



Parish of Wargrave
with Knowl Hill

OUR VISION IS TO BE A CHURCH AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY

PARISH

MAGAZINE

MARCH 2023

MOTHERING SUNDAY

A celebration of Mothers &
Grandmothers

WHAT IS LENT?

Understanding what these
40 days are about

PARENTING GUIDE

Resources for parents to
help navigate the Bible

In other news:
St Mary's Spring Clean
Questioning Evangelism
Fairtrade Fortnight

From the Editor

A warm welcome to the March edition of the Parish Magazine. We hope you find the articles interesting and uplifting.

Richard's article in the February edition on 'What did Jesus think about homosexuality' – the first of 4 such articles – raised some interesting feedback from some members of the Church family, which is a good thing. This is a particularly challenging issue and our March edition includes the second of Richard's articles and a contribution from Andy which spells out the detail of the decision of the Church of England to bless same-sex partnerships. More to digest, and we would be interested to hear your views on the subject.

On a lighter note, we have some joyful articles from mothers and grandmothers around Mothering Day, and reports on the two evangelical seminars which Richard and Jubi hosted recently. These help to focus our minds on the need to spread the Good News at every opportunity; there is much to celebrate in our faith. It is not all angst!

Good reading,

Bob

BOB AUSTEN | PARISH MAGAZINE EDITOR



WELCOME

The copy date for submissions for the April Magazine is noon on Wednesday 15th March 2023.

Articles of up to 400 words are most welcome for publication in this Magazine and should be sent to the Editor: bobausten@wargravechurch.org.uk. The decision to edit and publish material is at the Editor's discretion. Views expressed in articles included in the Magazine are not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Parish Magazine cannot accept responsibility for any products or services advertised in this publication.

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PARISH REGISTERS : WEDDINGS, BAPTISMS & FUNERALS

Baptisms at St Mary's, Wargrave

1st January Scarlett Lina Jones

Funerals, Cremations and Ashes at St Mary's, Wargrave

6th January Bernard William Wheeler, 90, Service at Reading Crematorium

23rd January Patricia Elena Gertrude Lomax, 90, Service at St Mary's, followed by
Cremation at Easthampstead Park

If you are interested in holding your wedding, baptising your child or getting baptised yourself, or need to discuss funeral arrangements, please contact Lucy in the Parish Office or alternatively contact our Vicar, John Cook (see page 2).

SUNDAY SERVICES

March



St Mary's Church, Wargrave

8am Holy Communion: a said service in traditional language

9.45am Service reflective below

1st Sunday of the month: **5th March**

9.45am All Age Family Worship & Baptism followed by Brunch in the Church Centre

2nd Sunday of the month: **12th March**

9.45am Holy Communion

3rd Sunday of the month: **19th March**

9.45am Morning Worship in modern language with music

4th Sunday of the month: **26th March**

9.45am Holy Communion

St Peter's Church, Knowl Hill

1st Sunday of the month 10.30am Holy Communion

3rd Sunday of the month 10.30am Village Praise

St Paul's Church, Warren Row

2nd Sunday of the month 9.15am Holy Communion

Our Groups

WELCOME CAFÉ

The Café is open on Tuesdays from 2.30pm - 4pm in the Hannen Room

Next Sessions:
7th, 14th, 21st & 28th March

BUTTERFLIES

Butterflies continues to meet on Wednesday mornings (1st and 3rd of the month in term times), enjoying a delicious breakfast, chat and parenting discussion time in the church centre.

If you are the parent of a baby or toddler, we'd love to meet you! Details can be found on our Facebook page @**butterflieswargrave**

Butterflies is held in the Church Centre, 9.30am - 11am.

Next Sessions:
1st, 15th & 29th March

OPEN CHURCH

St Mary's Church is open Monday to Saturday 9am to 4pm.



LADIES' BREAKFAST

Come and join us in the Church Centre at 9am on **Saturday 4th March** for a delicious breakfast and discussion.



This session, Jane Shaw will be leading us on the subject of 'Beeing'.

Please bring with you a copy of a news headline that has grabbed your attention recently and be prepared to talk about why and how it makes you feel.

Contact Lesley or Linda for more information.

lesley.turville@gmail.com
lindacaradine9@gmail.com





Lent, Holy Week & Easter

ASH WEDNESDAY

Wednesday 22nd February

11am Holy Communion at St Mary's

PALM SUNDAY

Sunday 2nd April

8am Holy Communion at St Mary's
9.45am All Age Service & Baptism at St Mary's

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Thursday 6th April

7pm Contemplative Service with Readings
at St Mary's

GOOD FRIDAY

Friday 7th April

9.30am Young Family Service in the Church Centre
10am Walk of Witness Jct Highfield Pk & Victoria Rd
10.30am Hour at the Cross at St Peter's
2pm Hour at the Cross at St Mary's

EASTER SUNDAY

Sunday 9th April

8am Holy Communion at St Mary's
9.45am Holy Communion at St Mary's
10.30am Holy Communion at St Paul's

HOLY WEEK 2023



LENT: What does it mean?

Steve Turville

The English word Lent is a shortened form of the Old English word 'lencten', meaning 'spring season', and in the Church calendar, is a very important season of preparation for Easter through prayer, reflection and repentance of sins.

In Western churches it begins on Ash Wednesday, six and a half weeks before Easter, and provides a 40-day period for abstinence and reflection. Many Christians give up those worldly things that have become too important in our lives, and add a Lenten spiritual discipline, such as charitable work, reading a daily devotional or praying through a Lenten calendar, in order to focus more on God.

The 40 days remind us of Jesus Christ's fasting and temptation in the wilderness before he began his public ministry and do not include Sundays because the Lord's Day is always a day of celebration.

In English-speaking countries, the day before Lent is known as Shrove Tuesday, which is derived from the word 'shrive', meaning 'to administer the sacrament of confession to; to absolve', as Christians would confess and be absolved of their sins as they begin Lent. Pancakes are associated with Shrove Tuesday because they are a way to use up rich foods such as eggs, milk, and sugar - which are not eaten during the season, and so Shrove Tuesday has become known as Pancake Day.

Lent then begins on Ash Wednesday. The wearing of ashes is often seen in the Bible as a sign of penitence and mourning. Traditionally, Christians receive a mark of a cross on their foreheads as a solemn reminder of our human mortality and the need for reconciliation with God. (In our Ash Wednesday Holy Communion service at 11am in St Mary's, worshippers can choose to receive ashes or not, and they can receive the mark of the cross on their foreheads or palms of their hands.)

Lent then continues from Ash Wednesday for six and a half weeks, and includes Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, which we will look at next magazine.

LENT, HOLY WEEK & EASTER



LENT IN THE PARISH

As a Parish, we will be following The Church of England's 'Dust & Glory' Lent reflections, where you are invited to explore how we can live well with the mess of everyday life. Sign up to receive daily emails by visiting our Lent 2023 online page.



It's not too late to sign up to one of our House Groups that will be following a dedicated Lent Course. Should you wish to join a course, please email Sarah Whiteside who will advise you when the courses are running. sarahwhiteside@btinternet.com

WALK OF WITNESS: 7th April

LENT, HOLY WEEK & EASTER

Children, adults and well-behaved dogs are invited to join us for our Walk of Witness which starts at 10am from the junction of Highfield Park and Victoria Road.

We walk to St Mary's Church, calling at Elizabeth Court and The Mount, ending up at the Church just after 11am.

On the route we will stop for readings and to sing hymns.


You can join us on any part of the route which is: Victoria Road - Elizabeth Court - Hamilton Road - Silverdale Road - The Mount - Braybrooke Road - Church Street - Mill Green.

At the end of the walk hot cross buns and refreshments will be served in the Church Centre

Bring your Friends and Neighbours, ALL ARE WELCOME!



BUTTERFLIES MOTHERS' DAY DINNER



Join us for our


Please bring your own drinks

Mother's Day Dinner

St Mary's Church Centre

**WEDNESDAY
15 MARCH**

7.30pm
tickets £15
camillacook@btconnect.com

 St Mary's Church Wargrave
With Kindness

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

RAMBLIN' WITH BOB: Sunday 26th March

A reminder of the March ramble which takes place on Sunday 26th March, meeting at 12.30pm on Mill Green for a delightful stroll along the old Thames towpath to the confluence of the Hennerton Backwater.

We shall return in time for lunch at The Bull at 3pm.

Please let Bob know if you wish to join the ramble and partake of lunch.



If you would like to join us on our walks in the future, please contact Bob Austen to be included in our notices.



Email: austenrobert@hotmail.com
Home: 0118 940 3038 or Mobile: 07970 611013

Celebrating Mothers

MARY: The perfect mother, on Mothering Sunday

Susan Puddy

CELEBRATING MOTHERS

This year, Mothering Sunday falls on 19th March, traditionally a day we honour mothers and mother figures with flowers, cups of tea, home-made cards and breakfast in bed. After half an hour it's back to normal. Such is motherhood that even 30 minutes is to be celebrated but it's confirmation that we're doing OK as mothers, a role without proper training, away days and modular learning but plenty of well-meaning advice. Yet, Mary, mother of Jesus, our model of perfect motherhood and unselfish love, not only had no choice in the matter but the news of impending motherhood was broken to her by an angel called Gabriel in the middle of the night who might have said be not afraid but would certainly have put the fear of God in her. No more sleep for Mary.

Most women start telling others they are expecting a baby after the 12 week scan but who could Mary tell? Especially as the baby was the son of God. She might have kept that bit quiet as no-one would believe her. Even ancient Cousin Elizabeth nursing her own secret was unlikely to be a natural confidante.

Baby Jesus is born and Mary falls in dizzying love with him, blowing bubbles, kissing and cuddling him, breathing in his baby smell. Despite the gorgeous pictures through history of Mary in azure blue smiling sweetly at her chubby baby,

looking like Mona Lisa's younger sister, it's easy to think Mary must have worried day and night over her ability to keep Jesus safe.

Did she panic every time he had a runny nose and a cough? Turn into an over-protective woman with a worry frown? Or did she think, as Jesus went off to climb trees and chase sheep, he's in good hands, God will keep an eye out, I'll have a sit down and a couple of glasses of wine. A comforting thought, access to an in-law with a superpower.

Then Mary has more babies, half-brothers for Jesus and less time for him, but feeling guilty that she and Joseph should be doing more to guide him as a future king. And she has to spend so much time grinding wheat into flour to feed the family she doesn't know what he gets up to. Fortunately Jesus was a good boy, obedient to his mum and dad but maybe his brothers felt he got more attention and was the favourite. Perhaps as Jesus grew through his teenage years Mary hoped he would settle down with a nice girl. Or did she suspect the horror of what she would have to endure during his agonising goodbye?

That's some impressive example of motherhood for the rest of us, relieved at just getting through another day of child-rearing reality. We only have to be good enough, not perfect and a cup of tea on a wobbly saucer is the most welcome thank you there is.



WHAT A MOTHER MEANS TO US

St Mary's Congregation

Recently at St Mary's, the congregation was asked 'What do you (or did you) love about your Mum? If you are a Mum, what do you love about being a Mum? When asked those questions, most had lovely things to say but some found the questions hard. Most of us are very grateful for our Mums, but we don't all have memories we want to dwell on!

Whatever our experience of having a mother, or of being one, the truth is, we all have a loving heavenly Father. He knows everything that there is to know about us and yet loves us beyond anything we can fathom. As you read the comments written by members of the congregation, take a moment to think about how they give us a glimpse of God's love for us.

What I love(d) about my Mum

My Mum loved me and my sisters unconditionally – that is true love.

My Mum was kind and understanding. She helped everyone where possible. She certainly loved me and my sister.

She is nice and she taught me a lot and gave me a younger brother.

She was always there for us when we got home – loving and caring at all times and super at cooking.

She's always been there for me! Gentle and kind and fun.

Her selflessness.

She's always prayed for me, even when I turned away from Christ.

She always makes me smile and gives so much love and care to my daughter.

She is kind, generous and loving.

What I love about being a Mum

The children have someone to turn to, who is always there for them, to share their joy and lift them up during times of difficulty. My children are married and God has blessed me with grandchildren and that is a wonderful thing. The birth of my first son was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I think if I wasn't a mum I'd be more selfish.

The joy of seeing my children experience new things.

When they tell me they love me and only seek comfort from me when hurt / ill.

The love for my children and supporting them throughout their lives

The sheer joy (and pain!) and privilege of sharing life and time with children God has given me – and it goes for a long time!

The love and joy my children and grandchildren bring me.

It's wonderful being a mum. You get all the grotty jobs and also all the love. God is good to us as mothers.

THE JOYS OF GRANDCHILDREN

As Mother's Day approaches we invite some of the busy Grandmas, Grannies and Nans of the Parish to reflect on their wonderful experiences.

ROSIE CREEDON

I am blessed with having four grandchildren, three boys (6, 2 & 4m) and one girl (3). They are truly a joy. None of them live nearby, but at least we're all in the same country, with trips to Bristol & Cornwall as often as possible. So visits to them are precious, likewise their visits to me, which turn my house into total chaos, are equally precious.

As young children, they are full of enthusiasm, curiosity, energy and imagination which is fun to be around. They all love cuddling up to share a story book and reading stories to them is one of my favourite things...although by the time the 2 year old has asked for the same story to be repeated about 5 times on the trot, the pleasure of that particular book can wane a little.

As I look at these children and watch them grow and develop, it brings me to ponder afresh at the wonder of new life and the God-given uniqueness of each one of them.

I remember my late husband, David, saying, when our children were young, how, as well as in the fun and happy times, in those moments when they're being challenging or just sheer hard work, he loved them so much, and how that gave him a tiny glimpse of how God's unconditional love for us must be. And the love I feel for my grandchildren, the joyful fun, fascination and sometimes sheer exhaustion of being with them, is a wonderful reminder of God's love for them as well as for each one of us through all the changing times of our lives, in the good times as well as the challenging or tough times.

JANE BATTING

I can honestly say that being a Granny is wonderful. Humbling to be loved and treasured by your children's children. Lovely for me that I can watch them grow and learn and start to question. Maybe I can answer some of those questions!



Jane with (from left)
Leo, Bertie, Rufus, Poppy and Teddy

As everyone says - being a grandparent is one step removed from being a parent enabling you to have a close relationship with a grandchild that can add a different perspective. Not being so closely involved in the everyday ups & downs means you might be listened to (not always, I might add!) It is my hope that they will become part of the wider church family through love and example and I feel very privileged and lucky that I have 5 wonderful grandchildren with another on the way!

ALEX CLARK

I became a Nan for the first time last May when Thea was born to Lindsay & Gareth. It was wonderful to hold and hug her knowing this was a privilege. I loved her immediately and being able to watch her grow and develop is a joy. As a grandparent I am not working or multi-tasking as I was as a parent so I can spend time being in the here and now with Thea as she grows and explores the world around her. Yes, I have learned to change nappies again but that comes with the territory! Her baptism at St Mary's was a wonderful event as Thea took it all in her stride smiling all the way through as Steve conducted the service. There were four generations present Thea, her mother, Nan & Grandma and her Great Nan watching her join the church family.



Baby Thea with her Great Nan and Nan at her baptism

JANE AUSTEN

I thought that being a mother to three sons was the most rewarding part of my life which couldn't be surpassed, but being a grandmother now the joy just keeps on giving.

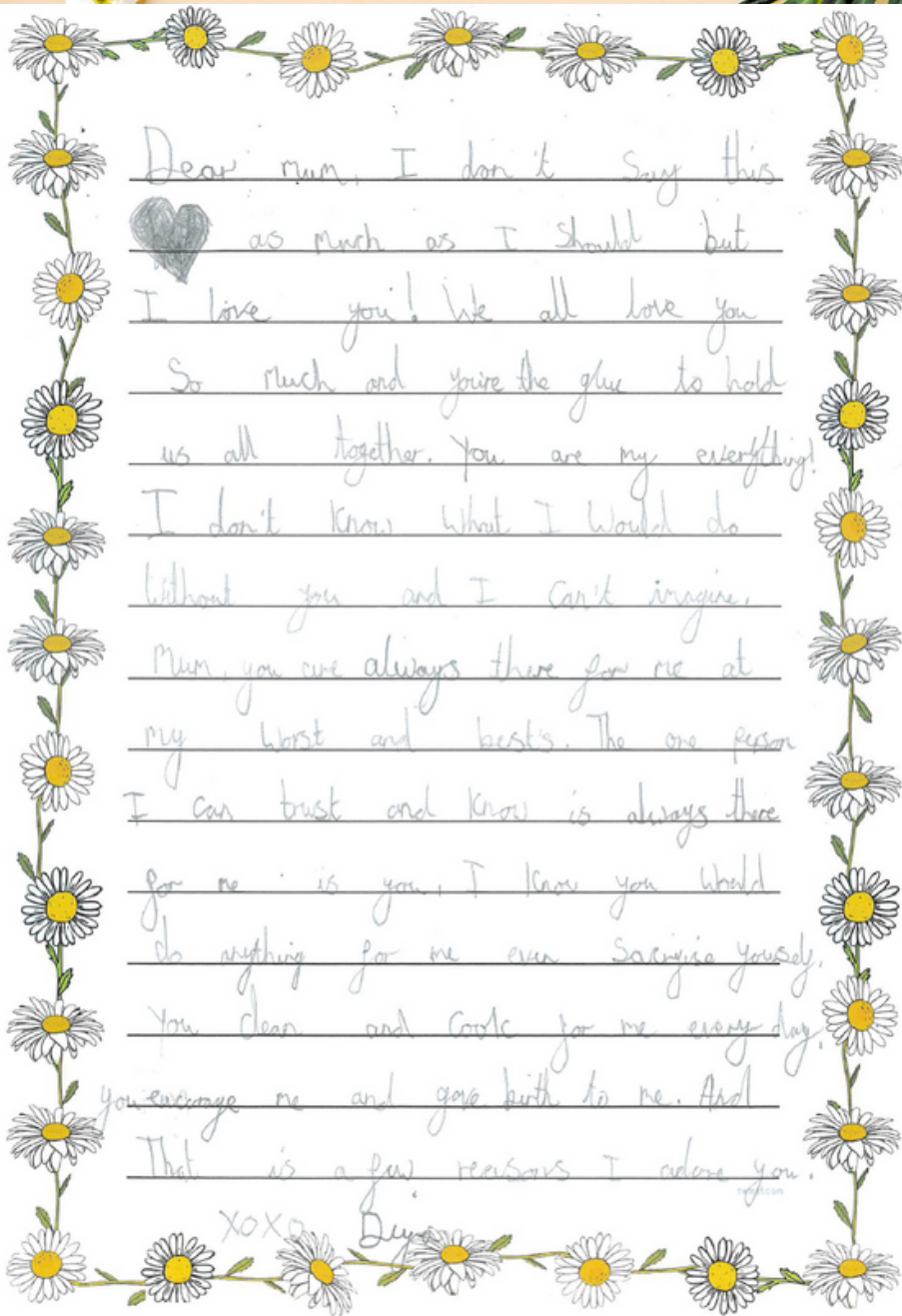
Three granddaughters and one grandson is amazing – though tempered by the fact that three of them reside in Toronto making contact rather limited – but technology allows for regular contact through facetime so no excuse not to talk to Grandma!! It's another dimension to parenting being sort of once removed – taking into account modern views on parenting – not always the same as Dr Spock or Penelope Leach in my day – but basically lots of love & fun and totally life affirming. So weekly visits to our granddaughter in Worthing who is 3 and loves nothing better than a good book to read or blocks to build. At least twice a year visits to Toronto to 2 granddaughters (9 & 6) and grandson (3) who keep Grandma on her toes when visiting with snowman building in Winter and lots of fun in the pool in Summer. So I feel totally blessed to be part of this wonderful extended family – albeit with the usual ups and downs of life – just hoping I can keep the energy levels up to carry on.




Whether or not you have children or grandchildren, let us all thank God for the children around us, those in our families, godchildren, those amongst our friends, our neighbours and our village, and pray for God's blessing on them through the precious times of childhood and as they grow into their adult years.

MESSAGES TO OUR MOTHERS

MESSAGES TO OUR MOTHERS



Dear mum, I don't say this
 as much as I should but
I love you! We all love you
So much and you're the glue to hold
us all together. You are my everything!
I don't know what I would do
without you and I can't imagine.
Mum, you are always there for me at
my worst and best's. The one person
I can trust and know is always there
for me is you. I know you would
do anything for me even sacrifice yourself.
You clean and cook for me every day.
You encourage me and gave birth to me. And
That is a few reasons I adore you.

XOXO
Diana

JACK

Most beautiful woman the world has ever seen
I also **love you to the moon and back**. And also
thank you for paying for my football every week.
Thank you for when I get McDonald's now and then
as well.

ANNABEL

Dear Mum, I don't say this as much as I should but I really do love
you. I love the way you cook, I love the way you clean. I'm really
glad you're not mean! I don't know what I would do without you,
you always try and make my dreams come true, even if it
means you have to let yours go. I wouldn't give you up for the
world because I love you.

OLLIE

I love you and I'm sure everyone else does too. You're the
best as we live in the west. I'm sure you're out of this world,
hence why your hair is lovely and curled. I love you so
hopefully you do too. You must be the best.



RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Annie Hobden da Silva

PARENTING

Raising children can be a challenge. Parents are bombarded by the opinions of their families, other parents, Instagram, the internet, books etc. It can be hard to know whose voice to listen to.

But what about the Bible's view on how to raise children? We can easily get distracted with all the things the world tells us we should be doing and forget to think about how to raise children who know the Lord. Sunday Club is a great source of weekly input, but the Bible is clear that children learn about God through the daily conversations and teaching of their parents. Proverbs 22:6 says "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

As a starter for 10 I have put together some resources that might help your family learn and grow together in your faith. There are many more available and if you have resources that you have used and enjoyed in the past, please do share them with me. I'm new to this as well!

And the Bible is clear that passing our faith to the next generation is the responsibility of all God's people. We all have a part to play. "One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your mighty works." (Psalm 145:4). So if you are not raising children directly yourself at the moment, do look at the resources below and pray about how you could share your faith with the next generation and how you could support some of the parents at church to do this.

VIDEOS

There are lots of different videos produced by churches that are available on YouTube. Here are a couple of ones I particularly enjoy.

Saddleback@Home have great videos available online for different age groups. We love watching the toddler videos with Arabella. They have also animated a lot of the Bible and we use these 'Stories of the Bible' videos in Sunday Club.

The Bible: A Brickfilm is great for anyone who likes Lego. The Bible stories are brought to life through the medium of lego.

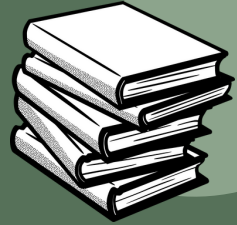
The Bible Project (bibleproject.com) produce videos that summarise the books of the Bible and themes in the Bible. I find them incredibly useful, and teenagers would also benefit from watching them.

BOOKS

Risen Motherhood by Emily Jensen and Laura Wifler. This is a great tonic from secular parenting books as it encourages us to think about our parenting through the lens of the gospel. How do the truths of the gospel (God's love, mercy, grace etc) impact how we parent?

Soul Food for Mums: A weekly devotional for baby's 1st year by Lucinda van der Hart and Anna France-Williams.

New Baby Survival Guide: Bite-sized Bible reading for new mothers by Cassie Martin and Sarah Smith



PODCASTS

Faith in Kids produce two streams of podcasts. One for families to listen to together (Faith in KIDS) and one for parents to think about questions concerning how they raise their children (Faith in PARENTS). You can stream these podcasts through your usual app or go directly to the faith in kids website: faithinkids.org/podcasts/

The ladies who wrote **Risen Motherhood** (see above) also have a podcast to encourage parents (mainly targeted at Mums but applicable for all parents / grandparents / care givers) to think about how the gospel applies to the daily challenges of raising children. risenmotherhood.com/podcast



IN PERSON @ ST MARY'S

Of course, there is nothing like in-person encouragement / sharing of ideas. A new **online home group** will be starting shortly on Thursdays 8pm - 9pm via Zoom for parents (and anyone else who wants to) to join. This will be supplemented with a family dinner once a month for parents & children. If you are interested in joining this home group please get in touch with Nicola (07740 644379).

Butterflies is a great way for new parents to meet. It happens on the 1st, 3rd & 5th Wednesdays of each month at 9.30am in the church centre. For part of the session a wonderful group of volunteers look after the babies and toddlers while the parents have a conversation (led by Camilla) about raising children and parenting.

We are aware that there are so many other things that could be done to support parents from parenting courses, to prayer, to practical help with babysitting and meals etc... If you have an idea or feel you have time to volunteer, please get in touch with me, Annie Hobden da Silva: hobden.da.silva@gmail.com.



SUNDAY CLUB: Our Children and the gender debate

Jubi Filho da Silva



"How many genders are there?" — asked the interviewer.

"I'd say... definitely more than two," said one of them.

"It's an infinite amount of genders," said another.

"You just talk to the person and find out what they feel. The only person who really needs to know about their gender is themselves," said the last one.

The dialogue above comes from a recent interview filmed at the campus of the University of Sussex - search it on YouTube if you like. Now I turn to you, the reader. How did you feel when you read that? Tense?

When you read just the first line, the question itself, was that enough to make you feel uncomfortable? Did you cringe when you read some of the answers? Sigh with a sigh of anxiety and perplexity, rolling your eyes annoyed, angry at this interview, perhaps angry at this article? Exactly — what is this doing featuring in a Parish magazine? Worse, what is this doing in the space reserved for the Sunday Club column!?

This is the world we live in. We can wear masks that help protect us from a nasty virus flying in the air, but there are no masks to protect us from culture. We all breathe it in. The latest census revealed that the British sexual minorities whose gender identity differs from their sex registered at birth is only 0.5%. I am sure some would have celebrated a bigger number there, but this isn't about numbers. This is about real lives and the world our children will inherit from us, the adults. We are responsible for them. More — Christian adults are responsible for teaching children tremendous good news that will help them breathe in the pure breath of God... so they can grow up like Jesus did, "in wisdom and stature... in favour with God and man." (Luke 2:52) So, how are we doing that?

Faith in Kids is a ministry that designs resources for Sunday school. "Who am I?" is a 7-session resource that teaches children the very good news of the gospel: we are made by a loving God; we are made to love others; we are given a body; we are loved and forgiven; and we will be like Jesus. You can find the materials on **Faithinkids.org**. We are more than happy to teach that in Sunday Club this month.

Meanwhile, what do we do about how we feel? Remember Paul in Athens feeling "greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols"? (Acts 17:18) He didn't stop there, at the feeling. He went in and preached the good news of Jesus to people. We are not alone.

A reminder of the contacts to reach out to for all our Young Clubs.

Creché - Camilla Cook camillacook@btconnect.com

Sunday Club - Annie da Silva hobden.da.silva@gmail.com

Pathfinders - Marc Uniacke marcuniacke@gmail.com

Tuesday Youth Group - Richard Eves richard.m.s.eves@gmail.com

UPDATING THE ELECTORAL ROLL 2023

Helen Vonka

On behalf of the PCC, I am writing to you to encourage you to join the church's Electoral Roll if you are not currently a member. The current roll was fully renewed in 2019, and so we only need anyone who would like to be added to the list to apply now. You may have recently moved into the Parish or started coming regularly to services. There is a copy of the current list pinned up at the back of the Churches, and application forms are also available there, from the church office, or by request from me. The Parish has a single Electoral Roll, but it is divided into separate sections for Wargrave and for Knowl Hill/Warren Row.

When you apply to enrol, you identify yourself as a member of the Church at Wargrave and Knowl Hill and show that you are willing to join fully in its life through corporate worship, prayer, giving, service, fellowship and sharing the Gospel, so that the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified. The minimum age for membership of the Electoral Roll is 16, but young people who will reach that age in the next year can apply now and will then become members on their birthday.

Though all are welcome to share in the life and worship of their local Church without necessarily joining the Electoral Roll, we would encourage you to join because this is the nearest thing we have to a "Membership List", and is the basis for many official sets of statistics. Membership of the Electoral Roll is a requirement for parents seeking to send their children to Church Schools outside the Parish e.g. Ranelagh. It is also the list of those who are entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting, being held this year at St. Mary's on Sunday 16th April, to stand for election to the PCC or Deanery Synod, or to be appointed as a Sidesman/Sideswoman.

Please can I have completed applications by **Sunday 26th March** at the latest by dropping them into the Church Office or the Postbox in the lychgate or given directly to me on Sundays at St Mary's.

For more information or details, please contact Helen - 0118 940 1139 / hvonka@yahoo.com

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE JOHN RAY INITIATIVE?

Mike Buckland



The John Ray Initiative is a Christian charity aiming to equip the church in issues of environmental science and theology.

It was founded in 1997 by Sir John Houghton, former head of the Met Office and co-chair of the International Panel on Climate Change, and other notable scientists such as the geneticist and naturalist Dr Sam Berry, and botanist and former Kew Gardens director Sir Ghillean Prance. Sir John was a regular visitor to Wargrave as the brother of the late David Houghton, who lived at Wargrave Court and played a leading part in our church life.

The charity takes its name from John Ray, one of the earliest English parson naturalists. Together with A Rocha, a Christian nature conservation charity, it runs the Christian Rural and Environmental Studies (CRES) course and regular Zoom webinars. Recent speakers have been IPCC lead author Dr Mike Morecroft on COP27, Revd Margot Hodson (co-author of the Christian Guide to Environmental Issues, and contributor to our parish Lent Course in 2017) and Dr Norman Wirzba, a leading environmental theologian. To find out more, visit jri.org.uk where you can find Bible Studies and other resources, blogs, book reviews and briefing papers, and sign up to receive their regular newsletter.

Members of the congregation are also invited to talk to Revd James S Watterson, JRI Operations and Development Manager, by phone, video call or email. You may request this via the contact form on their website. Please explain that you are responding to the invitation he sent via our Vicar John Cook.



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 2023

27th February - 12th March



As a Fairtrade church since 1997, we mark Fairtrade Fortnight. On the 5th & 12th March, we plan to offer a modest selection of products at our 9.45am services in St Mary's, and on request at St Peter's. Please support the stall!

ECO CHURCH

THE EGG THAT SHARES THE EASTER STORY



The Meaningful Chocolate Company's Real Easter Egg is the only UK egg that proclaims what Christians believe is the true meaning of Easter: the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is palm oil free, plastic free, made of 100% Fairtrade chocolate and has a story booklet for children, for less money than similar sized eggs in shops: £4.80 for the original milk egg, £5.50 for the dark one. We shall also have, from the same manufacturer, "sharing boxes" of mini eggs for church children's groups and baptism parties, and a chocolate bar that commemorates the King's Coronation.

The Real Easter Egg will be on sale until Sunday 2nd April - Palm Sunday and the Sunday before Easter. You can also buy them during the week from Mike Buckland, our Fairtrade champion.

Phone: 0118 940 4960
Email mikebuckland54@gmail.com

The Parish of Wargrave with Knowl Hill would like to take this opportunity to thank Mike for his continued support for his efforts regarding the Eco Church initiative.



THE REAL EASTER EGG



Sadly, as you may have heard, the fair trade pioneer Traidcraft UK, founded in 1979, fell into administration in January, despite the heroic efforts of its staff in Gateshead. We shall source our Fairtrade products from other suppliers from now on, such as Kingdom Coffee, a Reading-based company which has supplied our filter coffee for over ten years. Thank you for your support of Traidcraft over the years. Without a doubt, we did our best.

JANUARY IN

Japan



LESLEY & STEVE TURVILLE

IN JAPAN

Lesley and I were very blessed to spend the first 3 weeks of 2023 with our daughter Nicky, son-in-law Len, and grandson Jed in Japan. They work with YWAM, (Youth With A Mission) a Christian mission organisation that has bases all over the world, and they are based in Takatsuki, 15 miles south of Kyoto, 230 miles west of Tokyo. Currently, Nicky and Len and the rest of the team are putting together a Discipleship Training School to begin at the end of March, as well as hosting weekly community meals, English conversation classes for local people, worship evenings and hosting visiting mission teams from other YWAM bases. A team from Hawaii was there at the same time as us.

While Nicky and Len were working, Lesley, Jed and I explored the area, walking daily through local fields and streets to shops or parks. After three weeks, we were virtually perfect at 'hello' and 'thank you'. On our last day, two old gentlemen whom we had often said hello to on our walks, gave us a tour of their allotment and presented us with a gift of lemons from their tree. It's amazing how just smiling can build relationships.

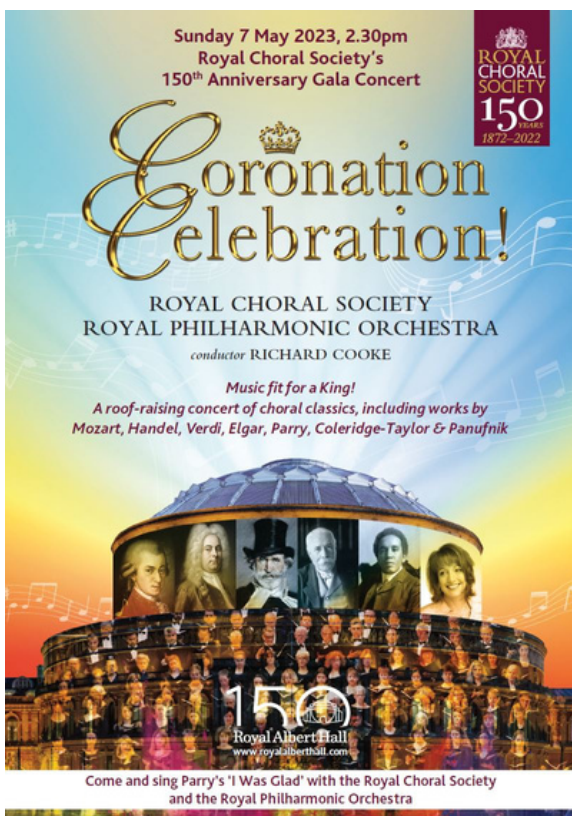
When Nicky and Len were able to join us, we went further afield, to Kyoto, the ancient capital, and Osaka, for some proper tourism. What a beautiful, fascinating and welcoming country. It was our first time in Japan, and we are already planning our next trip.



CORONATION CELEBRATION!

King Charles III will be crowned on Saturday May 6th. The next day, in the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal Choral Society will be presenting a Coronation Concert, to mark this Event, and also to celebrate their own 150th Anniversary. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra will be playing and maestro Richard Cooke conducting. Details on royalchoralsociety.co.uk.

The RCS has been conducted by Verdi, Elgar and many others and they will be highlighting their musical repertoire with works like 'Dies Irae' from Verdi's Requiem, Elgar's 'Praise to the Holiest' from the Dream of Gerontius. Many other classical favourites like Mozart's 'Ave Verum', and Handel's 'Zadok the Priest', will also be sung. Best of all, the whole RAH audience will be invited to sing Parry's Coronation Anthem 'I Was Glad' very loudly indeed 'beltissimo' at the end.



CORONATION

The Parish are running a coach from Mill Green leaving at Noon and returning by around 7pm. The cost is £10 for the coach and £25 for a seat in the RAH and there are, at the time of writing, around 10 tickets left. You could also bring a coronation chicken sandwich and suitable celebration beverage for lunch. To book a ticket, please contact peter@familydart.com.

CEMETERY CENTENARY

Peter Mayes



On the 27th September 1922 Henry Bond of Wargrave Court signed a deed identifying his intention to convey the area known as the Old Chalk Pit to the Diocese of Oxford for use as an additional burial ground for the Parish of Wargrave and requesting the Commissioners to formally accept it.

This move was prompted by concern that St Mary's churchyard was now virtually full. Searches for alternative space had not yielded a practical solution due to the proximity of the Thames.

Mr Bond first floated this proposal, as a gift to the Church, at a Vestry meeting in 1919 at which time a committee of church elders comprising Sir William Cain, Dr McCrea, Mrs Oliver Young and Mr Burrows was appointed to consider it. A few months later, having first reviewed the limitations such surfaces might present to grave digging, the committee favoured the proposal. At that time Mr Bond made the point that deviation from the circuitous route through the village might prove necessary. His proposal, which was illustrated on a map attached to the conveyance, precisely followed the existing route of the unmade-up extension of Braybrooke Road which then turns through 90 degrees to run down to meet the A321 road.

The work of the Committee over the course of the next two years makes interesting reading. Since the Chalk Pit was still being worked they decided to restrict the cemetery to the north side of the property, the area that had been worked out.

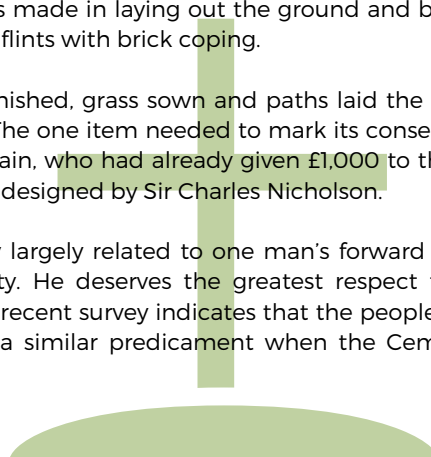
However, there were two dilapidated buildings and an old lime kiln on it all being in need of attention. Road access to the site was also discussed with assessment of costs related to light and to heavy traffic and organisations that might bear the costs.

The Parish Magazine October 1922 issue confirms acceptance of the site by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, as approved by the Bishop of Oxford, for a burial ground. With the Conveyance confirmed and signed the way was set for consecration which was identified in the March 1923 issue to take place on Wednesday 8th August. In the meantime progress was made in laying out the ground and building foundations for a boundary wall of rough flints with brick coping.

In May, with the wall finished, grass sown and paths laid the beauty of the new burial ground was apparent. The one item needed to mark its consecration had already been promised. Sir William Cain, who had already given £1,000 to the fund, also presented a Churchyard Cross to be designed by Sir Charles Nicholson.

This has been the story largely related to one man's forward thinking, his community spirit and his generosity. He deserves the greatest respect from us all. This story is pertinent today since a recent survey indicates that the people of Wargrave could, in 10 - 20 years' time be in a similar predicament when the Cemetery reaches full burial capacity.

Think on it!



WHICH TEAM DOES GOD SUPPORT?

Mark Puddy

When you see a footballer coming on the pitch and crossing himself, or someone who has scored pointing up to give thanks to God, what do you feel is happening? Are they wanting God to make their team win? What happens when there are Christians playing for and supporting both teams? Which team should God support?

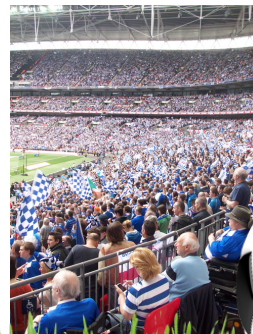


This difficulty was much more vividly demonstrated in the First World War, when both sides had a belief that God was behind them. Does God take sides in a matter of life and death such as a war? Surely then, he must be concerned with football, as, in the words of Bill Shankly, "Somebody said that football's a matter of life and death to you, I said 'listen, it's more important than that!'"

When we go to a match to support our local team, we are hoping for success, skill and entertainment. It makes us seem a sad lot, when we return home after an afternoon marked by defeat, hoofball and misery. Why do we expend so much emotional energy in something which is as fruitless? As Christians, should our minds not be on higher things? In my opinion, it is the very meaningless of it which makes it appropriate way to invest our time and feelings, as whether Reading win or lose is of no lasting importance. Pretty well any other activity where glorying in the triumph of one group of people at the expense of another occurs in settings such as in a war, sectarian violence or bigoted hatred of one sort or another. It is only within the sporting environment when we can share the elation of triumph without the dark side. (The above point does not apply to Millwall supporters). The danger is when the obsession of following the Royals becomes more important to us than following Jesus, or when those feelings of hatred or violence become linked to support.

QUESTION OF SPORT

Let us return to the image of the goal scorer. I feel that a footballer wants to do their best in all they do, using their God-given talents. Remembering Hal Robson-Kanu's wonder goal for Wales against Belgium; where did that come from? Nothing we saw from him playing for Reading prepared us for that. When a footballer scores a wonder-goal, they may reflect on what God has given them, and, by that gesture, give Him thanks, and acknowledge their debt to him in a way visible to all the crowd.



QUESTIONING

EVANGELISM

Maybe this talk should be retitled 'Questioning - A Tool of Evangelism'

This talk by our curate Richard Eves was based on a book of that name written by Randy Newman. It was for those who wanted to share their faith in Christ with others and have found this challenging. How do we engage with non-Christians to have meaningful conversations about Jesus? How can we speak to those close to us without jeopardizing our relationships?

We start by talking to people and asking questions!

We heard some examples from the Gospel of Mark, of Jesus being questioned. This showed us how he did not force answers on people - instead he asked them questions.

Mark 2:18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?"

Richard shared principles of how to engage with people. He also explained why asking questions helps us to understand where people are coming from and what is at the heart of their unbelief. We reflected on past conversations, how we might have responded differently and how we could use these principles with others in future.

I can recall a couple of occasions chatting to people. I could hardly call them conversations because of their brevity.

The first was being asked by a member of the family 'Why do you believe when we don't?' to which I had no answer. The second was talking to someone about Jesus' forgiveness of sin to be told 'I am not a sinner so I don't need Jesus'. Again I had no response and I am still working out how I might respond to both these questions when they arise again.

But no matter how and with whom we seek to engage, we must never forget the importance of prayer and the responsibility of God in salvation. We are all in God's hands

Christine Walker

HONEST EVANGELISM

Christine Walker et al

It was encouraging when nearly twenty of us gathered for this talk on Evangelism presented by Jubi da Silva based on a book by Rico Tice called 'Honest Evangelism - How to talk about Jesus even when it's tough'.

Why all this focus on evangelism? It's because there is a need to tell people about Jesus Christ and an urgency to inviting people to get to know Him. As the Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians "Now is the day of salvation" - for we do not know when the Lord will return, it could be at any time.

Starting a conversation about Jesus can often be difficult so we tend to avoid it. Whether we're speaking to strangers, casual acquaintances or close friends and family, we can shy away from mentioning the Lord's name. All of us had plenty of reasons for not evangelizing.

Given some helpful tips to get us thinking we practised having conversations about Jesus with each other. We learned how to focus on three key aspects of the Lord's life - his identity, his mission and his calling.

Jesus Christ, Jesus - the Christ, the Messiah, the one promised by God. His birth was foretold, where he would be born, who he was, what he was and how he would die. His mission would involve his suffering, death and rising from the dead and because of this he saves us from the consequences of our sin. The calling is that as followers of Jesus we are told to give our lives to him, to follow him, to go out as witnesses.

It can help to think through the questions people might ask and how we would respond. We need to be sure of the basics of our Christian faith, to understand for ourselves why Jesus came, why he had to die and what this means. We can also pray for help in the moment and during conversations! If the questions are more difficult, we might offer to sit and read the Bible with someone, to let them see for themselves what it says.

When faced with difficult and challenging questions, or perhaps a hostile response, it is not the time to become discouraged. Remember drawing people to Christ is not solely our responsibility, above all, it is God's. We do not always know what the outcome will be, but we must speak out so that others too can enjoy the fruits of the kingdom of heaven, even eternal life.



VICAR'S LETTER

"Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls" Jeremiah 6:16



Dear *Friends*

Driving in Scotland, the Lake District, or across Pennine passes you will have spotted the tall marker posts by the side of the road, often painted red at the top. They are designed to show where the road lies even after heavy snowfall. Without them it would be impossible to navigate safely and to stay on the road.

Navigating the teenage years has never been easy. There are the challenges of trying to work out who we are, how we fit into our families, schools, and wider society. How much harder it is for today's teenagers when so many of the established marker posts of the past have been removed. For example: that we are created by God, that there is an objective morality which is not for us to make up, that history has lessons to teach us which are good and helpful, that parents are worth listening to as they have wisdom from their longer experience of life etc.

With the markers removed, young people are being told they are free to make their own path through life. It sounds liberating, but the irony is it is deeply unsettling for many. Our drift from Biblical moorings has placed an intolerable burden on the shoulders of so many teenagers. This would include (but is certainly not limited to) having to somehow discern which of an entire library of 'genders and sexualities' they belong to. The promise of an impossible dream, which cannot be realized, makes the world a frightening place to so many.

The prophet Jeremiah (7th century BC) spoke to God's people at a time when they had lost their way. A good path leading to rest and blessing remained for those humble enough to recognize they had strayed from it, willing to ask where it was. Tragically God's people said, "We will not walk in it" (Jeremiah 6:16), and so found themselves on a very different path, not to rest, but to exile.

As a church one of the great joys and opportunities working with young people is we have the privilege of pointing them to the ancient paths which, although ignored or forgotten by so many, lead to life and rest. Moreover, and most importantly we can point them to the one who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). There is in the Lord Jesus the ongoing promise of rest for people with messy lives. Our ambition should be that each generation might hear of the "ancient paths" and walk in them.

Please then, I would like you to pray for all our work with children and teenagers, and for those who lead this work. Since the Pandemic there has been a reduction in numbers of children and young people with whom we have contact. This reflects the whole of the whole of the UK. In our present culture reconnecting with these children and young people can seem an impossible task.

But it is an exhilarating fact that God can change where we have been in recent years and overcome our present challenges. None of us need be stuck in the past. But equally, the word of invitation cannot be indefinitely ignored. Grace is not cheap.

All of us, both youngsters and those decades older need to wake up and remind ourselves that every step down the wrong path takes us further from the crossroads...and a point can come when we can hardly hear the voice that calls us back again.

John

John R.M. Cook
Vicar of Wargrave with Knowl Hill

SPRING CLEAN: ST MARY'S CHURCH

18th March

Mark Puddy

After 3 years of accumulation of dust, dirt, and Covid, we spruced up St Mary's last March, with the first Spring Clean of the 2020's. Well, you've guessed it, it's that time again!

I am delighted to announce that Saturday 18th March is the day we are asking for as many as possible to join the fun. I attended for the first time last year, and am gagging to have another go with improbably long pieces of bamboo, supplied from the Panda reserve Richard and Mel Eves have at the back of their house. These are held together with tape, brushing off the rafters previously trod only by angels, and, as Churchwarden, I'm keen to see it all again.

We start at the difficult early time of 7.30am, when the high-level team arrive, cleaning, using ladders, as high as we can, to bring dust down to the floor level. Health and safety requires that we should not do anything which might bring a cleaner down quicker than the dust they have just dislodged. By 10.30am, the dust has safely come down to earth, and a second team of terrestrials are to arrive to clean everything accessible at ground level. Everything is over by lunchtime, there is no dust to settle, and a good job has been done by all.

We need volunteers for both parts of the event, and I am particularly keen to see lots of young recruits to do the aerial work (as that's the bit I am organising, sorry June!). Even if you can't manage all the shift, then please do volunteer for the time you can spare. The more who volunteer, the more fun it will be, and the quicker we will get the job done.

We will be putting up a list in the back of church for volunteers to sign up or alternatively, email one of us depending on your availability
7.30am - Mark: markpuddy@btinternet.com
10.30am - June: junemil.knox@gmail.com

WARGRAVECHURCH.ORG.UK

SPRING CLEAN

QUESTION TIME

Richard Eves



WHAT DID JESUS THINK ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY PART II

QUESTION TIME

What did Jesus think about homosexuality? This is a high stakes question for Christians. We know we ought to follow Jesus whatever he says. But on this question more than most we know that the answer could have consequences - and these could be very costly. It might affect our relationships - we have gay family members and friends. It could be costly in our workplaces or social groups, where having the 'wrong' view on this question is entirely unacceptable. Indeed, it could well affect us directly as we reflect on our own desires and behaviours. As we will see, this last category might include far more of us than you would first think.

In the last article, we saw that since Jesus never directly addresses the topic of homosexuality in the Gospels, the best approach to the question is first to determine what standard Jesus applied in considering such issues. For Jesus, the standard in all such considerations is the Bible. The Bible is Jesus' 'true truth', the stable horizon against which all other things are measured. For Jesus, every word of the Bible is a word of God - what the Bible says, God says - and so can be taken as completely reliable in every area, including in moral judgements. So, what can we learn about Jesus' attitude to homosexual activity?

The first thing we can observe is that Jesus cares deeply about sexual ethics. Jesus' car would never have sported a 'Love is love' bumper sticker. For example, He repeatedly warns against adultery (e.g. Matt 5:28, Matt 5:32, Matt 19:9, Matt 19:18)

But adultery is not the only behavior which Jesus considers to be sexually immoral. We see this in Mark chapter 7 when, in listing the variety of evils that come out of the human heart, Jesus mentions both adultery and sexual immorality. The inclusion of both terms means that Jesus sees sexual immorality as a wider category than just adultery, otherwise Jesus would be uselessly repeating himself. This general term - sexual immorality - is used by Jesus a number of times in the Gospels, but He never defines the specific behaviors it includes. Rather, He seems to assume that His hearers will know what it means.

How then can we know what Jesus meant by sexual immorality? The answer, as we have already noted, is that Jesus' definition of sexual immorality comes from the Bible. The behaviours He would have considered sexually immoral are those described as such in the Old Testament. The explicit prohibitions of these behaviours are found in the legal codes of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, though condemnations of the behaviours are found in numerous other places as well. Specifically, the behaviours considered sexual immorality - and so forbidden - are adultery (e.g. Deut 22:22), fornication, that is, sex between unmarried people (e.g. Deut 22:20-21), incest (e.g. Lev 18:6-18), bestiality (e.g. Lev 18:23), rape (e.g. Deut 22:25-27), and, in answer to the question at hand, homosexual sex (e.g. Lev 18:22 and 20:13). [1] Can we be sure that Jesus knew of these prohibitions?

Well, when He was asked which of the Old Testament commandments were most important, Jesus quotes from Leviticus 19:18, (You shall love your neighbour as yourself). This verse comes in between the two prohibitions of homosexual sex in Leviticus, so it is clear that Jesus was familiar with them.

This is a hard and potentially shocking discovery. We might find ourselves getting angry or upset in response. How could Jesus think such a thing? As we process this information, let's remember three things. In the first place, we should recognise that viewing homosexual sex as sexual immorality is not the only place in which Jesus' biblical sexual ethic is at odds with contemporary morality. Few are those in our day who would say that sex between unmarried people is wrong, or even that adultery in each and every circumstance is an evil. Where many today would find much of Jesus' pattern of sexual ethics shocking or even outrageous, this is not just because this pattern is 'defective' on the issue of homosexuality. Rather, His entire moral vision is alien to contemporary culture, and it is the similarities and not the differences that we should find surprising.

Secondly, some have argued that the two Leviticus texts cited do not in fact ban all homosexual activity. Whilst there is no space to recount these arguments here, suffice to say that the overwhelming scholarly consensus, including among those on both sides of the homosexuality debate, is that these verses do in fact condemn all same-sex sexual activity as sinful.[2]

Finally, we might find ourselves wanting to distance Jesus from the perceived harshness of these passages. Surely Jesus was gentler and kinder than this; more understanding, and willing to make more allowances.

However, when we look at Jesus' teaching on these themes in the Gospels, we see that His desire is not to loosen the restrictions of these passages, but rather to tighten them. For example in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' teaching on adultery is as follows:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Jesus' position is not that the Biblical teaching on sexual immorality is too severe or harsh, but rather that it needs to be seen as a bare minimum, a starting point only, and that if someone is to truly live out these prohibitions they need to not only abstain from the acts themselves, but also put to death the desires that give rise to them. Sexually immoral acts are the fruit of dark hearts, just as dark spots on the skin are the sign of an inner cancer. If we're to be well, we can't just bleach the spots, we need a treatment that destroys the cancer. And if, God forbid, the cancer comes back, we kill it again. We fight it to the death, because if we don't, that's where it will take us. So says Doctor Jesus. His prescription? Be killing those desires, and be filled with love. Not love driven by the desires of our corrupted hearts, but by a genuine other-centredness. A love that doesn't seek its own desires, but lays down its life for its friends. This is what Jesus taught, and it is how He lived.

This standard of sexual conduct, focussed on the inner spiritual condition as much as outward physical acts, is one which we all fail. No one lives up to the standard Jesus lays out here. But this is the very heart of the Gospel. Jesus is the friend of sinners - He knows we all fail in this area. That's why He came.

Jesus came into the world to save sexual sinners, so the one thing we absolutely must not do is to pretend that there is no such thing as sexual sin, or that Jesus would never have called anyone a sexual sinner. Jesus has total trust and reliance on the Bible as a guide in all matters of life and belief. It is simply not credible to suggest that there are parts of the Old Testament with which He would have been uncomfortable, or from which he would have wanted to row back. And that includes in His view of same-sex sexual activity.

It may be that these things have been hard to read and even harder to accept. What Jesus teaches is very different to what we hear in the world around us, and following His lead could be very costly. But as Christians, following our Lord whatever the cost is what we do. Because whatever we may suffer for being loyal to Him, it will

never come close to the cost He bore for being faithful to us.

In this second article we have seen how, because of His confidence in the Bible, Jesus' definition of sexual immorality included same-sex sexual activity. In parts three and four we will explore two encounters He had with people caught up in sexual immorality, and what happened next.

[1] A modern reader might consider paedophilia to be an obvious omission from this list, but since any sex outside of marriage is covered by one of the other categories of immorality, sex with a person too young to be married is automatically a form of sexual immorality.

[2] In an excellent summary of this consensus, Ian Paul quotes from eight biblical scholars who think that the traditional christian position on homosexuality is wrong, but who nonetheless agree that the Bible clearly describes homosexuality as sinful. <https://www.psephizo.com/sexuality-2/what-is-the-bishop-of-oxford-thinking/>

TIME FOR A SMILE

When Forest Gump died, he stood in front of St Peter at the Pearly Gates. St Peter said, "Welcome, Forest. We've heard a lot about you." He continued, "Unfortunately, it's getting pretty crowded up here and we find that we now have to give people an examination before we let them in."

"Okay," said Forest. "I hope it's not too hard. I've already been through a test. My Momma used to say, 'Life is like a final exam. It's hard.'"

"Yes, Forest, I know. But, this test is only three questions. Here they are:"

- 1) Which two days of the week begin with the letter 'T'?
- 2) How many seconds are in a year?
- 3) What is God's first name?

"Well sir," said Forest, "The first one is easy. Which two days of the week begin with the letter 'T'? Today and Tomorrow."

St Peter looked surprised and said, "Well, that wasn't the answer I was looking for, but you have a point. I give you credit for that answer."

"The next question," said Forest, "How many seconds are in a year? Twelve."

"Twelve?" said St Peter, surprised and confused.

"Yes, sir. January 2nd, February 2nd, March 2nd..."

St Peter interrupted him. "I see what you mean. I'll have to give you credit for that one, too".

"And the last question," said Forest, "What is God's first name? It's Andy."

"Andy?" said St Peter, in shock. "How did you come up with 'Andy'?"

"I learned it in church. We used to sing about it." Forest broke into song, "Andy walk with me, Andy talks to me, Andy tells me I am His own."

St Peter opened the gate to heaven and said, "Run, Forest, Run!"



HOT TOPIC

The Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford

On 9th February the Parliament of the Church of England agreed to bless same sex partnerships but not to allow same sex marriage. Subsequently, the Bishop of Oxford sent out a letter, part of which is printed below and which was countersigned by the three area Bishops in the Diocese.

The General Synod has approved the motion brought by the House of Bishops as the next step in the Living in Love and Faith process.



The motion laments our failure as a church to welcome LGBTQI+ people; welcomes the decision of the House of Bishops to draw up new pastoral guidance to replace Issues in Human

Sexuality and looks forward to the House of Bishops further refining, commending and issuing the Prayers of Love and Faith.

The Synod debate was demanding. Many of our Oxford representatives spoke at different points and reflected different points of view. All spoke graciously and clearly.

I welcome Synod's decision as will many across the diocese. Some will be disappointed that the proposals were not able to go further than offering Prayers of Love and Faith and new guidance. Others will believe that the Bishops and the Synod have gone too far.

It is clear from the voting in the Houses of Clergy and Laity that whilst a majority are in favour of moving forward in this way, there remains a substantial minority opposed to change for a variety of reasons, and this is reflected in our own diocese.

The debate in the Synod chamber was both passionate and respectful. Synod rose to the occasion.

It was also an emotional debate. People laid themselves bare. There were tears afterwards on all sides.

Please hold in love and prayer those from our own diocese who took part and those who led on the debate nationally.

In March the House of Bishops will return to the task of refining and developing the Prayers of Love and Faith and to developing new Pastoral Guidance.

At present we expect both texts to be ready in some form by the July meeting of the General Synod. It's important to stress, for the moment, that nothing has changed in the Church of England's pastoral practice, although we do now have a clear direction of travel from the Bishops and affirmed by the General Synod.

Locally and nationally we will continue to listen carefully as this process continues, including of course to LGBTQI+ people and their families. There will be mixed feelings: for many a sense of welcome progress combined with a weariness that the debate will need to continue and disappointment that the Church has not been able to offer the celebration of equal marriage.

As bishops we will also be listening carefully to clergy and churches which are not able in conscience to affirm same sex relationships. We are already in dialogue with a range of individuals and groups across the Diocese of Oxford on this. As I said in my speech to the General Synod:

"My vision for the Diocese of Oxford is that we will be a diocese where all are affirmed and cherished, where same sex relationships can be celebrated and those who hold the traditional view are honoured and respected".

With love in Christ in testing times

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven Croft". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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PRAYER IS THE ONLY ENCOURAGEMENT

People often ask how we persevere in advocating for justice and freedom when it looks like nothing is changing – or, in some cases, getting worse.

In all honesty, it isn't easy! But we are inspired by the incredible courage of the people for whom we work. If they are not giving up, and because we serve a God who doesn't give up, then neither should we.

Over the last few years, I've journeyed with brave Sudanese contacts and partners through a rollercoaster of change in their country, from a brief period of hope to the military coup and bitter crackdown which is today's reality. The unrelenting resolve of the Sudanese people through these highs and extreme lows has inspired my work and my prayers.

We can never fully understand the pain and turmoil of their experiences, but we can stand alongside them and show unity in prayer. Sometimes our prayers are the only hope and encouragement they have.

Continue to remember those in captivity as if you were with them, and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering. (Hebrews 13:3)

HOW CAN I HELP?

Use CSW's prayer guide
csw.org.uk/prayer.htm

We do see answers to prayer, for example
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INDUCTION OF JON DRAKE: St Mary's, Maidenhead

The first of February marked a significant milestone at St Mary's, Maidenhead as they formally welcomed Jon Drake as their new Vicar and his wife Louise. Jon is well known to St Mary's, Maidenhead having served as Associate Vicar for a number of years.



The ceremony, officially known as institution, induction and installation, was a celebratory occasion and included traditional elements with presentation by their patron, oaths, handing Jon the key to the church and symbolic gifts of water, a map, a Bible, a copy of the book of common prayer, and bread and wine! These gifts were presented to Jon by members of the congregation with explanatory prayers. There were also hymns, led by a band, affirming the basis of their God-given mission, and wonderfully showcasing the church organ.

Bishop Rod Thomas gave an inspiring message to Jon, in his new role, and to St Mary's congregations based on 2 Corinthians 4: 1-6, where it was encouraged to not lose heart at the task set before us and to draw strength from the transforming power of ministry through Jesus. At times, we should expect some discouragement and may feel inadequate, but we can take confidence in the life-giving treasure he has placed in our fragile "jars of clay". He also highlighted the hope of unchanging truths in the Bible.

Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!



JON DRAKE

LITTER PICK: 8th April

The first Litter Pick in Knowl Hill for 2023 is happening on Saturday 8th April.

There is a small group of villagers who reliably turn out and spend an hour or so of their time to come along and help to clear up some of the litter from the roadside and the open spaces.

We always welcome additional volunteers. Bags, litter pickers and hi-vis jackets are provided.

We meet at the Royal Oak and then finish about 12 noon, at the same location and generally manage a quick drink afterwards to quench the thirst!

If you cannot make it but wish to put your name down for others, there will be other dates later in the year. Please email Lesley with your details: elbcarillon@gmail.com.

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(This includes areas within Knowl Hill, Warren Row, Littlewick Green, Woodlands Park and Paley Street.)

For further information on the areas covered and eligibility, please write to:

Clerk to the Trustees, Carolyn Thompson, Spire View,
Waltham Road, White Waltham, SL6 3SG

Or email for application form: carolynth52@icloud.com

MURDER MYSTERY IN KNOWL HILL

To celebrate St Valentine's, on Saturday 11th February, the villagers and friends of Knowl Hill were entertained to a Murder Mystery, produced by Skew Whiff. Not only were there two professional actors but ten budding thespians. With characters such as Clive Taker, Beryl Bunion, Neil Dandroof, Penny Farthing, Paula Hollywood and Laurie Elle - who could fail to be entertained!

The evening was enhanced by the provision of a delicious meal provided by Chris Burns from Effortless Eating.

The mystery surrounded a Valentine's Day Bake Off and who would be crowned master baker. Intrigue, followed intrigue.

Arthur Farthing, Penelope's husband, was one of the judges and tasters for the best cake, all of which looked scrumptious! No sooner had he taken the first bite, he collapsed. It transpires that the final cakes had been laced with shards of glass. But who would murder Arthur who was the local bank manager and a stalwart of the community?

And who had stolen the £20,000 village hall roof fund. And why?

A woman scorned was not to be reckoned with and it transpired that Arthur had been having dalliances with several ladies of the community but he had thrown over Beryl. If she couldn't have him then no one would! A veritable "bunny boiler" (check the anagram for a clue!)

A great evening was had by all.





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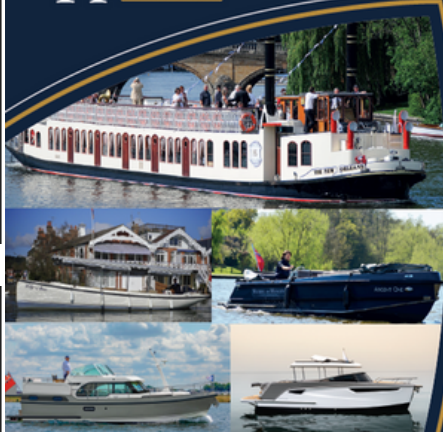
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