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# Summer 2017



All Saints' Cottenham

£1.50

## A letter from Gareth Morgan

I am going to make an unbelievable suggestion, unbelievable because it is so far out of tune with life today that probably everyone will see it as irrelevant, unworkable and unbelievable. My suggestion is that we follow one of the ten commandments, to keep a Sabbath Day. Following traditions Jewish religion keeps the Sabbath on the Saturday, Islam on the Friday, Christians on Sunday. But the point I want to make is that all these religions believe that in every week there should be one day in which we do no work. It is not only about a time for worshipping God but it is essentially about doing no work. All work is to be done in the rest of the week; see Exodus 20:8-11. The need to do no work is not just for those who are religious, but also for everyone, so that they able to remain human.

Our society is now organised so that in all days and at all hours there is work happening. A compromise could be not to restrict a Sabbath to a particular day but that every individual has one day in which they do no work. Many people would think this too is cloud cuckoo land.

Continued on page 2

## A letter from Gareth Morgan continued from page 1

Today I was talking with a friend and we were discussing how obsessed we are with work. She said that one of her staff had just e mailed her about work. She then remembered that the staff member was on holiday in Spain. So she e mailed back *“What are you doing? You are on holiday. We will do what needs doing and we will discuss when you are back at work.”*

Emails and texts are an obsession, and they can easily fill up time. Because we can send them at any time, we do. And so work intrudes into our relaxation time. I applaud the company which cuts down its emails by charging every one of their work force when they send an email.

I admire one Jewish way of keeping the Sabbath, which recognises that the unpaid work of house work goes on every day and so has aimed to recognise that the person doing the cooking, usually the house wife, should do no cooking on the Sabbath.

The purpose of not working is to remind us that there are others ways of living besides working, whether paid or unpaid. There is more to life than work. Last week we went to Anglesey Abbey and we were lucky it was a sunny warm day. Instead of walking all the time, as though doing a walk was the object of the trip. we



stopped and sat down. It was lovely sitting, soaking in the warmth and enjoying what was around. One seat was under the trees and looked from the shade down through a sunlit hedged walk to open lawn.

**Little Saints** is a group for babies and pre-school children with their parents and carers. They meet in All Saints' hall on Thursday mornings in term-time, 10 am to 11.45 am. If you would like to know more, please contact Emma McCaughan (250827, [emma.mccaughan@pobox.com](mailto:emma.mccaughan@pobox.com)).

There are currently two **Evening Discipleship Groups** which meet fortnightly on alternate Mondays and Thursdays from 7.45 to 9.30. We aim to encourage and support one another as disciples of Jesus in our everyday lives. The groups are always open to visitors on a one-off or regular basis. If you would like to know more, please contact Mick Lumsden (251371, [mick@mplumsden.plus.com](mailto:mick@mplumsden.plus.com)) or Lynda Unwin (250435 [lynda.kingsfarm@gmail.com](mailto:lynda.kingsfarm@gmail.com)).

The **Daytime Discipleship Group** meets on Tuesdays at 1.30 pm. Anyone who is happy to study with small children present is welcome. If you are interested in joining, please contact Kirsten Burrows ([kirsten.burrows@gmail.com](mailto:kirsten.burrows@gmail.com)).

The **Prayer Circle** meets on the last Thursday of the month at 2.30 pm in members' homes. We share a time of fellowship over refreshments followed by a time of prayer together, finishing around 4 pm. Everyone is very welcome to join us (please see pewsheet for venue). If you would like to know more, please speak to Jennie Steer (202026, [dandj@steer.me.uk](mailto:dandj@steer.me.uk)).

The monthly **Fellowship Tea** is an opportunity for anyone to meet for prayer and a chat over afternoon tea. It takes place on the third Monday of each month in the Community room at Franklin Gardens from 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm. If you would like to know more, or if you require transport to and from the tea, please contact Sue Hooks (250560) or Maggie Appleby (200035).

**All Saints' Choir** usually practises in All Saints' Hall on Fridays from 7.00 pm to 8.00 pm, but dates and times can vary. New members are always welcome. For more information, contact Frances Horgan ([franceshorgan9@hotmail.com](mailto:franceshorgan9@hotmail.com)).

**All Saints' Bellringers** practise in the bell tower most Wednesday evenings 7.30 pm to 9 pm. New members are always welcome: if you would like to chat about it, call the Tower Captain, Simon Wilson (251105).

**ATTIC** is a youth group run by Christians Together in Cottenham for 11 to 16 year olds, aiming to provide fun activities with a short something-to-think-about spot. For dates and times please contact Steve Whyatt (01223 237874, [steveuw@genr8.org](mailto:steveuw@genr8.org)).

## Regular services and groups

**The 10.30 am Sunday service** takes place every Sunday in church. One Sunday a month is an All-Age service, other weeks are Holy Communion. See All Saints' Diary for the schedule for each month. Services always include hymns and are followed by fellowship with refreshments in the church hall.

**Sunday School**, for children up to Year 2, meets in the hall during the 10.30 service (except when there is an All-Age service or a 9.30 service). There is no lower age-limit, and we have toys for tinies. Parents are welcome to accompany their children until they settle. We have stories, songs, games and craft activities, and re-join parents during Communion. For information contact: Sarah Ward ([sarah@wardhome.me.uk](mailto:sarah@wardhome.me.uk)). The **Samuel Group**, for Years 3 to 6, meets upstairs at the same time. For information contact Emma McCaughan ([emma.mccaughan@pobox.com](mailto:emma.mccaughan@pobox.com)).

**The 9.30 Service** is designed for young families and takes place in church, usually on the last Sunday of each month. See All Saints' Diary for confirmation of the date. The service lasts about half an hour and includes songs, a story and prayers suitable for very young children, followed by refreshments.

**The 8.30 am Sunday service** takes place every Sunday in church. This is always Holy Communion without hymns. On alternate weeks the Book of Common Prayer is used.

**Morning Prayer** is held on most Thursdays at 9.15 am in church. The service lasts about half an hour.

**Wednesday communion services** take place at different locations in the village on a monthly pattern. We are aiming to continue all services during the interregnum. If it is necessary occasionally to cancel a service because no leader is available, people who attend regularly will be informed. If you want to check up before attending, please contact Janet Johnston (253478).

**Tuesday Church** is designed for families with children of primary school age, but anyone of any age is welcome. They usually meet fortnightly during term-time, with games, drinks and snacks from 3.15 pm. The service is from 4 pm to 5 pm and includes songs, a story, craft and prayers. For information, contact Emma McCaughan ([emma.mccaughan@pobox.com](mailto:emma.mccaughan@pobox.com)).

Another stop was by the mill with life on the river such as moorhens and the line of the poplar trees. Another time it was in a formal garden with a backdrop of a beautiful curved beech hedge. In all three stops there was the sound of wonderful bird song and an amazing selection of trees of different shapes sizes and colours. I enjoyed doing nothing and responding to what was happening outside myself. I was taking time out to sit and stare.



Is it unbelievable for you to regularly have one day a week in which you do no work, either paid or unpaid? If the answer is 'yes', is that because you can find no satisfaction apart from work? If so, is it time for you to start looking?

Best wishes and Happy Sabbath

### From the Registers

We welcome into the family of the Church by baptism

14 May	Arthur William George Trelawny Ford
11 June	Amber May Rusk

We rejoice in the marriage of

27 May	Sarah Holmes and Alex Broughton
2 June	Emily Cooper and Daniel Wild

We commend into God's care those who have died

2 May	Pamela Florence Saxby
6 May	Robert Tom Smith
26 May	Christine Roe
30 May	John Eric Northrop
7 June	Brian Gardner (burial of ashes)

## Fellowship Tea

a report by Pat Labistour

Do you enjoy delicious sandwiches, yummy home-made cakes and good company? Then the Fellowship Tea, held on the third Monday of the month from 2.30 to 4.00pm in the Franklin Gardens Community Room is for you! Now well into its second year, it is organised and prepared by members of our wonderful Social and Catering Team. As soon as you arrive, you are greeted with a smile and the first of many cups of tea from a seemingly-bottomless teapot!



When everyone has assembled and been greeted, we begin with a prayer and a hymn, usually followed by a short 'entertainment' – this can be a reading or a poem, a personal reminiscence – and we've heard some amazing personal stories, including those of a young soldier stationed in Jerusalem in World War II, and a trainee fighter pilot who had to learn to find his own way home in the dark without a compass! Tales of holidays – cruises to the Baltic and a holiday in Iceland, reminiscences of life in old Cottenham,



experiences of a Cathedral flower arranger, a visit from a group of children from *Tonguetwisters* to sing Christmas songs, a craft session where we made the decorations for our Christmas Tree Festival entry, and the occasional quiz to keep our 'grey matters' in trim!

## Church notice gaffes

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What Is Hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 pm. Please use the back door.

Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.

Pot-luck supper Sunday at 5 pm: prayer and medication to follow.

The Associate Minister unveiled the church's new campaign slogan last Sunday: "I Upped My Pledge - Up Yours."

Thanks to Ken and Elizabeth Hewitt for this contribution.

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I am not sure how many of the youth of Cottenham hit town at the weekend. If you, or perhaps a younger family member, does this, I hope you will be less concerned knowing that the Street Pastors will be on hand.

Much valuable work goes on unseen - I hope it is an encouragement to you to know that every Friday and Saturday night the patrols will be out. But Street Pastors do need support. Not only more volunteers but also people who will pray, either from home, or from the base in town.

If you would like to know more about how you could help, please speak with me, or email [mick@mplumsden.plus.com](mailto:mick@mplumsden.plus.com)

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After the 'entertainment', eyes are focussed on the table where the tea-time spread is spectacular – sandwiches and savouries, cakes and scones – the result of an enormous amount of work – and greatly appreciated by everyone. If you haven't been before, do come along. You will be most welcome!



At the April meeting we had a Hat Show, where everyone was invited to bring a hat – either sensible or silly, home-made or decorated, one worn for a special occasion, or one with a story.

Above: shop-bought hats

Right: home-decorated hats

Below: hats that tell a story



All the photographs for this article were taken by Maggie Appleby.



The three winners, left to right: Phoebe won first prize for a Hat with a Story. Pat won in the shop-bought hat category. Sylvia was the winner for a home-decorated hat.

Hats telling a story: Phoebe, who won the prize for her section, told the group how she had woken during the night before the tea and suddenly remembered that she had to decorate a hat. She got up early and looked around to find decorations for each season of the year. She called her hat a 'Hat for all seasons.'

Pat Labistour modelled a straw boater with a blue ribbon bearing the words *HMS Endeavour*. Pat told the group how she had been a tour guide on this ship and how, during a particular tour, the fire alarms sounded and she contemplated evacuation of her visitors, given that they were below deck and some were rather portly!

The poem opposite was read out by Pat Labistour as part of the entertainment.



It struck me what great value this is - could any other organisation put on a hundred days of mission in the centre of town for such a low cost?

But the reality is that the mission is struggling both financially and with too few volunteers (forty-two trained Street Pastors, with several not active for health or other reasons).

The income side includes grants from partner groups but only one fifth of the mission costs are met by churches - and the deficit at the end of the year was nearly £5,000. With limited reserves there may soon come a time when the mission may need to be cut back.



As a volunteer, I hear lots of praise for the work done by Street Pastors. Youngsters out on the town may not embrace our faith, but almost without exception they appreciate what is done, and many are not hesitant to express that thanks. I firmly believe that the work done helps to change

negative perceptions of Christians and Christianity. Following the principles of "*Listening, Caring, Helping*", Street Pastors demonstrate the practical compassion shown by the Good Samaritan - and that is so appreciated!

The work is also valued by the police and other agencies. Over the years the partnerships with door security teams, the police and the CCTV have all strengthened and Street Pastors are seen by these secular bodies as a valuable resource.

## Cambridge Street Pastors by Mick Lumsden

Cambridge Street Pastors began nine years ago as an ecumenical local initiative under the guidance of the national group, Ascension Trust. It is now one of over three hundred such organisations that send out local Christians onto the streets of our major towns and cities at night with the aim of bringing the church to the people. The aim is that a patrol consists of four Pastors, supported by a 'Prayer Pastor' back at base.

Street Pastors do not preach - the aim is more to 'be Jesus' for the youngsters out on the town. The main way this is achieved is by helping those in need - whether they are ill, lost, distressed or struggling to walk on high heels. While we do not preach, we are



prepared to explain our motivation. People I have talked with have been impressed that the volunteers do it for free and appreciate the fact that the mission is non-denominational and non-judgmental. The gratitude of some we have helped has been humbling.

The AGM was held recently. It was reported that in the last year over a hundred patrols had gone out (10 pm to 4 am is standard); the safe refuge was open fifty-one times with over a thousand visitors; six hundred people were blessed with flip flops; three hundred bottles of water were given out.

The accounts showed the total cost was about £25,000. The bulk of this is staff costs (director and administrator) along with a paid security guy for the safe refuge. Consumables (such as flip-flops and blankets) are the other significant cost - premises are provided for free by three different churches in town.

## When Polly buys a hat

When Father goes to town with me to buy my Sunday hat,  
We can't afford much time in doing things like that:  
We walk into the nearest shop, and Father tells them then,  
"Just bring a hat you think will fit a little girl of ten."

It may be plain, it may be fine with lace and flowers too;  
If it feels 'just right' upon my head we think that it will do:  
It may be red or brown or blue, with ribbons light or dark;  
We put it on – and take the car that goes to Central Park.

When Mother buys a hat for me, we choose the shape with care;  
We ask if it's the best they have, and if they're sure 'twill wear;  
And when the trimming's rather fine, why, Mother shakes her head  
And says, "Please take the feathers off – we'd like a bow instead."

But oh, when Sister buys my hat, you really do not know  
The hurry and the worry that we have to undergo!  
How many times I've heard her say – and shivered where I sat –  
"I think I'll go to town today and buy that child a hat!"

They bring great hats with curving brims but I'm too tall for those;  
And hats that have no brims at all, which do not suit my nose;  
I walk about, and turn around, and struggle not to frown;  
I wish I had long curly hair like Angelina Brown!

Till when at last the daylight goes, and I'm so tired then,  
I hope I'll never need another hat again;  
And when I've quite made up my mind that shopping is the worst  
Of all my tasks – then Sister goes and buys the hat that we saw first!

And so we take it home with us as quickly as we may,  
And Sister lifts it from the box and wonders what they'll say;  
And I – I peep into the glass, and (promise not to tell)  
I smile, because I really think it suits me rather well!

Then slip into the library as quiet as can be,  
And this is what my Brother says when first he looks at me:  
"Upon – my – word! I never saw a queerer sight than that!  
Don't tell me this outrageous thing is Polly's Sunday hat!"

## The venomous Bead

Saint Bede of Jarrow (The Venerable Bede) has been given the job of looking after the parish of Cottenham during the interregnum. In previous magazines we read some of his correspondence with his old friend Trumwine,<sup>1</sup> asking for advice about his new role. This is Trumwine's most recent letter.

My dear Bede

I regret that my efforts to find a bishop of greater stature to buoy up your fellow parishioners have, as yet, yielded nothing. I confess that I have not put the effort into it that perhaps I should, as I still find the Lenten Fast very trying. Your description of the 'potato' demoralised me further, as root vegetables of any kind have always seemed to have been given to us by the Good Lord solely to prevent us from getting too weak from hunger during periods of fasting – or actually starving to death in times of famine. The 'potato' you describe sounds very like a turnip but if it helped you through the Great Fast, I understand that you must be grateful, and if it inspires you to prayer, so much the better.

All that being behind us, I started again on Low Thursday to give proper thought to your most recent letter and to ask myself what encouragement and help I might be able to offer but now it is already Trinity Monday and I have been so distracted by other matters that I have been neglecting my correspondence. Returning to this previously unfinished letter, I find that I am somewhat out of date with your situation.

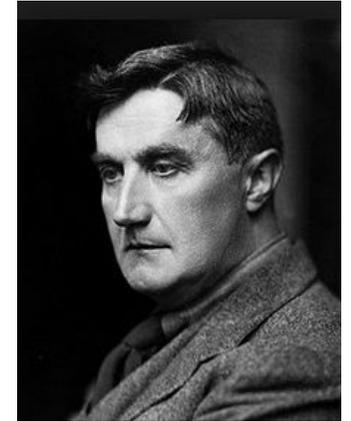
Can you (without reminding me of people I would prefer to forget) let me know how things are with your neglected parish?

Ever yours in Christ

Trumwine

<sup>1</sup> Trumwine was Bishop of the Picts from 681 and later a monk at Whitby.

*valiant be* (after John Bunyan), *I heard the voice of Jesus say* (*Dives and Lazarus* – the wonderful tune being used in his variations for viola), *For all the saints*, and perhaps best of all, *Come down, O love divine*, the tune of which he named *Down Ampney* in honour of the Cotswold village in which he was born in the Old Vicarage in 1872.



We are, actually, fortunate to have so much of his wonderful composition to enjoy today, as we nearly lost him in a near-drowning incident when he was on a folk song collecting expedition, and went swimming in Robin Hood's Bay (where I lived for forty years before coming to Cottenham). It's a dangerous bit of coast, and he got caught up in the undertow. Suddenly a huge wave swept him back onto the beach and saved his life! If you know where to listen, he refers to this musically in his *Sea Symphony*!

To end on a bit of a personal 'note': like many of Scottish descent, whose forebears were affected by the terrible aftermath of the Jacobite rising of 1745, I'm always uncomfortable with the tune *Maccabeus*, used for the hymn *Thine be the glory*. These are, of course, wonderful, inspirational words . . . BUT the tune, composed by Handel in his oratorio *Judas Maccabeus*, was originally written to welcome the brutal and victorious Duke of Cumberland on his return to London. '*See the conquering hero comes!*' are the original words. This is, unfortunately, an example of the devil having not only a 'good' tune, but a great one!

## Famous composers continued from page 19

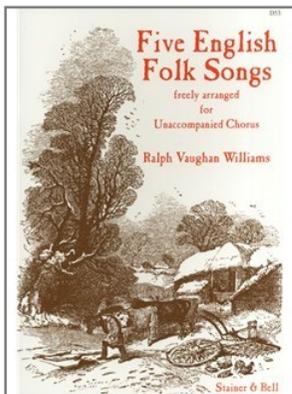
(and yes, in spite of his name, he is mostly of British descent, though with an interesting smattering of Swedish, Latvian and German descent along the way!). Both of them were lifelong friends and were deeply involved in the Folk Song Revival instigated by Cecil Sharp in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Whereas the contributions to our hymn book from Vaughan Williams are all arrangements of traditional tunes, Holst uses original compositions for *In the bleak midwinter*, naming the tune *Cranham* after the village in Gloucestershire where he lived in what is now known as Midwinter Cottage; and the most famous *I vow to thee my country* using the theme for *Jupiter* from his *Planets Suite* – naming the hymn tune *Thaxted* after the



small Essex town in which he lived in the Manse from 1917 to 1925. Holst became a great and inspirational teacher, pioneering the musical education of women at St Paul's School where he taught from 1905 until his death in 1934.



Ralph Vaughan Williams, truly one of the greatest English composers, was also an avid collector and arranger of folk songs. He collected literally hundreds, and we have over forty in our current hymn book today. There are far too many to mention all of them, but a selection of favourites must include the *Sussex Carol* - *On Christmas night all Christians sing, O little town of Bethlehem, I will sing the wondrous story, He who would*

## Bede's reply

My dear Trumwine,

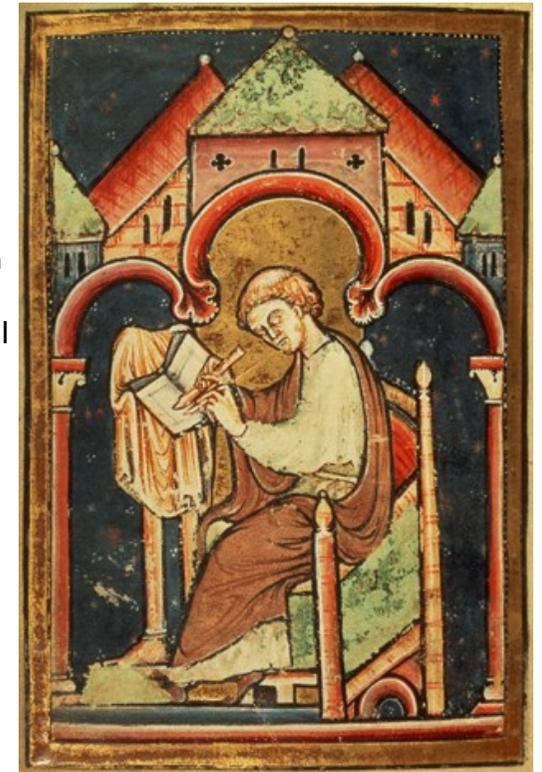
Well, Easter has come and gone, and a very fine time it was. Lent was, as ever, a particular pleasure, although it must be said that the modern Christian has lost all sense of what is implied by the word *penance*. He seems to imagine that by abstaining from *chocolate* (which by the way you should try if you get the chance), he is mortifying his flesh and purifying his soul! When I think of poor old Drythelm<sup>2</sup>, up to his neck night after night in freezing cold water, while the wind drove the waves over his head and carried the music of his psalms to heaven.... well, I could weep.

Still, there were moments of real profundity, particularly during Holy Week. The Maundy Thursday meal was a powerful experience, although the menu (quiche, potatoes and *apple pie* forsooth!) could certainly have been more penitential. And as the congregation gathered on Good Friday to reflect on the death of Our Lord, I could almost have imagined myself back in Jarrow, listening as Ceolfrith<sup>3</sup> expounded those well-loved texts. (Though I would have had a word or two to say to the choir!)

Continued on page 10

<sup>2</sup> Drythelm was a Northumbrian who received a vision of the afterlife and subsequently devoted himself to prayer and penance.

<sup>3</sup> Ceolfrith was the abbot of Jarrow monastery, where Bede was a monk.



## The venomous Bead continued from page 9

Easter Sunday was a *blast* (a modern expression meaning, I believe, that a thoroughly good time was had by all). After a brief nod in the direction of austerity (a few brave souls were in church at 6 a.m.) the congregation reverted to type. Sausages, eggs and bacon, tea and coffee, cake and sparkling wine were consumed in lavish quantities throughout the morning. There were occasional breaks for divine service, but even these had more of the character of a public entertainment than anything that Ceolfrith would have recognized. But heaven help me Trumwine, who am I to judge? If a Christian congregation can't have a party on Easter Sunday morning, then when on earth can it? It was a wonderful day, and God blessed it with sunshine.



In other news, I'm happy to report that the first phase of the roof repairs is now complete. I'm not sure if I've already told you about our church building. It's a large and stately edifice, somewhat inconveniently situated at the very far end of the High Street, and chiefly remarkable for the architectural language of its tower, which would scarcely be out of place in Mecca or Baghdad! This ancient and venerable building,

*adoration*; at Christmas, the lovely *It came upon a midnight clear*, and the great Easter hymn *Alleluia, alleluia, hearts to heaven and voices raise*. Not so frequently used today is *Onward Christian pilgrims* – formerly 'soldiers'.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when many people could not read music, it seemed sensible to set words to some well-known folk songs. A few examples we still enjoy today are the Scottish *Kelvin Grove* ('Bonnie lassie – o') for *Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?*, and the *Skye Boat song* – more familiar to us oldies as *Spirit of God as strong as the wind* from our old school hymn book. From Ireland we have the *Londonderry Air* for *I cannot tell why he whom angels worship*, and from England, *Greensleeves*, *What child is this on Mary's knee is sleeping*, to name but a few.



Fairly recently I attended a service where the hymn was sung to the theme from *Eastenders*, which caused a ripple of amusement across the congregation! It worked quite well, however!

I have decided to settle on two great English composers, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst

## Famous composers and the Folk Song Revival

Continuing the new series by Pat Labistour on our favourite hymn writers

“Why should the devil have all the good music?” I’m sure you must have heard this at some point. It is, however, a ‘mis-quote’ taken from a sermon the Rev Rowland Hill, Pastor of Surrey Chapel in London, preached in 1844. What he actually said was “The devil should not have all the best tunes”. Over the years, the quote has been attributed, wrongly, to Charles Wesley, Martin Luther, General William Booth, John Newton (of *Amazing Grace* fame), and Isaac Watts.



Before we go on, however, you might like to know that Sir Rowland Hill was a renowned teacher, inventor and reformer. He was responsible for instigating the pre-payment of letters – the Penny Post – introduced on 1 May 1840. Have you a valuable Penny Black in your stamp collection? He was famous enough in his day to warrant burial in Westminster Abbey!

Looking through the list of composers in our hymn book, there are a number of tunes by really famous names. Bach springs to mind first; then there are wonderful tunes dating back to Tudor times with Orlando Gibbons (*Forth in thy name O Lord I go*) and Thomas Tallis, (his canon- *Glory to thee my God this night*); then Beethoven with his *Ode to Joy*; Mendelssohn (*Hark the herald angels sing*); Jean Sibelius (*Be still my soul* – the theme from *Finlandia*); and a clutch of eminent Victorians including Charles Hubert Parry (*Dear Lord and father of mankind*, and of course *Jerusalem*) and John Stainer (*Love divine all loves excelling*, and *All for Jesus* from his *Crucifixion*).

Perhaps you only associate Arthur Sullivan with his Savoy Operas, but he has contributed some great tunes to the hymn book as well! At harvest we sing *To thee O lord our hearts we raise in hymns of*

in which the Christians of Cottenham worship week by week, is so hedged about with orders and restrictions that you can barely move a chair or a vase of flowers without breaking a law of some sort. Honestly Trumwine, you never saw such a performance as the long-suffering churchwardens have to go through to get anything done at all. Between the DAC and the Victorian Society, it’s a wonder the place hasn’t simply crumbled away.

On the interregnum front, there’s real progress, I’m glad to say. It’s all a bit hush hush at the moment, but it does rather look as though there might be some serious interest. In fact, by the time you read this, there might even have been an *appointment!* I keep my fingers firmly crossed and lose no opportunity to touch wood. (Old habits die hard!) These are wonderful people, Trumwine, and their new rector will be lucky to get them.

Ever your own,

Bede



## Conflict or mutual enrichment?

Reflections on the relation of Science and Faith, from a lecture given in March by Professor Alistair McGrath, reported by Mick Lumsden

Advocates of both Science and Faith traditions claim that their discipline is a quest for knowledge or truth. And both acknowledge that the truth they find will be partial or contingent. The Christian knows (with St Paul) that she sees “*through a glass, darkly*”; the scientist knows that her theory may be superseded when more data is available.

Some scientists reject the approach of faith because the knowledge acquired refuses to be subject to the rigours of the scientific method; some Christians reject science on the basis that human wisdom is trumped by divine revelation (either to modern individuals or in Scripture). Thus there can seem to be a war between the two schools (a fallacy perpetuated by the media).

Professor McGrath is both an eminent scientist and a world-renowned theologian: he does not see that a clash is necessary. However, rather than settle for a situation in which each keeps strictly to their own territory he believes that the search for truth must involve both, and that when the two work together they are mutually enriching. This reminded me of John Polkinghorne’s illustration of using the two approaches to give binocular vision.

Professor McGrath went further in arguing that science on its own is weak because it cannot itself create a valid framework in which it can operate. But he also warned people of Faith to avoid a simplistic approach to science which sees ‘God’ as the answer when science has no explanation; such a ‘God of the Gaps’ approach leads to a loss of Faith as natural explanations are found.

But his most powerful argument for the partnership of science and faith was that in seeking to really know something you need to employ as many perspectives as possible. He touched briefly on the idea of getting to know a mountain. Because of my own interest I have pondered this and done more reading and what follows goes



been affected by that, but having talked to a number of people who have been to Oberammergau, I have also realised that most people are deeply moved in one way or another, although the details vary and are often very personal.

The Passion Play affects different people in different ways, as it should, because the story of Jesus’ suffering and death affects people individually and in individual ways. It always has done, and it always will do. To be honest, it hurts. We know that Jesus suffered horribly, but so too did the people who knew him and loved him. More to the point, his suffering still affects everyone who knows him and loves him now. Should this suffering makes us despair like Judas? No, because, like Peter, we will be forgiven.

So, did I wait forty years just for a painful experience? Absolutely not! The play includes the Resurrection and the more deeply you suffer from the Passion, the more keenly you will feel the joy of the Resurrection. And that is the point. Worth waiting forty years? I wish I had been able to go sooner, but the short answer is “Yes!”

The next Oberammergau Passion Play will be held in 2020. Most of the tickets are bought up well in advance by a few package tour companies which encourage churches to form groups and make block bookings about two years ahead. Anyone interested would be advised to start making enquiries and preliminary plans this year.

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about Simeon's prophecy. Shortly afterwards, Jesus appears, collapsing under the weight of the cross he is carrying; Mary cries out, "It's him! It's my son! It's my Jesus!"

The anguish of that moment will stay with me. So too will Peter's distress and anger with himself after he has denied that he ever knew Jesus. It may not be quite true to the scriptural account, but in the play, John reassures Peter that Jesus will forgive him. Shortly before that scene, the narrator draws a distinction between Peter, who hopes for mercy, and Judas who does not. In one of many parallels with the Old Testament, Judas is compared with Cain, and there seems to be no hope for either of them.

That brings me to the scene which I personally found the most moving: Judas' lament before his suicide. Judas has made many mistakes and he has been tricked by Caiaphas too. He tries desperately to achieve the impossible, to undo the deal he has done, and then, when he finally comes to the conclusion that the situation is hopeless, and not having John to reassure him that forgiveness is possible, he asks, "Where can I go to hide my shame and get rid of my pain? Nowhere is dark enough."

That is just the beginning of a long and truly heart-rending speech at the end of which he hangs himself. I know I am not alone in having



well beyond the lecture, while underlining the point. So to understand a mountain you could start with a good map. A picture would bring the map to life; ten pictures from different angles would add to your understanding and appreciation; pictures taken in different seasons and weather conditions could add more; aerial photography would add another dimension; visiting the mountain would add further to your knowledge and struggling to the summit would give you a deeper understanding of its roughness and altitude. Sleeping out on the mountain would add still more. And each visit would add to the knowledge that would be in your muscles as well as in your mind.

In the same way the perspective of the scientist is important – but often we need to add in the perspective of the artist, poet and theologian.

The reductionist says that a mountain is "nothing but" a pile of rocks; the person who has sweated to the summit knows that, although it is a pile of rocks, it is much more than that.

The professor expressed a worry about 'Scientism'. This is the idea that Science is supreme and renders other disciplines redundant. He is a passionate scientist but encouraged us to see science as "nothing but" an (important) partner in our quest for truth.



## Oberammergau Passion Play

The Oberammergau Passion Play originated in 1633. At that time the plague was rife in Europe, and some of the villages in that area of southern Germany had been wiped out altogether. After a few deaths from plague in Oberammergau, the villagers prayed for protection, promising God that if he would spare them, they would perform a Passion Play every ten years. From that day no new cases of plague occurred, and in gratitude the people of Oberammergau have kept their vow ever since.

In recent decades the play has become a popular pilgrimage destination. More than two thousand actors, singers and musicians participate, and the entire life of the village revolves around the production. In 2010 some people from All Saints' church joined a group led by a former Rector of Cottenham, Ian Friars, in July, and others joined a different group travelling from the Midlands in August. Below, Joe Webster describes his experience.

If ever you have to wait decades for an opportunity and it finally comes, you run the risk of disappointment on the grand scale, don't you?

I first heard of the Oberammergau Passion Play in 1970. I was a teenager at the time, and I was struck by the effect it had on my aunts when they went and saw the Play together that year. My father's two sisters were very different characters who didn't really share any interests, but somehow they were brought together by what you might call the 'Oberammergau effect.' I have wanted to go to it ever since. In 2010, at last, it was possible. Forty years' wait! Was it worth it?

The whole thing is performed in German (with a few bits of Hebrew) but each playgoer is given a booklet containing the whole script in German as well as an English translation, so it is not necessary to be fluent in German in order to follow the play. I was fortunate enough to be able to borrow a copy of the script in advance, which enabled me to do more preparation than most



playgoers. But just reading the script did not fully prepare me for the impact of the thing.

It really is most extraordinary: beautiful, thought-provoking, terrifying at times, horrifying at others. Above all, if you let it, it can be a profound spiritual experience.

I'm sure it strikes different people in different ways. Like many Christians, I have meditated on the Passion countless times and thought hard and tried to imagine the suffering of Christ, and of course the Passion Play brings it all to life in an excruciating kind of way; but the odd thing is that it was something else about the play that struck me more deeply, and that was the effect that Jesus' suffering had upon those who were his nearest and dearest at the time.

For instance, Mary his mother is portrayed as worrying terribly about what has been going on and John has the ghastly job of breaking the news to her that her son has been condemned to death. He tries to persuade her to leave the place as she will find the sight of Jesus (who has already been flogged at that stage) just too distressing, but she says, *"I want to suffer with him. I want to share his shame with him"* and tells John

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