

Saints ALIVE

*The magazine of:
All Saints, Leighton Buzzard
St. Nicholas, Hockliffe
St. Michael's, Eggington
St. Michael and All Angels,
Billington
The Good Shepherd, Sandhills*

April 2024

70p



Inside:

Tributes paid to Dexter Pulford
The Easter Season brings joy and hope to Mother Kirsty
Focus on Alice de la Pole and her legacies to the town
Eco Church urges us to reduce food waste
The history books of the Old Testament

All Saints Leighton Buzzard

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*From soggy socks to sunshine,
Christ's Resurrection brings hope*

By Rev'd Dr. Kirsty Borthwick



As I write this, in mid-March, I'm slightly soggy and just a little fed up, having been caught out in one of those downpours that have been our near constant companion through Lent this year. As you read this, in April, we'll have entered together into the season of Easter, and with it I hope the sun has arrived and looks set to stay!

The transition from Lent to Easter is one marked by hope - as we recognise the first signs of spring, as our worship turns from sorrow to joyful praise, and as we renew our trust once again in the God who transforms even death into life.

But it's ok too if you're stepping into Easter this year, like me, with your socks soggy and your heart a little heavy. Because the hope of Easter - true hope - is a hope that doesn't shy away from the realities of life, but instead speaks new life into all we bring before God, not least the fullness of ourselves, the good and the bad, the joyful and the painful.

And we know this because the risen Christ we worship bears the wounds of his crucifixion. Jesus shows them to us in our doubt and sorrow just as he showed them to our brother Thomas. "Peace be with you," he says. "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe". This is our Easter hope.

And in just over a month, in the early days of May, we'll celebrate again the feast of the Ascension, in which we remember Christ's wounded and risen body borne up into heaven, so that our wounds can be healed and glorified in his.

Whether happy or sad, sun-filled or soggy, I pray this Easter season will be one of joy for us all. And if it offers the promise of hope, I'm pleased to report the clouds have cleared and the sun has come out, even in the short time of writing this letter. God is at work. For Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Mother Kirsty

He is risen

Our present pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team

All Saints

Sundays:

8am Holy Communion

9.30am Parish Eucharist

11.30am (usual pattern but can vary occasionally)

1st Sunday: Messy Mass

3rd Sunday: All Age Service

2nd & 4th Sunday: Holy Baptism

6pm Evening Prayer

1st Sunday: Choral Evensong Plus

3rd Sunday: Sung with hymns
(NO choir) followed by Benediction

2nd & 4th Sunday: Said Evensong

Weekdays:

Holy Communion

7.30pm Tuesday

(Service of Healing on 3rd Tuesday)

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

St. Barnabas, Linslade

Sundays:

8am Said Eucharist

10am Parish Eucharist

6pm Evensong

www.stbarnabaslinslade.uk

St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach

Sundays:

8am: Holy Communion

11am Holy Communion (in church & via Zoom)

1st Sundays: Family Service

Tuesdays: 7pm Holy Communion

Morning Prayer via Zoom:

9.00am Monday - Saturday

www.saintleonardschurch.com

St. Michael's, Eggington

9.30am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

9.30am 2nd Sundays: Family Communion

4th Sundays: Holy Communion

St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington

11.15am Holy Communion

Good Shepherd, Astral Park Sports & Community Centre, Johnson Drive, Sandhills, LU7 4AY:

Sundays at 9.45am:

1st Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

2nd Sunday: 'In the Community', at Astral Park

3rd Sunday: Family Service

4th Sunday: Bring and share breakfast and Holy Communion

Free pop-up café every Sunday from 9.45am

Sunday Saints: for age 3+ year olds, meets during 9.30am Sunday service at All Saints.

All Saints Toddler Time: All Saints every Wednesday during term time, at 9.30am & at 1.30pm. £1.50 per parent / carer & child; 50p extra per child; refreshments included.

Leighton Young Singers Club: for children in Years 2-6, meets on Fridays at 6.30 - 7.30pm.

Bereavement Café: a support group offering friendship and understanding.

1st Sunday of the month, 2.30-4pm The Spire Coffee Shop, All Saints

Choir Practice: Friday evenings, 6.45 trebles; 7.30 adults.

Bellringers: Practice on Monday, 7.30 - 9.30pm.

Spire Coffee Shop: Tuesday, Friday & Saturday 10am - 2pm.

Contact Details on Page 2.

News Roundup

We are delighted to announce that we are now in a position to interview the fourth Candidate who was unable to attend at the last round. The date will be on Thursday 18th April. A long way off, I grant you, but it was necessary to coincide a slot in both the Bishop's and Archdeacon's diaries. We will be in contact with the forum groups and anticipate them to take place between 14.00 - 15.00. This will follow the previous format, but clearly on a much smaller scale.

John Sykes, Church Warden.

News Roundup



All Saints Holiday Club
12th - 16th August
"Everyone's a winner"
Application forms now available.



Worth a smile

A musical concert was about to be performed in a prison. The Governor was talking to a titled lady guest, explaining that the orchestra was made up of murderers, embezzlers and other hardened criminals. The lady then pointed to a man in the corner, holding a trombone. "He looks a tough customer," she whispered. "Whatever has HE done?" The Governor paused and smiled. "Ah, actually, he is the chaplain."



A friend took her small daughter to church. The vicar's prayer had gone on for several minutes when suddenly a small voice piped up: "Has he forgotten how to say Amen?"



Seen in a parish magazine: "We shall be meeting on Wednesday, when the subject will be 'Heaven – how do we get there?' Transport by bus is available at 6.45pm opposite the King's Arms.



I'm not old. I woke up, I lifted my arms, I moved my knees, I turned my neck. Everything made the same noise: Crrrrraaaaaacccccckkkk! So I've come to the conclusion that I'm not old, I'm crispy!



Whenever I see a little church, I always pay a visit. So that when at last I'm carried in, the Lord won't ask 'Who is it?'

Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, February:

No Weddings

'Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate'

Holy Baptism, February:

11: Aria Tilly Truszak

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. February:

2: Dennis Warwick at All Saints; 6: Rosemary Dimmock at St. Barnabas;
9: Margaret Croft at Bierton; 12: Audrey Lee at All Saints; 26: Colin Gilbert at Bierton

'Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die'

Years Mind, April:

1: Frederick Saunders, Robert Walters; 2: Betty Ransom; 5: Robin Boyce;
6: Ethel Higgs, Alison Austin; 7: Peter Archer; 12: Marjorie Bester, Constance Short;
13: Hugh Frank Delafield; 17: Jean Rumbelow, Stuart Vines, Doris Garrett;
20: Burt Edgoose; 21: John Macfarlane; 22: Michael Gardner, Pamela Webb;
23: Norman Warburton, Dorothy Lawson; 24: Penny Edwards;
28: Travers William (Bill) Ellison; 29: Derek Windle



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Leighton Buzzard Music is a registered charity no: 1183681



Pulford VA Lower School

Head Teacher: Rev'd Dave Heather, MBE

Office Manager: Mrs Alison Quick

Tel: 01525 372188

Website: www.pulfordschool.org

A church school for
a whole community



Dexter Pulford

24th August 2011 – 24th February 2024

In the late summer of 2011 Dexter, a German Shepherd puppy, joined our school community. His initial training was overseen by some very excited year 4 pupils who are now all in their early twenties.

He was our longest serving pupil, spending twelve and a half years with us. Most of the time he helped out in the Forest School but was most keen on ensuring that the lunch cooked for the children was up to standard.

He sadly passed away at the end of February at the grand age of twelve and a half.

At school we have received so many lovely messages from pupils, past and present, remembering the special memories that Dexter helped to create.

One current year four wrote:

"Thank you for being our dog,

The school dog.

Our protector, friend and sidekick.

You made us smile and feel at home,

You made our school our place.

You will be missed and not forgotten.

Thank you, Dexter, for being our dog.

The children have asked some fairly tricky theological questions as they process the fact that Dexter has died.

I wonder how you would respond to the following:

"Do dogs go to heaven?"

"I know that he's dead, but is he all right?"

"Will he be buried in the church?"

"When will his funeral be?"

I will leave you to ponder!



Perhaps later in the year I will be able to write an article for you which introduces our newest furry pupil – watch this space. We have already had several enquiries from doggy mummies and daddies.

Dave Heather



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BSc., AMCST

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email: eileennaples50@outlook.com

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Selections

*Pet, gift and garden.
Household, kitchen tools and
electrical items.
Calor Gas, DIY and repairs.
Memorial.*



selections_pet_garden

On a musical note.....



Why do we like music?

Why do we like music? The truth is no one knows. The current favourite theory among scientists who study the cognition of music – how we process it mentally – dates back to 1956, when the philosopher and composer Leonard Meyer suggested that emotion in music is all about what we expect, and whether or not we get it. Meyer drew on earlier psychological theories of emotion, which proposed that it arises when we're unable to satisfy some desire. That, as you might imagine, creates frustration or anger – but if we then find what we're looking for, be it love or a cigarette, the payoff is all the sweeter.

This, Meyer argued, is what music does too. It sets up sonic patterns and regularities that tempt us to make unconscious predictions about what's coming next. If we're right, the brain gives itself a little reward – as we'd now see it, a surge of dopamine. The constant dance between expectation and outcome thus enlivens the brain with a pleasurable play of emotions.

Why should we care, though, whether our musical expectations are right or not? It's not as if our life depended on them. Ah, says musicologist David Huron of Ohio State University, but perhaps once it did. Making predictions about our environment – interpreting what we see and hear, say, on the basis of only partial information – could once have been essential to our survival.

We all know that music has this direct line to the emotions: who hasn't been embarrassed by the tears that well up as the strings swell in a sentimental film, even while the logical brain protests that this is just cynical manipulation? We can't turn off this anticipatory instinct, nor its link to the emotions – even when we know that there's nothing life-threatening in a Mozart sonata. "Nature's tendency to overreact provides a golden opportunity for musicians", says Huron. "Composers can fashion passages that manage to provoke remarkably strong emotions using the most innocuous stimuli imaginable."

The idea that musical emotion arises from little violations and manipulations of our expectations seems the most promising candidate theory, but it is very hard to test. One reason for this is that music simply offers so much opportunity for creating and violating expectations that it's not clear what we should measure and compare.

Underneath all these ideas is the fact that we're not even sure what kind of emotion we're talking about. We can recognise sad music without feeling sad. And even if we do feel sad, it's not like the sadness of bereavement – it can be enjoyable even if it provokes tears. Some music, like some of Bach's, can create intense emotion even though we can't quite put into words what the emotion is. So we'll surely never understand why music stimulates emotions, at least until we have a better picture of what our emotional world is really like.

Taken from a BBC Future article by Philip Ball

Calendar of Events

3rd April

Lunch Club in the North Transept, All Saints 1pm.
Tickets £6.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



7th April

Services as usual at All Saints including All Age Communion 11.30am
Bereavement Support Café Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm



19th April

Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm - 3.30pm



21st April

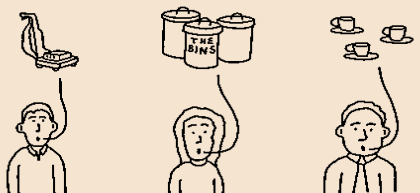
Services as usual at All Saints including All Age Communion 11.30am

28th April

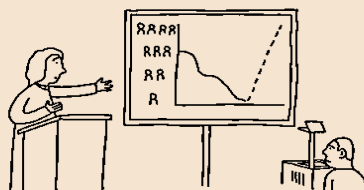
Annual Parochial Church Meeting All Saints 11am
Bereavement Service All Saints 3pm



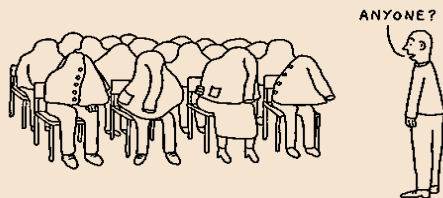
THE ANNUAL MEETING



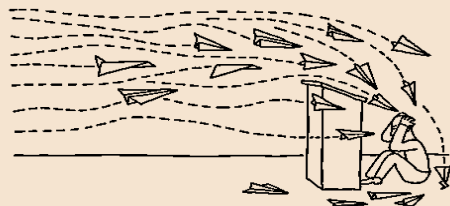
INTERESTING REPORTS ABOUT KEY
AREAS OF OUR WORK



THE VICAR'S SPEECH ABOUT
THIS YEAR'S ACHIEVEMENTS



THE ELECTION OF A NEW
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL



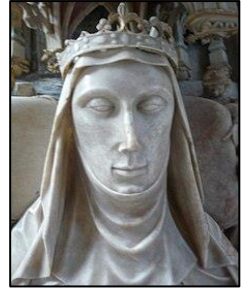
SOME QUESTIONS FROM
CONGREGATION MEMBERS



*History all around us,
Alice de La Pole, née Chaucer
(1404 - 1475)*

*on ... Donor of the All Saints roof,
and likely builder of the Market Cross.*

The Town Lands Trust which owns the Market Cross, and paid for the conservation, has commissioned a history of the monument to go with a description of its recent conservation. It describes the life of Alice Chaucer, granddaughter of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer. She was married three times, the first time at the age of 10, and widowed at the age of 11. It was from her first husband that she inherited Leighton Buzzard and continuously owned what was then a very rich manor until she died, aged 71.



Her second husband, the 4th Earl of Salisbury, commander of the English Army in France was killed by debris from a cannon ball at the siege of Orleans. Her third husband, the rich and influential Duke of Suffolk at the court of Henry VI, was murdered on the high seas. By this time Alice was 46 years old, and because of the inheritance of property from her husbands, very rich. She was said to own 202 manors - of which Leighton was one of the wealthiest.



At this point, Alice decided against any more husbands and devoted herself to good works, mostly of a religious nature. That is when she is believed to have built the Cross, commissioned the work on All Saints and later founded the Leighton Buzzard Guild of Corpus Christie, which built itself a hall behind the Market Cross. *(cont. overleaf)*





on ...

History all around us, shaping the worshipping community in The Ouzel Valley

The five sided or pentagonal cross that stands in Market Square has just undergone a £200,000 renovation to make it safe and conserve as many of the original medieval features as possible.

There are no known documents that describe the origins of the Cross and who built it but Alice Chaucer, Lady of the Manor of Leighton Buzzard for most of the 15th Century is believed to have been responsible.

Alice was a deeply religious woman towards the end of her long life, and the Cross reflects the religious symbolism of the age. As well as building the Cross she paid to replace the original steep pitched roof of All Saints, adding light with some additional windows to the nave, placing the angels inside the roof and nine gargoyles outside.



It was the belief at the time that the angels inside the roof were waiting to carry the prayers of the faithful to heaven - past the gargoyles on the outside who represented the devil.

The Cross itself does not carry any representations of angels but its five sides are said to represent the five wounds of Christ on the Cross. The figure of Christ Rising, one of the five surviving medieval statues on the Cross, still has visible the spear wound in his side made by a Roman soldier. This is despite 500 years of weathering that has obliterated many of the other details on the carvings.

*Photos previous page: Alice de la Pole, detail from her effigy in Ewelme Church, Oxfordshire
An angel's view of the roof; and gilded angels" to take the prayers of the faithful to heaven.*



on ...

The Market Cross, Leighton Buzzard Market Square

The Cross has played a central role in the religious life of Leighton Buzzard through the centuries, replacing All Saints, as the place for marriages in the Civil War. Each year the Rogation procession ends at the Market Cross for a celebration drink and a cake.

The detective story of who built the Cross, where the stone came from, who the statues represent and why, is told in a 72-page booklet with more than 80 illustrations being published by the Town Lands Trust and the Leighton Buzzard Archaeological and Historical Society. Copies at £8 of the history can be ordered by email at paulbrown5@mac.com

Paul Brown

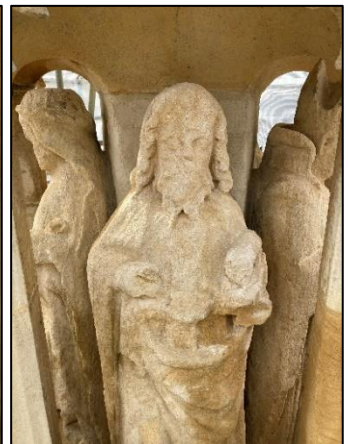


Above: The top of the restored weathervane, the Christian Cross and gold leaf shining even on a dull day.

Below left: The head of the medieval statue of Christ Rising, cleaned but showing its age.

Centre: A side view of the Bishop, believed to be Bishop Chedworth of Lincoln.

Right: Despite the weathering of 500 years this is still identifiable as a statue of John the Baptist.



Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Stuart Blofeld; Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

Building Community

The mission of our church is to offer an attractive and hospitable Christian presence to those living on the new estates in Leighton Buzzard, seeking opportunities to create and build community.

We do this through our regular Sunday and Wednesday cafés, through the drop-ins we host during school holidays and via other social events such as quizzes and 'Beer & Carols'. It is over a year since we ran our first 'Lego and hot chocolate' drop-in at February half term 2023 and since then things have really taken off. At times we have had around 80 children and adults in the Astral Park Community Centre, enjoying the Lego and crafts, and taking time out to chat over a cuppa. We aim to provide a welcoming, safe and – importantly – free space for children and their parents or carers to come during holiday time, recognising the financial and other pressures that families can be under.

Over time we have got to know some of our regulars and have been able to invite them to other family-friendly events which happen on the 2nd Sunday of each month. The format of these mornings is relaxed, and includes free refreshments, crafts for children, and a 'Thought for the day' reflection for adults.



Our Mothering Sunday event was one of the best yet. The café team were in full swing, providing bacon butties as well as hot and cold drinks, biscuits and pastries. Children had fun creating a bouquet for their mothers and other adults, led by some of the very creative people in our church family. The reflection prompted us to think about the mothering qualities of God, and to bring to mind the people in our lives who have nurtured and encouraged us, offering wisdom, protection, love and support. As a church we look to reflect God's character by offering that kind of care to all those we come in contact with, and walking alongside them on their faith journey.

Katharine Reedy

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Brian Speller: 210565; Tom Ware



Searching for a Hero.

In childhood, I had three heroes: Sir Galahad, Ivanhoe and William Brown. It might be asked "Why do we need a hero?"

Well, let's look at my childhood heroes, who were they and what they did?



Sir Galahad had a quest, a purpose, a search he was engaged in: seeking the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail was purportedly, the cup from which Jesus served the wine at The Last Supper. Galahad's quest is regarded as symbolic of our search for spirituality and involvement in our faith.

Ivanhoe, the hero of three novels by Sir Walter Scott, was a knight who went with King Richard 1 to take part in the crusades. The crusades were regarded as a struggle to protect Christianity. Ivanhoe in his quest, showed loyalty, bravery, and unflinching service to his cause.



William Brown, schoolboy hero of the novels of Richmal Compton, known as Just William, was a little unkempt, to the despair of his mother, but started each day with his faithful dog, Jumble, to search for adventure, to right wrong, and generally to enjoy life. His faith in his ability to find adventure, to right wrong and to savour life's treasures was unflinching and fresh every day.

This triumvirate of heroes personifies the qualities needed by St. Nicholas Church. We need a person or persons who can advocate and lead in the quest to find funding to carry out the many repairs and refurbishment to the church that were identified five years ago in the quinquennial, the five-yearly inspection of the church, its exterior fabric and its interior condition.



It is probable that the PCC of Saint Nicholas Church will engage the services of a fundraising company. However, we will need somebody who has the time, the energy and the heroic qualities shown by my childhood heroes in order to liaise with any company engaging in fundraising on our behalf, and to liaise with architects and builders who would carry out the repairs and refurbishment of the church. If you are reading this and thinking "I could do that", please, please, please get in touch with Father Noel as soon as possible. Thank you.

Roger Spalding, PCC member

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Sandra Brewin 373644; Julia Haviland 850380



You know that spring has arrived when we are encouraged to turn out on a Saturday morning for the bi-annual Church and Churchyard Clean-up. This year on 16th March everybody in the village had been notified of this event, and you will see from the photograph how many people came to help. Paths became visible again; drains were cleared of leaves; and a large bonfire was ignited. Inside the church, the brass was cleaned (a mammoth task), and everything looked shiny in preparation for Easter.



On Saturday 23rd March, Tina and David Thompson are hosting a breakfast, after the Spring Walk – formerly known as “Billington Winter Walk”. We have realised that it is possible that people do not like turning out at 8am in January or February – we just pray for a fine and sunny morning.

We have just been honoured by a visit by Archdeacon Dave – who came to St Michael & All Angels on 17th March to preach and preside at our Holy Communion service, after having taken the service at The Church of the Good Shepherd. Rev'd Steve had arranged this before starting his sabbatical study leave. Archdeacon Dave preached on the passage in John, about Jesus pointing out to his followers that they must lose their lives and follow him, to find eternal life. He said that people are put off Christianity because Christians portray this way of life as being too easy. In fact, it is hard – very hard, and demanding of one's commitment and determination to think of others before oneself. He gave us 4 “P's” to remind us of our responsibility as Christians:

- P1 – “Personal”: “do not be ashamed or embarrassed to declare one's faith to friends and neighbours.”
- P2 – “Public”: “to be interested and aware of political situations, and be prepared to speak out against what is wrong.”
- P3 – “Power”: “God is the Ultimate Power, which is the power of love. Any other power is destructive.”
- P4 – “Prayer”: “None of us prays enough; but things can be changed for the better by the power of prayer.”

Thank you, Archdeacon Dave.

Sandra Brewin

Services at St Michael & All Angels during Eastertide:

- “Tenebrae” Meditation: 6pm on Good Friday
- Easter Day Holy Communion: 11.15am, followed by an Easter Egg Hunt.

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861



Country Life

When we moved to Eggington in late 2016, the draw for me was the peace and quiet of the countryside. I had been bought up on a farm in Heath and Reach and was expecting the experience to be similar. What surprised me, when we moved from right near the train station in Leighton Buzzard to Eggington was how noisy it was. However, this was a different noise. At night there were owl calls right outside our window; in the daytime there were the screeches from the red kites; and at dusk the crowing of the rooks. In between these were the farm vehicles in what seemed almost constant use. Far from the peace and quiet of the countryside this was the hustle and bustle of the countryside.

But, do you know what, I love it. Watching those red kites in flight makes my heart soar. Knowing that there are owls outside my window at night, even if I can't see them, gives me a sense of peace. I can't say that I particularly like the rooks but feel slightly guilty that I prefer the other birds because they are more pleasant to my eye and ear. They are all God's creatures after all.

In recent years I have developed a huge respect for my neighbouring farmers. I avidly watched Clarkson's farm and also watch Harry's farm on YouTube. I was bought up on a very small farm and we didn't rely on the farm produce for income. Possibly inspired by "The Good Life", my parents reared pigs, sheep, goats, cows and chickens in between my father commuting to London and my mother working as a radiographer. This was tough but is very different to running a large farm which relies on its produce to survive. I take my hat off to any farmers who are able to produce food for the country with all the challenges they face, not only with what nature throws at them but also with the economic burden of not being paid sufficiently for their produce. The crazy situation with the farmers in Wales just highlights how little appreciation those producing food get for the job they do.



We are so fortunate to have working farms still running locally. They are literally the bread and butter of this country and the sights, sounds (and smells) of the countryside around us is something we should all be grateful for.

Hannah Johnston



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Sunday school at All Saints Church



Each week at the 9.30 service there is a Sunday school run by volunteers. Each Sunday, children of all ages are welcome to join us during the 9.30am service on Sundays for fun activities, crafts and stories about Jesus and how he wants us to live. We also have a show-and-tell at the end of the service to share what we've been doing with everyone. Children under 3 years must be accompanied by an adult.

We learn about the week's Gospel story and carry out a representative crafting activity that reinforces the message of the story.

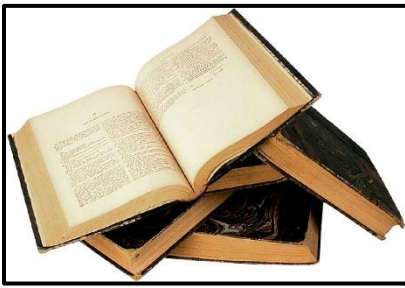
Over the weeks, the children have made donkey hand puppets for Palm Sunday (below), and boat-and-rainbow paper plate pictures for Noah's Ark story (see right).

Sunday school is a fun way of teaching the message of the day so that the children take away and understand God's word from the service.

Any volunteers who would like to help out in the future, please make yourself known to Alison Dobbie.



Jaine Holford, Sunday School Helper



Biblical Genres

*A series exploring
the different kinds of writing in the bible.*

This month:

History ...

by Rev'd Dr. Kirsty Borthwick

One of the things that makes the Bible quite tricky to keep track of, and the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament especially, is the fact that its chronology jumps about a lot, and often repeats itself. Whilst the Books of the Law that Fr. Bernard explored with us in February fall at the start of our Bibles, it may well be the Book of Job, which appears much later in our Contents Pages, is the oldest bit of writing in the whole Bible. And then we have books like 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, which often provide accounts of the same events, but with very different intentions and recorded at different times. Or books like Isaiah, which scholars separate into parts, with different parts understood to be written at different times and contemplating very different historical events. Or books like those of the Wisdom literature which Fr. Noel explored last month which, whilst obviously written in certain times and places, carry an air of timelessness about them.

History plays a very particular role in Scripture, especially because a number of books of the Bible are historical in genre; their intent is to tell us stories of the past. These are the 'Historical Books'. Gathered in this collection of texts are the books of: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

So what stories do they tell us?

Well - Joshua informs us of the conquest of the promised land, in which the Israelites battle repeatedly with the Canaanites who live there, most famously perhaps in the siege of Jericho. As the book ends we find Joshua dividing the land between the twelve Israelite tribes.

Judges then recounts the first few attempts at organising the leadership of the people and the forming of settled community. In a series of shorter narratives, we meet a disordered community at war with their neighbours, various judges raised up to lead them and, after some period of struggle, the renewing of peace.

The Book of Ruth stands out because it's not the story of an Israelite, but of a Moabite woman, who through friendship and marriage makes the Israelite God her own. Her full significance is revealed as we encounter the kings of the united Kingdom in the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, for Ruth is recorded as the great-grandmother of King David.

And it is David, with Saul before him, Solomon after him, and the later Kings of the divided Kingdoms which dominate the bulk of the historical books of the Bible (that's the ones that come in pairs!). This is the great defining era of the Hebrew Bible which shapes so much of our own expectations of the Kingdom of God and the reign of Christ.

But the story of the Hebrew Bible is one of turmoil - of the people abandoning their God and of his turning his face away, and then sending his prophets to proclaim his name and draw them back, teaching them (and us!) true faithfulness.

This is the story of the Exile, in which the leaders of the Israelite people are sent into seventy years of captivity in Babylon where they await God's restoration. And the story of this restoration is what we then encounter in two of the later historical books: Ezra and Nehemiah.

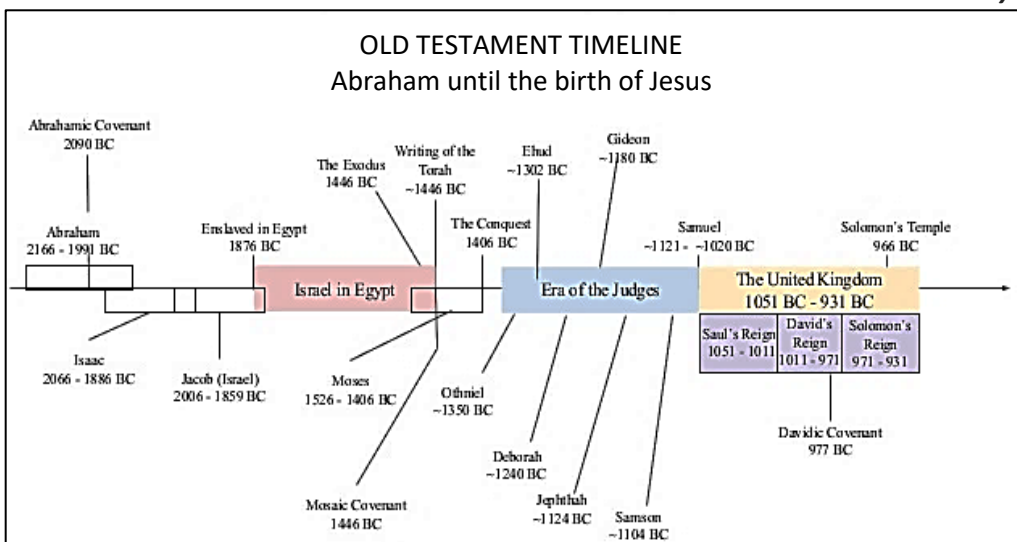
So what about Esther? Well - this book is strikingly unique - it never mentions God by name; it's set in Persia, and its historicity, if we can call it historical at all, is hard to place. As ever, Scripture is rarely simple!

But what sounds loud and clear across all these books, and across Scripture as a whole is that there is a clear arc of biblical history in which this is all set, in which the clearest theme is the faithfulness of God to his people, from the first covenants with Noah and Abraham, to the exodus from Egypt; from the conquest of the promised land to the building of the first kingdoms; from exile in Babylon to the people's return and restoration.

This history matters because without it we cannot understand our present. Neither the war that plagues these lands to this day, nor the hopes for peace which are held so dear.

Nor indeed, the hope in God's faithfulness by which we seek to shape our own lives, especially in these hope-filled days of Easter.

Mother Kirsty.



Use it, don't waste it.

March was a busy month for those of us trying to reduce reuse or recycle as much as possible. The Greenpeace campaign to collect data regarding plastic waste 11-17 March and the Food Waste Action Week 18-24 March encouraged us all to do our bit.

6.4 million tonnes of food and drink are thrown away in Britain annually, two thirds of which could have been consumed. If we could throw away less, we would save a lot of money, but also contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Throwing away food creates methane which is even more potent than CO₂. This is in addition to the squandering of resources needed in production, processing, and transportation.

WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) is encouraging shoppers to buy loose fresh products so that they can select the size and number for their own needs. Large, bagged quantities appear to be cheaper but only if you do not end up throwing away some of the product, and you then do not need to dispose of another plastic bag.

There is growing awareness of the benefits of tracking waste and redirecting it. Businesses are encouraged to track what they throw away because they can discover potential savings. Some companies back the Courtauld Commitment 2030 to deliver farm to fork reductions in waste and emissions.

There is also a Food Waste Reduction Roadmap created by WRAP whose UK mission is to halve food waste by 2030. An example of this movement is that FareShare (a UK charity fighting hunger and food waste) donated enough food for 128 million meals last year.

So as individuals we can do our bit by buying what we will use, then freezing or cooking surplus to prolong the useful life of fruit or vegetables. This will enable us to reduce our waste and save money.

Alison Dobbie





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- March 23rd
 - April 27th
 - May 25th
 - June 22nd
 - July 27th
 - September 28th
 - October 26th
 - November 23rd
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