun poked its head above the horizon. The shadows danced magically and trees loomed out of the darkness. He was no longer tired but enchanted. But too soon they felt the heat of the sun and the ground warmed up and he noticed the dust everywhere. He began to feel thirsty.

"Well, one way or another they seem to end up with me, that is if they are lucky and don't fall into the hands of exploiters," said Bill. "It's very hard to settle them. They feel insecure and want to be near people like themselves, but we don't want ghettos. Then there is education and all the little things which make up living, not to mention language difficulties."

"What about the local natives?" asked Fred. "Well, of course they are often not welcoming," said Bill. "There is fear of lost jobs, crowded classes, strange habits, a charge on the State and all the rest. I am not sure how far these reactions are genuine

and based on facts or just a way of rationalising their opposition to immigrants. It's easier for us. It's far too expensive for them to come where I live"

They seemed to have been walking forever, never knowing where they would sleep. Once in a huge town market he had got separated from Mum and Dad. At first he rushed about the many stalls losing his bearings. Stallholders chased him away. Then he cringed in doorways to try to avoid being notice. The luminous eyes of a goat waiting patiently for death stared at him and he thought "he knows I am lost!" Stallholders had chased then away but one gave him a big mango which he chewed. He tried standing still. Looking at the wall hoping that way no one would notice him. His relief was almost physical when suddenly his mother's arms were about him and he knew he was saved. They went on their way out of a town he hoped never to see again.

Often they used the cool of the evening to walk and sometimes even throughout the cold night. He got used to sleeping at any time just by closing his tired eyes. It was all never ending and he often wished he was back at school under that huge tree or asleep in their hut.

"What is the answer?" asked Bill. "Well," began Fred. "First we need to recognise the causes, instead of punishing the victims. There are many triggers but usually it is basically climate change and population growth with violence and social unrest for many reasons tipping the balance. It's ironic that sub-Saharan African countries, for example, use relatively small amounts of fossil fuels yet at present they bear the brunt of climate change induced by consumption and living standards dominantly in the West. The COP rich countries have recognised this, but so far have not shelled up what they promised to allow poor countries to respond and adapt to their problems."

"Also, we forget the problem is world-wide. Populations in Central American countries want to go to the USA and, as the Australians are aware, populations from South East Asia are on the move. The dominant reaction is to defend the borders rather than address the root causes. But it's obvious that the problem won't go away without a solution directed at the causes. It can only get worse as climate change really begins to bite."

"Actually, putting yourself in the shoes of the emigrants, they don't have much of an option," said Bill. "TV does not help by giving the impression that all is milk and honey in the West so that the practicalities go unrecognised. A friend was telling me that in parts of India the unemployed watch TV whilst they are starving."

"But we just can't go on like this, blaming the French, and building walls. They will never be high enough, the punishments will never be great enough to be as bad as the conditions from which they are escaping," said Fred. "That I have to agree with" said Bill, "but the populations in the West are dominantly defensive with little concern for the overseas poor. It's not their problem. We don't want them here is the dominant attitude but at the same time we begrudge giving aid."

Finally they climbed into the crowded rubber dingy and slowly it motored out towards the unwelcoming, cold, grey horizon. It was not a rough sea but the dingy, so very cramped, was sluggish. He sat on his mother's lap. They had been forced by lack of

space to throw away their possessions and had only what they stood up in. Only there was no space to stand up. The white waves were exciting as they climbed to the top and then rushed down the other side, but as the waves became higher his excitement turned to apprehension and he hid his face away. It seemed an eternity but when the outboard motor stopped and they were tossed hither a thither he was really frightened.

Out of the mist loomed a great grey shape which turned out to be a naval vessel and they were hauled aboard. The sailors were quite rough but some he saw had sympathetic smiley faces and he felt better for that. It then seemed quite soon that they landed up at a steep quayside and were loaded into vans. At last they had arrived at their longed-for destination. After all those months travelling through foreign lands, all would be well now. His father said they were some of the lucky ones.

It was dark now and so cold, but much less frightening than in the rubber dingy. The van took them to some low huts with iron beds and thin mattresses. It was so very cold but oh so much better than being on the road. However, the next day they met several people who had been there more than a year, still waiting for their case to come up. The food was OK, very different from back home but it filled the void. The days, however, each one like the last, soon began to drag very slowly by with nothing to do and it was always so cold even in bed. There was no indication what to expect for the future. Rumours abounded. They could be sent back to the arid desert.

"Of course, when they get here everything is so different from home that they are totally lost. You can't expect otherwise. How long it takes to settle varies enormously and often is not helped by the company they fall in with," said Bill. "I see it all the time. They often have only a thin knowledge of the language and don't understand the currency or money values. It all has to be relearned, and there are plenty around who find ways to exploit those weaknesses. The weather is usually very hard for them to adapt to and they cannot look forward more than a few days at a time. We do our best. We tell them about social security benefits if they qualify and how to start school and so on but it's hard for most of them to catch on."

"I heard the other day," said Fred, "that some are going to hospitals with non-existent aches and pains hoping that will extend their time before they are deported." "Yes, necessity makes us all tell lies and sometimes even when there isn't the need," said Bill, "but it's the kind of initiative like making use of gaps in "the market" or hole in tax law. It's really quite like international tax avoidance. It's called enterprise. If it's exercised at scale in commercial competition, just within the law, it might even earn a knighthood. It's bound to happen."

After two months Dad's comment that they were some of the lucky ones proved to be correct. They were told they could stay in the UK and after a long journey in an enclosed van they mounted some rickety stairs to a single room which they were told was theirs for the present. Their next door neighbour was also a migrant and had long talks with Dad about life in England and how to go about getting work, finding a school and looking for better accommodation.

After some days his mother took him to a somewhat dark, forbidding, high building which she said was the nearest school. The Headmistress seemed stressed and hurried them

through the procedures, most of which went in one ear and out the other. The boy was in a Mrs Clark's class and she seemed calmer and sat him in the only space next to a white girl, Ruth, who seemed a bit older than him. He was introduced to the class which then returned to an English lesson.

His eyes drifted round the room. At home he had felt like one of the others. Here every child had different faces, hair and clothes. There were colourful paintings, tables and lists on the walls and the teacher wrote on a big white board. What was being said was too fast for him to understand. A bell signalled that the children could get up and drift out of the room. Ruth took his hand and led him outside. The playground was pulsing with children apparently of all ages, some kicking a ball, others throwing things to each other, yet others just standing around. He felt the smallest there.

Back inside he tried hard to listen to the lessons and gradually began to understand. He was given a sheet of paper to copy things from the white board at the front. He was relieved to recognise the alphabet and copied it in his best writing. He also did some sums which he found reassuringly easy. At his African school he had been good at arithmetic and English. When the end of the day came Mrs Clark looked at his work and said how very well he had done. He kept quiet.

"Of course, once they have left me I don't see them again. It's just on to the next batch and certainly they keep coming", said Fred. "Changes made by governments don't seem to make much difference. It's only the slogans which change. But my wife is a teacher and she says it's not what she was trained for. Teaching English to children with so many different natural languages is not what training college was all about. She concentrates on the English and Maths and there is little time for anything more other than allowing them to draw and paint which they often do quite well. Instead, you have to keep your eyes skinned to recognise maltreatment and malnutrition. Recently she has taken me to charity shops and bought bits of clothing. She gets a bit upset if she gets the wrong size."

A few weeks later things became more complicated. His mother had found some cleaning work which took up a long day so that she could not collect the boy from school. He used to feel his way round the streets to their room where a neighbour gave him something to eat and then some domestic job to do like scrubbing floors, till Mum came home. He noticed that these days she rarely smiled. Once he heard his parents talking about whether they had done the right thing. His mother finished by saying that in the long run it would be far better for their son if they had stayed at home they would have starved. His father wondered whether the boy would grow away from them as he became part of this new culture.

Each day dad was out long before he went to school and, if there was work, he was picked up in a van in the car park of a supermarket from where he went to whatever job his master had for him. He earned just enough for the rent and food and came home late, most nights exhausted.

Mrs Clark heard from Ruth about how the boy spent his time after school and at first she was furious. On reflection she understood there were different values outside of school. With the Head's agreement she raised at the staff meeting the idea of an after-school

club. It would be quite informal with a sandwich and milk followed by artwork and reading aloud or stories from the teacher, some set work and perhaps some formal games in the playground if the weather was right. It would mean using the classrooms but would be manned by volunteers. To her surprise there was some enthusiasm and six teachers said they would volunteer to lead on a rota. The Head said she was in school most days till 6.00pm, so that would make it official and she would pay for the sandwiches herself. She had arranged for outside volunteers to take the activities and had no doubt one of the dinner ladies would stay behind to make the sandwiches and leave them in the fridge. But the running of the classes would have to be managed wholly by the teacher in charge. It would start when parents had been informed and had signed up. In the event it was a huge success, all very informal and the children responded enthusiastically.

One day Mrs Clark got out some warm clothing which the boy tried on including long trousers, proper shoes and a multi-coloured sweater. He looked so different. The loud sweater seemed to say, "Look, this is me. I am not a non-entity. I have things to say!" She was so pleased she gave him a quick hug.

The boy felt a constriction in his throat and then a sob, then he was so embarrassed to find he was crying. Mrs Clark saw that underneath this small child was so alone and vulnerable. Without thinking she picked him up and cuddled him. But inside her a voice said "this is not professional, you should not be doing this," and she put him down.

"Isn't all this immigration dealt with in a partial and amateurish way," said Bill, "surely we should face these problems better in world-wide co-operative way?"

"I'm not so sure that's possible," said Fred. "It seems to me that settled people and governments get so bound up in their own self-interests and the United Nations was never made strong enough to bring the necessary pressure to bear to get co-ordination. Look at the way the Climate Change and other world problems have been allowed to just fester on with little or nothing done and of course the big power struggles which demonise the other side and one way or another resort to threats and force seem to create as many problems as they solve. Many of these problems are interlinked but it seems in no one's interest to try to sort them out properly, except on terms which suits the sponsoring Great Powers. Notwithstanding all our modern resources and education the governments of the world are just not up to it. They can't think outside of the box. We badly need a spiritual revival; a recognition of shared moral values, less materialism and more humanity."

Bill looked at his watch. "I think we'll have to leave that one till our next Friday, duty calls" he said.

Harry Ingram

News from the Church of England

Full house for Eco Diocese sign-ups

All 42 dioceses in the Church of England have signed up to become an “eco diocese” as part of their commitment to reach carbon net zero by 2030.

The Eco Dioceses scheme, developed by the charity A Rocha UK, sees churches and dioceses awarded bronze, silver, or gold status depending on actions taken to improve their environmental footprint.

The Church of England is seeking to reach net zero carbon by 2030 to meet a target set by General Synod in 2020.

Graham Usher, the Bishop of Norwich and lead bishop for the environment, said: “Having every diocese sign up is a statement of intent from all of us as we take seriously the need to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss today.”

“As Christians, we must make real differences to our lives to care for God’s creation and limit the impact of the climate emergency.”

“As Christians, we must make real differences to our lives to care for God’s creation and limit the impact of the climate emergency.”

“This is why it is imperative that we reach net zero carbon across the Church of England by the end of the decade.”

Helen Stephens, Church Relations Manager at A Rocha UK, said “The steps taken by the Dioceses of the Church of England reflect a united commitment to encourage grassroots action at a parish level.

“As each diocese progresses through the Eco Diocese scheme more churches will become Eco Churches, a growing church community which cares for creation across all aspects of life; commits dioceses to action towards net zero carbon emissions; and incorporates creation care into ongoing ministerial training.”

“We commend all of the dioceses for making this commitment and look forward to many more award applications as they continue to take action.”

Full article available at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/every-church-region-country-signs-become-eco-diocese-ahead-2030-net>

CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY 2022

Now that more services are taking place again in Church, this is our plan for February and March 2022 – subject to change at short notice so please check the details on our website or with the Parish Office.

Wednesday 2nd February 3.25pm T-Time Tales

Thursday 3rd February 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
2.00pm SMART

Sunday 6th February 4th Sunday before Lent "Green Sunday"
8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in the Hall
10.00am Holy Communion – in the Hall and Online
4.00pm Family Service in the Hall

Wednesday 9th February 3.25pm T-Time Tales

Thursday 10th February 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Sunday 13th February 3rd Sunday before Lent
8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online

Thursday 17th February 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Sunday 20th February 2nd Sunday before Lent
8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online
4.00pm Messy Church

Wednesday 23rd February 3.25pm T-Time Tales

Thursday 24th February 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church

Sunday 27th February Sunday next before Lent
8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church
10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online

CALENDAR FOR MARCH 2022

Tuesday 1st March	St David
Wednesday 2nd March	ASH WEDNESDAY 11.00am Holy Communion with Ashing 3.25pm T-Time Tales 8.00pm Holy Communion with Ashing
Thursday 3 rd March	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church 2.00pm SMART
Sunday 6th March	1st Sunday of Lent "Green Sunday" 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in the Hall 10.00am Holy Communion – in the Hall and Online 4.00pm Family Service in the Hall
Wednesday 9 th March	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 10 th March	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Sunday 13th March	2nd Sunday of Lent 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online
Wednesday 16 th March	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 17th March	St Patrick 12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Sunday 20th March	3rd Sunday of Lent 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online 4.00pm Messy Church
Wednesday 23 rd March	3.25pm T-Time Tales
Thursday 24 th March	12.45pm Holy Communion (Iona) in Church
Sunday 27th March	4th Sunday of Lent (Mothering Sunday) 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP) – in Church 10.00am Holy Communion – in Church and Online

Please remember that planned services are subject to change at short notice so please check the details on our website or with the Parish Office.

Which way should I turn?

We all have times in our life when we wonder which way to turn. I remember my mother-in-law when getting older going out to drive and taking a very long time to return. When she did get back she said her trouble was that at a junction she always turned left rather than right as it was so much easier to do. It was a wonder she got home at all!

But so often in life we tend to take the easy way out as other ways are more of an effort. I suppose easy ways out are to turn neither left nor right but to go straight on, regardless, or even go into reverse beating a retreat. So often a decision needs to be made one way or another. It is very tempting to continue straight ahead, so we don't have the embarrassment of admitting we might have been wrong.

This reminds me of a song by Michael Flanders and Donald Swan that talked about the honeysuckle and the bindweed that grew in a corkscrew fashion next to each other and fell in love. Unfortunately one grew up to the right and the other to the left and they became inextricably entwined.

"To the honeysuckle's parents it came as a shock,
"The bindweeds, they said are inferior stock!
They're uncultivated of breeding bereft
We twine to the right, they twine to the left.
Consider their offshoots, if offshoots there be
They'll never receive any blessing from me
Poor little sucker, how will it learn,
When it is climbing, which way to turn?
Right, left, what a disgrace,
Or it may go straight up and fall flat on its face!
Together they found them, the very next day,
They had pulled up their roots and just shrivelled away
Deprived of their freedom for which we must fight
To veer to the left or to veer to the right."

This seems to indicate that we should not just take the easy way out by continuing as before, but boldly to veer to the left or right instead and we must not give up by going into retreat or "pulling up our roots" as those are certainly not ways forward, but back.

As we get older our ways forward have to be determined more and more by others, but where we can make the decision ourselves, let's do so!

Ian Archer

Environmental News

Fairtrade Fortnight – 21 February to 6 March

For two weeks each year at the end of February and start of March, thousands of individuals, companies and groups across the UK come together to share the stories of the people who grow our food and drinks, mine our gold and who grow the cotton in our clothes, people who are often exploited and underpaid.



In 2022, *Choose the World you Want Festival* will return online from 21 February to 6 March. Last year's festival saw campaigners, shoppers, students and businesses come together in a show of support for the farmers behind our food on the front line of the climate crisis. From online panels to bake-offs and coffee mornings over fifty virtual events took place as part of our virtual festival, with supporters sharing the power of Fairtrade and what needs to happen next to ensure farmers and workers are put front and centre of conversations on how to tackle the climate crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us more than ever how interconnected we are globally.

Fairtrade is about social, economic and environmental justice. A root cause of the inability to adapt to and mitigate climate change is poverty. More money in the hands of farmers is needed if they are to adapt and survive the climate crisis. Choosing Fairtrade fights for improvements in producers' livelihoods with collective strength through co-ops and their bargaining power, the protection of a Minimum Price and Fairtrade Premiums.

In 2019, Fairtrade also launched an ambitious new living incomes campaign to lead the way to a sustainable future for cocoa farmers. A living income would provide farmers with a decent standard of living – enough to cover all their cocoa farming costs and enough to cover their basic human rights, like a nutritious diet, children's education and healthcare. Only when they have met these basic needs can they start to meet the challenges of our changing climate.

Look out for more information in church or visit [fairtrade.org.uk](https://www.fairtrade.org.uk)

Information taken from Fairtrade website.

Christmas Cards

Let me own up to it. Although most of our cards are addressed by Chris, I do enjoy the ones I send and even more the ones which come my way. I prefer the traditional snowy or religious ones. Well, you might guess that from a sentimentalist with one foot in the past though not quite in the grave. It takes me back to singing carols in groups round the streets when it used to be very cold. With the ones I send, each time I ponder to find some phrase which I think will re-join us after a year perhaps without contact.

Primarily, of course, cards are a shared reminder of the birth of Christ, but they are also a remembrance of the joy of new life and of renewed life. That's surely worth celebrating. I guess from that comes the food, drink and presents so naturally comes the frenzy of buying and selling so that the prime reasons sometimes get overlooked.

I also enjoy the Newsletters I receive. For the last two years those holiday trips abroad which raise the envy of the devil have been less in evidence and yet I was amazed at the ways so many friends had got about and done things. Others had suffered death or life blows with which they were still struggling. One had lost his mobility and was struggling to regain it. Another pair had had three serious operations each and a son who had spent nine difficult months in hospital with a rare decease. They know what it is like to be on the floor. I just had to phone them.

My own efforts at a letter seemed very poor by comparison. No exciting trips and the activities seemed so bland compared with my correspondents. Still I was able to show my pride that, after a life of sacrifice to the altar of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, Paul had been chosen to manage a group of thirty five post-PhD specialist researchers in their attempt to point out the risks to the world involved in current evolution and inventions. Yes, that was worth a para. And then it was time at the end to thank the recipients for their friendship which has helped make us what we are and which means so much to us both.

The end game will be when the cards are taken down. I shall go through them all again, savouring them and bringing to mind people not as they are now, struggling with life, but when we were all in our prime with mobile faces and a ready smile. Some will go to one side for a short email of appreciation and best wishes for the coming year.

One card I treasure for rather strange reasons. He was a retired Royal Navy Commander who retrained and served under me as an inspector in my office. His pedigree was impeccable with three uncles, one a general, one an Air Vice Marshall and one an admiral. Tony, as you might expect, had somewhat traditional views,

dramatic experiences, as well as a well-honed accent. We had many an argument over lunch perhaps rescued by a sense of humour on both sides. I took him along to one of my contentious cases before the Commissioners and after that he, notwithstanding his top deck bearing, at least had some respect for my Revenue capability. His card this year expressed concern about a drift in this country towards the far right. That was not a view I expected from him. Tony was always very fair minded. In the New Year I intend to grill him on what he meant.

Friends come in all sorts and sizes. Some are made over time perhaps from a poor beginning. Others are formed in a flash of some kind of recognition of kindred spirit. Often a smile or joke demonstrated shared values. Yes, some escape and are lost. A few have been life changing. It always surprises me when we speak even after a year or more that we are immediately on the same wavelength and pick up as if time had stood still. This year I received an unexpected phone call from a distant niece. She recently retired as a Minister in the Methodist Church. Her husband is not very well and she just wanted to touch base. So we had a great chat mainly of reminiscences of her father, my brother and her current battles with Covid, so that link got a polish. I cannot envisage a life without friends. Their place in the fabric of life is more important than all the possessions.

I expect many of you will remember those few lines.

“Make new friends, keep the old.
One of silver, the other gold.
And in your golden chain of friendship,
Consider me a link.”

So, it's well worth getting the chain out and polishing it once a year.

Harry Ingram



Book Review

This month: Les Miserables

By Victor Hugo

I had seen this performed on stage and film but had never read the book, perhaps hoping one day my French might be good enough to read it as originally written. However I have now read a fifth of it on kindle and am truly fascinated by it. The story is so well told and includes injustice, heroism and love. I am sorry I have not yet been able to read all 1,463 pages before I recommend it to you but that first part of the book which I have read covers guilt, sins, confession and wrestling with one's conscience (or the listening or not listening to the Holy Spirit) and it does that in a gentle understanding way. In this time of Lent I feel that is very good for me to read. It is obtainable from Amazon on kindle for £1.99, paper back for £10.55 and leather bound for £15.05.



Thank you to Ian Archer for his recommendation of Les Miserables. If you have a book you would like to review, please email magazine@stmarksreigate.co.uk



Reader recipes

Chocolate is said to be an aphrodisiac and so in the month of love we have a chocolate recipe just for you.

Squidgy pear and chocolate pudding

Ingredients:-

- 200g butter, plus extra for greasing
- 300g golden caster sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 75g plain flour
- 50g cocoa powder
- 410g can pear halves in juice, drained
- 100g plain dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids)
- 25g flaked almonds (optional)
- cream or ice cream, to serve



Method:-

1. Heat oven to 190C/170C fan/gas 5. Lightly grease a roughly 20 x 30cm shallow ovenproof dish. Put the butter in a large saucepan and place over a low heat until just melted. Remove the butter from the heat and stir in the sugar until well combined.
2. Whisk the eggs together in a large bowl. Gradually add the eggs to the butter and sugar, beating well with a wooden spoon in between each addition. Sift the flour and cocoa powder on top of the egg mixture, then beat hard with a wooden spoon until thoroughly combined.
3. Pour into the prepared tin or dish and nestle the pears into the chocolate batter. Put the chocolate on a board and cut into chunky pieces roughly 1.5cm with a large knife. Scatter the chocolate pieces over the batter and sprinkle with almonds, if you like. Can be frozen at this stage.
4. Bake in the centre of the oven for 30 mins or until the mixture is crusty on the surface and lightly cooked inside. Do not allow to overcook, as the cake will become spongy rather than gooey in the centre. Serve warm with cream or ice cream.

Recipe taken from: <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/squidgy-chocolate-pear-pudding>. If you have a recipe you'd like to share, please send it to magazine@stmarksreigate.co.uk.

Puzzles

February Sudoku Puzzle

		3		8			2	
8	7		2	9	3			
	4	2	6			5		
5	1			3			7	4
2	3						9	5
7	8			4			3	6
		7			9	4	1	
			4	5	1		6	7
	9			6		3		

January Solution

3	9	2	7	6	8	1	5	4
1	5	7	2	4	9	3	8	6
4	6	8	3	5	1	9	2	7
2	7	9	1	8	4	5	6	3
5	1	3	6	9	7	2	4	8
8	4	6	5	2	3	7	9	1
7	8	4	9	1	2	6	3	5
9	3	5	4	7	6	8	1	2
6	2	1	8	3	5	4	7	9

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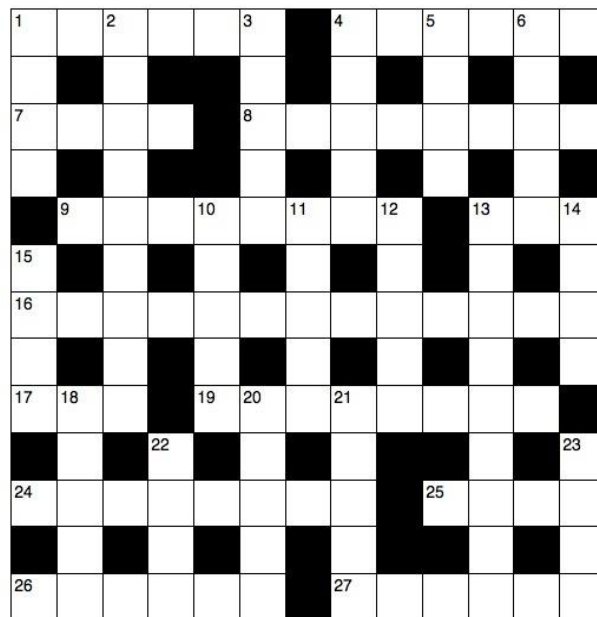
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February Crossword

Biblical references are from the New International Version

Across

- 1 'If you love those who love you, what — is that to you?' (Luke 6:32) (6)
 4 'They threw the ship's — overboard' (Acts 27:19) (6)
 7 The first murderer (Genesis 4:8) (4)
 8 He was the head Levite in charge of the singing when the ark of God was brought back to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:22) (8)
 9 Samson was noted for this (Judges 16:6) (8)
 13 Solicit money or food from passers by (Acts 3:2) (3)
 16 What William Booth's Christian Mission became in 1878 (9,4)
 17 Alliance of Religions and Conservation (1,1,1)
 19 'I will praise your name for ever and ever. — — I will praise you' (Psalm 145:1-2) (5,3)
 24 Simon had (anag.) (8)
 25 Desperate (Deuteronomy 28:48) (4)
 26 Elisha witnessed the boy he was seeking to resuscitate do this seven times before opening his eyes (2 Kings 4:35) (6)
 27 The belly and thighs of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream were made of this (Daniel 2:32) (6)



Down

- 1 'Before the — crows, you will disown me three times' (Matthew 26:75) (4)
 2 Relating to the books of the Bible between Acts and Revelation (9)
 3 'They have — the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' (John 20:2) (5)
 4 Belief (5)
 5 'Take the following fine spices: ... 250 shekels of fragrant — ' (Exodus 30:23) (4)
 6 'Do not — Jerusalem, but wait for the gift' (Acts 1:4) (5)
 10 A seer (anag.) (5)
 11 'Even there your hand will — me' (Psalm 139:10) (5)
 12 The wild variety was part of John the Baptist's diet (Mark 1:6) (5)
 13 A non-Greek speaker who was looked down on by civilized people (Colossians 3:11) (9)
 14 Famous 1950s musical whose characters included members of
 16 Across, — and Dolls (4)
 15 The province from which Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:19) (4)
 18 'He was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring — — his hand' (Ezekiel 40:3) (3,2)
 20 'Today, if you hear his — , do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion' (Hebrews 3:15) (5)
 21 The Jericho prostitute who hid two Israelite spies on the roof of her house (Hebrews 11:31) (5)
 22 'And now these three remain: faith, — and love. But the greatest of these is love' (1 Corinthians 13:13) (4)
 23 'God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end' (Daniel 5:26) (4)

January Solution

ACROSS: 8 Bottomless pit 9 Ice 10 Decalogue 11 Limbo 13 Seconds 16 Crimson 19 Eager 22 Abhorrent 24 Lap 25 Alpha and Omega

DOWN: 1, Abdiel. 2, Stream. 3, Wondrous. 4, Flocks. 5, USCL. 6, A pagan. 7, Athens. 12, IOR. 14, Creation. 15, Dye. 16, Cravat. 17, In hope. 18, Need no. 20, Galley. 21, Repeat. 23, Read.



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