



# Link

**February 2024**

The Magazine of the United Reformed Church  
Stratford-upon-Avon



***Worship, Witness and love for others through Jesus Christ***

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Rother Street  
Stratford-upon-Avon**

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# Thoughts for February

## What's the point of Lent?

Lent this year starts on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February – Ash Wednesday

Now, let me start out by saying that the title of this month's thoughts is not intended to be a negative one. Rather it's an analysis of what we think about Lent and Easter, since the latter is the most important feast day of the year – it's why we call ourselves Christians. Easter is not as important in the minds of non-Christians as Christmas, but that's because of the commercial hype that goes with Christmas. People who are not Christians don't understand the reasons behind the importance of Easter – that means we should be telling them!!



I, personally, find the difference between Lent and Easter quite an anomaly. I don't find Lent to be a joyous season, whereas we advertise and experience the joy of Easter. It is quite right that we should bemoan the suffering that Jesus underwent on the day of his crucifixion, and for that reason Good Friday is a muted occasion and Tenebrae is a very thoughtful service. BUT, it is called 'GOOD' Friday, and its name recognises that so much good came out of Jesus' death. We are all saved because of that, our sins are forgiven and death is not the end of our existence. That is the essence of the Good News of Jesus Christ. As I said, the only reason we are sad on that day is because we want to identify with Christ's suffering: he suffered as a human being, just as we might suffer.

There are many traditions associated with Lent. Many of them originated in the Roman Catholic Church and have been observed for centuries. What do they mean to us in today's world? To start with, there is the marking of foreheads with black ash, in the sign of a cross (Ash Wednesday), still observed in many traditions. The ash cross is meant to represent mortality and a penance for sins. It's a day of penitence to clean the souls before the Lent fast. Christians show repentance and mourning for their sins because we believe that Christ died for us. The ashes are meant to come from the burnt palms from the previous year's Passion Sunday – so they are meant to take us back to the last celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus for us. The idea is that on Ash Wednesday we begin a journey of renewal – from death to life.

What about fasting or denying ourselves luxuries in Lent? Millions of people do this as a sign of sacrifice and testing of their self-discipline. It is an attempt to identify with Christ's fasting and praying in the wilderness for 40 days. Forty days in the wilderness is the reason for the duration of Lent. Many people give up a particular habit in Lent. They won't eat chocolate, they give up smoking or alcohol, they won't eat meat on a Friday. It's an effort to join in Christ's suffering, an attempt to detach ourselves from worldly things, making more room for Christ in our lives and practising holy habits that will help us to grow in virtue and relationship with Christ.

On the other hand, there is the view that we should be doing something more positive in Lent; taking up a pastime or a habit that has a positive point, that improves our lives or the lives of other people.

Several denominations have a three-word slogan for Lent: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. The prayer over 40 days sets us on a journey, one that hopefully brings us nearer to Christ and leaves us changed by our encounter with him. The fasting is a sort of penance which is intended to turn us away from sin. However, for many people it's a bit like 'Dry January' - "What are you giving up for Lent? – chocolate, beer, Hot dogs, jellybeans?" – it's become something of a game for some people. The almsgiving is twinned with our fasting. As we experience weakness and suffering during Lent, we should be renewed in our compassion for those who are suffering, or hungry or otherwise in need, for reasons beyond their control. We share God's unconditional love; we learn to love like Christ.

It's no good doing any of these things if we don't think WHY we are doing them. Lent is the time where we try to focus on God and make a more concerted effort to put him first in our lives. It's a time of preparation for Good Friday and Easter Sunday – we should be spending time thinking and reflecting on our relationship with God.

We need to look to Jesus; we need to re-orientate ourselves to Jesus.

It's a challenging time, where we take a hard look in the mirror and identify where we can make changes – where our walk does not match our talk. If we give up eating meat or our bowl of ice-cream, that reorientates our bodies to Jesus. If we stop complaining about our neighbour who annoys us frequently, that reorientates us to loving our neighbour. The idea is that choosing some small thing to attend to, reorientates our lives towards the cross.

The whole point of Lent is to look to Jesus, not to fixate on an ever-growing



checklist of things not to do. Lent is, in fact, not about us, not about what we do, nor how well we do it. If we find ourselves with a spoonful of chocolate chip mint, we are not a failure. We are not less spiritual, and Jesus doesn't love us less. The point is not the ice cream, nor the spiritual feelings about the ice cream. The point is Jesus.

So, during this Lent let us find ways to, as the hymn says, fix our eyes upon Jesus. I don't think Lent should be a dour time, we are looking forward to something fantastic!!



*Peter*

## Family News

Mairi is recovering well from her recent back operation and hopes to be back in Church soon.

In December we had the welcome news that Natasha has been granted British Residency.

Phil is well and, as always, wishes to send his best wishes to everyone.

Several of our members and friends are struggling with various health issues at this time. Please remember them in your prayers.

# Mio Amore Firenze

It would be fair to say that Florence is one, if not **the** one, of mine & Dave's



favourite places.

We first visited for our Silver Wedding Anniversary in December 1998 and I vividly remember catching my first sight of The Duomo and being transfixed by its majesty. The lovely thing about Florence in the period between Christmas and New Year is that, because they celebrate right through until Epiphany, the shops are still full of presents, cards, beautiful cakes, chocolates etc, rather than being full of 'sale goods' as they are here!

When the time came for us to decide where to celebrate our Golden Wedding anniversary, there was no discussion to be had - it was always going to be Florence, even though we had visited three times in the intervening years.

Since our last visit in 2019, we had both read a novel "Still Life" by Sarah Winman, which one reviewer described as a "love letter to Florence". It quickly became a favourite book and we both decided to re-read it before and during our holiday. This turned out to be such a good idea as we walked around the city finding all the places mentioned in the book! At the start of the story the heroine is involved in rescuing a painting from Nazi forces at the end of the war. We looked up the painting, La Deposizione by Jacobo Pontormo and found that it had been returned to the Capponi Chapel in Santa Felicita Church, very close to the square where much of the action in the book takes place.

Later on in the story we discover that our heroine, Evelyn, first visited Florence in the 1920's where she met E.M. Forster at around the same time as he wrote "Room with a View". Evelyn fell in love with Florence, returning many times. Every time she arrived or left she said "Mio Amore Firenze", so I shall be doing the same!

Our next visit is already at the planning stage!

**Ann Jones**

## Children in Care become Adults: what happens next (Part 2)

BOWAVTA (Boarding out with a view to adoption) was an arrangement provided by The Children's Society for those who were deemed to be able to develop in family life after time in the institutional home.

The area Social worker alerted us to an 'almost' eighteen year old whose placement with an elderly couple in a small village had broken down. He had been bought a motorbike to enable him to get into Ipswich to work and to accommodate his social life! The elderly carers loved him, but the residents of the village complained about the motorbike noise.

We opened the door to a 6' tall young man, holding a couple of bags and a sword. The Housemaster put out his hand and said, "I'll have THAT, thank you. And it's from?" "Ipswich Museum." It was rightly assumed that it hadn't been a gift.

He wore the inevitable jeans and T-shirt and a lovely black leather jacket, with studs spelling out HANDS, a nickname acquired at an early age because of the size of his hands! Was he going to be a handful?!

On their return from school all the family welcomed him back into the fold. After tea, HANDS was shown his room and allocated a locker in the lounge rather than the usual playroom locker in which the children kept personal toys and treasures. He unpacked his things and when I noticed that he had three copies of one of the books, I was naturally curious.

"Umm. I took them from the bookshop in town." "Not at the same time?" "Oh no. Two visits." "Why?" "I liked it and thought others might." He was obviously a

generous boy... The next duplicate was a key ring followed by two jumpers. The thought went through my head as to why the jumpers were being put into a locker rather than a drawer in his bedroom, so I ventured a punt about shoplifting. He immediately smiled and said, "No one has ever challenged me. I'm so glad you've asked about it." I was amazed. He then proceeded to tell me how he had taken sweets off the tray at the corner of the counter at the shop along the road after he'd returned from his paper round every day, gone home with a bar sticking out of his top pocket, but no one had challenged him. "I've only been here a couple of hours and Uncle's realised that the sword was stolen, and you've picked up I've a tendency to steal. Thank you." What does one say to that. A mere 'don't do it again' seemed futile and rather infantile to this nearly adult in front of me.

I thought of Romans 6 v1 : shall we continue in sin? but didn't say it!

The Museum gave him a warning and the elderly couple told him to visit whenever he pleased. He acquired a lovely girlfriend, whom he brought home for us to meet. During the week, HANDS went out on his bike in the evening with strict instructions to be home by 10 or it meant that 5 minutes late, 10 minutes early the next time. He nodded with understanding.

Matthew 12 v 31: all manner of sin shall be forgiven.

By the end of the third week, he was home at ten minutes past 10. "The next time you go out, you'll have to be home by twenty to 10." And so, it went on until HANDS looked at the boss and said, "It's not worth me going out is it Uncle?".

Then a summons for a court appearance at The Ipswich Magistrates because lead had been stripped from a local church roof. Part of HANDS' defence was that he had come down when his petite girlfriend had told him to, so he had only taken a little bit. The boys were fined, and Hands was put on probation as long as the girl stood by him.

Not long after this incident, the young couple moved into a small house together and started a family.

*Carole Sampson*

## With half-term coming up ....

After half-term, the english teacher returned to school with a sigh. He felt nostalgic. He found the past perfect, and the present tense.

# What's on at the Bear Pit

**Head and Heart: 31st January to 3rd February at 7.30pm  
Matinee at 2.30pm on 3rd February**

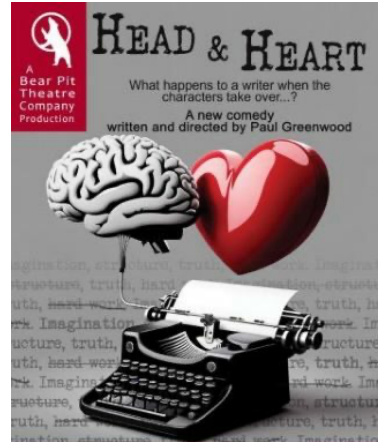
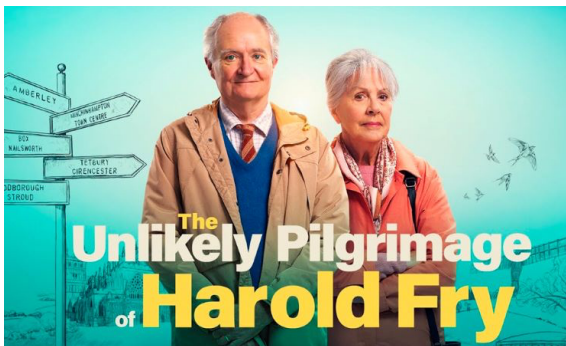
A Bear Pit production. Written and directed by Paul Greenwood, this play is a dramatisation of the process of creative writing.

Eve is a writer who is struggling with ideas. She begins by bringing characters on to the stage/page and attempting to make them interact in some way so that she can create a story. She tries various ideas but nothing works. The characters talk back to her making suggestions and this leads to conflict.

Evelyn, who is Eve's nemesis, alter ego, conscience and teacher, appears later in the play and she attempts to explain to Eve where she is going wrong. She makes suggestions and the characters sometimes side with her and sometimes with Eve. Eventually the characters begin to take over the writing of the story. Early on in the play a gun is introduced. One of the rules of drama is that if gun is brought on stage, it must be used.

**Tickets: £12 (concessions £10)**

**The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry: 9th February at 7.30 – 9.20pm**



**Bear Pit Community Cinema** supported by the Town Trust.

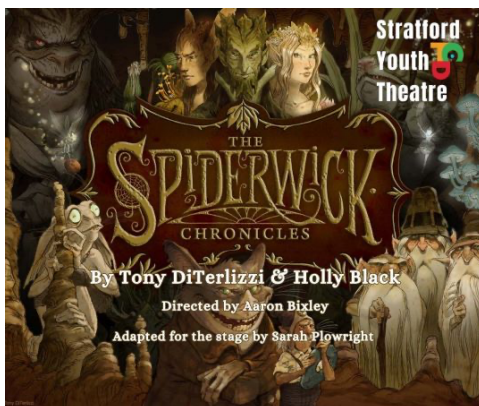
When Harold learns his friend Queenie is dying, he is moved to act. He leaves home, walking to the post box to send her a letter, until he realises a letter is not enough. In that moment Harold decides to keep walking, all the way to her hospice.

**Tickets: £5**

## **The Spiderwick Chronicles: 14th to 17th February at 7pm Matinee at 2.30pm on 17th February**

Stratford Youth Theatre are thrilled to present the first ever stage adaptation of 'The Spiderwick Chronicles' at The Bear Pit Theatre.

Based on the international best-selling and much-loved children's books by Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black, The Spiderwick Chronicles is a series of children's fantasy books which chronicle the adventures of the Grace children, Jared and Simon and their older sister Mallory, after they move into the Spiderwick Estate and discover a world of goblin's, ogre's and faerie's that they never knew existed...



From the team that brought you 'The Clopton Ghosts', 'The Snow Queen' and 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe', The Spiderwick Chronicles is an epic adventure you won't want to miss!

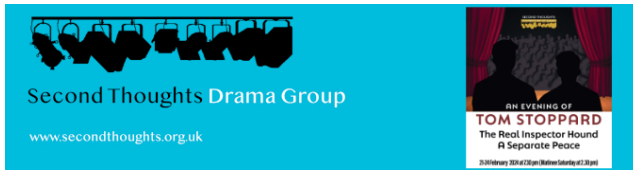
Our story follows the Grace children as they discover a field guide to faeries while encountering various magical creatures such as goblins, ogres, brownies, boggarts, hobgoblins, elves and many others.

The Spiderwick Chronicles was made into a film in 2008 and is about to be launched as a T.V series in 2024. This production is presented with the kind permission of The Spiderwick Studios and will be suitable for the whole family. (Does contain sudden loud noises and bright lights).

**Tickets: £15 (concessions £12)**

# An Evening of Tom Stoppard: 'The Real Inspector Hound' and 'A Separate Peace'.

21st to 24th February at 7.30pm (Sat matinee at 2.30pm)



A Second Thoughts Drama Group Production. Directed by: Jo Knight  
An Evening of Tom Stoppard, a double bill of *The Real Inspector Hound* and *A Separate Peace*, brings together two one-act plays from this esteemed playwright. In *The Real Inspector Hound*, two theatre critics are watching a whodunnit before they unwittingly find themselves part of the action. In *A Separate Peace*, a man longing for peace and isolation arrives at a nursing home hoping for a luxuriously easy existence- but can money alone buy him the slow-paced life he dreams about?

These amateur productions of “*The Real Inspector Hound*” and “*A Separate Peace*” are presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd. [www.concordtheatricals.co.uk](http://www.concordtheatricals.co.uk).

**Tickets: £14 (concessions £12)**

## URC Statistics

A minister called Martin Camroux reports each year on the statistics of the URC. He compiles it from the URC Yearbook. In recent years it has been a somewhat depressing picture. He reported again in January, this year. Here are some of his figures:

	2024		Last three years	
Number of Churches	1198	1242	1284	1331
Membership	41,786	36,986	40,024	43,208
Regular attenders	11,869	11,430		
Average congregation	36,627	35,844	41,577	48,208
Children at worship	3265	3001	3882	13,1208
Stipendiary Ministers	301	316	334	364
Non-stipendiary	60	60	56	62

The record of Church membership of the URC may not be accurate this year, because of the way that LEP's have been advised to record their numbers. (i.e. they have now been asked to record **total** number, as opposed to estimating the number of URC members). Not all LEP's, however, have done it this way.

It seems to me that the number of regular attenders and the average congregation size may be a better measure. Congregation size is up by 2.1%. Are we turning a corner? – we have to wait and see. But it is probably mirrored in our own congregation. Let's continue to ask all our friends to come along!!

At the end of his report, Martin Camroux writes:

### **“Renewal is possible**

None of us can choose the time or the culture in which we live. In his first statement as Archbishop designate Justin Welby felt confidently able to say, “we are at one of those rare points where the tide of events is turning .... I feel a massive sense of privilege at being one of those responsible for the leadership of the church in a time of spiritual hunger”. Such claims are made often and so far, have always proved a triumph of optimism over reality. Today even evangelical and charismatic churches which have until recently been growing are showing signs of decline, with the only really growing churches mostly linked to immigration. Even the Baptist Union has had a 51% reduction in its membership between 1970 and 2020.

But what the statistics do not show is what is possible for congregations of whatever type of theology or size who amid dramatic social change seek an authentic living of the gospel. After a transformational ministry at 4th Presbyterian in Chicago John Buchanan wrote:

*“Studies of growing congregations, at a time when mainline denominations are declining numerically, consistently discover that the one characteristic that growing congregations share is not theology, ideology, or worship styles, but a sense of mission. Growing congregations are focused on the world outside the walls of their buildings and are intentional about translating the theological affirmations they make inside into acts of compassion, love, and justice outside. When institutional survival absorbs a church's energy and imagination and resources, it simply ceases to be very interesting or compelling. When a congregation lives out its faith in and for the sake of its Lord, it is difficult to ignore”.*



Those churches are still there in the URC and in other churches. Today we are living in the midst of a seismic shift that we do not understand but out of which I dare to hope a reinvigorated church may come, though it may be that we cannot yet see what this will be like.

Those churches are still there in the URC and in other churches. Today we are living in the midst of a seismic shift that we do not understand but out of which I dare to hope a reinvigorated church may come, though it may be that we cannot yet see what this will be like.”.

So, in Rother Street, let’s not worry about our theology, our ideology or our style of worship, but let us focus on our efforts in serving our community, or as John Buchanan says “let’s live out our faith in and for the sake of the Lord”

*Peter*

## AMEN Shoebox Letter

**We received this letter from Amen Trust, via Ann and Malcolm McCulloch at the Baptist Church:**



Happy New Year from the AMEN team.

In December we were so pleased to be able to send out 2956 shoeboxes to our Romanian partners along with 4 pallets of other items such as blankets and baby equipment. A team of seven volunteers (including Amen Trustees Chris, Sharon and Simon) spent nine days in Romania helping to distribute the boxes and

minister alongside the partners.

Thank you for all your hard work collecting boxes, donating funds and praying for their transportation and delivery. Below are some of Simon's pictures from the trip – if you use Facebook you can find more on the AMEN Trust page.

Best Wishes for 2024

Janet

## WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

(A WOMEN LED, GLOBAL, ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT)



### PRESS RELEASE



### **'I beg you, bear with one another in love'**

The Christian Women of Palestine are calling us to connect with the land from where Jesus came; where he was born, ministered and died – and from where our faith began and is rooted. Despite living in an area of the world where there is ongoing conflict and the future is uncertain, the women of Palestine are sharing with love a reminder that they are there, and they want to give hope to everyone. The theme of the service 2024 'bear with one another in love' seems very appropriate for these women who will not give up witnessing the love of Jesus Christ.

World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation led by women which enables us to hear the thoughts of those women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns, and prayers. The preparation for the day is vast. An international committee is based in New York and there are national committees in each participating country. Regional conferences meet to consider the service and then local groups make their plans.

**Finally, at The United Reformed Church, Rother Street on Friday 1 March 2024 at 2pm we will gather to celebrate the service prepared by the women of Palestine.**

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 146 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world - through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later.

For further information and resources see the WDP website: [wwdp.org.uk](http://wwdp.org.uk)

# Tamow

Tamow (The Alternative Meals On Wheels) has been running for many years, certainly since well before I became a church member. For those of you who may wonder what it is, a group of ladies (I think it has always been ladies) meet for a pub or cafe lunch once a month at various locations in and around Stratford.

When I first joined it was run very efficiently by Bobby Taylor, but I don't think she was the first organiser. She followed on from Sheila Tait.

I picked up the baton after Covid lockdowns when several church members thought it was time to start going out again.

I have decided that the time has come for me to hand over the baton to someone else, although I intend to continue lunching! I will carry on until the AGM in April.

I hope someone else will take this on, it's not a particularly onerous task and I am happy to pass on my limited knowledge on local hostelrys!

***Ann Jones***

# Enthusiastic Innocence

I am not unfailingly cheerful! There are many days when I get out of bed with a creak and a groan. Do you know what sets me up for the day? A golden retriever.

My neighbour is a teacher, and out of the house for most of the day, so while she is at work, I dog-sit. Each working day I unlock the kitchen door to let my doggy friend out. No matter what mood I might be in before the door opens, she will always greet me with a stretch and a yawn. After that, she'll bound across and sit to attention, head up, waiting eagerly to be told she is a good girl.

Now, I could still be grumpy, but such enthusiastic innocence asks more of me – asks better of me.

We might think there's not much of that sort of enthusiasm to be found in the world these days. Instead, I think, just as she encourages me, so too, we might encourage each other.

Let's take some of that enthusiastic innocence for 'walkies' and watch it run.

***Taken from the Friendship Book and Submitted by Fran Maddy***

# Observations on Life

*A sharp tongue can cut your throat!*

*Keep Smiling – it makes people wonder what you've been up to!*

*If you want your dreams to come true, you mustn't oversleep.*

*The heaviest thing you can carry is a grudge.*

*One thing you can give and still keep – is your word.*

*You lie the loudest when you lie to yourself.*

*If you lack the courage to start, you have already finished.*

*One thing you can't recycle is wasted time.*

*It is too late to become what you might have been.*

*Be kinder than necessary because everyone you meet is fighting some sort of battle.*

## How to live out the good news in our daily conversations – part 1

**These are observations taken from a video by the Evangelical Alliance (EA):**

The EA recently held a Perspective Conversation where Jo Frost from the EA, co-author of 'Being Human: A new lens for our cultural conversations' and Aaron Nayagam from Fusion shared their perspectives, testimonies and tips for meaningful conversations in the present challenging culture.

In this part, let's take a look at some of the research on the cultural landscape in the UK from 'Talking Jesus Report' that were briefly touched on in the session. The findings were published in August 2023.

48% of the UK population describe themselves as Christians with 6% defined as practising Christians.

20% of the UK population think that Jesus is God in human form, 33% think he was a spiritual leader but not God. 25% a normal human being.

54% of the UK population think Jesus was a real human being, 28% believe he is a mythical or fictional character. This rises to 49% of 18-24 year olds.

45% of the population believe in the resurrection. A further 41% say they don't believe.

Searching on Google is the top way that non-Christians say they would find out about the Christian faith (26%). The next top ways were reading the Bible (22%), going to a local church (22%), talking to a friend or family member who they know to be a Christian (15%) and talking to a Christian leader in the community (12%).

53% of those who are non-Christians know someone who is a practising Christian in the UK. 35% said the practising Christian they knew was a friend; 31% said a family member, 12% an acquaintance, 11% a workmate, 8% a neighbour.

What questions are they asking? *'What happens when you die?'* was the highest scoring question for non-practising Christians at 22%, followed by *'Will everything be OK?'* at 19%.

55% of non-Christians who know a practising Christian have had a conversation with that Christian about that person's faith in Jesus Christ. 44% said they had not had a conversation about faith.

36% of those non-Christians who don't know a practising Christian have had a faith conversation about Jesus with a practising Christian that they didn't know.

75% of practising Christians report agree or strongly agree that it is every Christian's responsibility to share their faith. 77% of practising Christians feel confident to talk to non-Christians about their faith, but 42% of practising Christians say they don't feel that they know any non-Christians well enough to talk to them about Jesus Christ.

40% of practising Christians say they don't feel able to answer difficult questions and therefore don't speak about their faith.

75% of non-Christians felt comfortable during the faith conversation and 33%, because of the conversation, wanted to know more about Jesus Christ. A further 36% were open to an encounter or experience of Jesus for themselves after the conversation.

The top things that non-Christians remembered from the conversations they had had about faith were; they were asked what they believed (33%), the person shared about their personal faith (30%), they were invited to a church service (19%) and the person offered to pray for them (13%).

**There's lots here for all of us to think about, to discuss and to apply to our own individual contexts.**

# A Poem – The Hens.

*The night was coming very fast;  
It reached the gate as I ran past.*

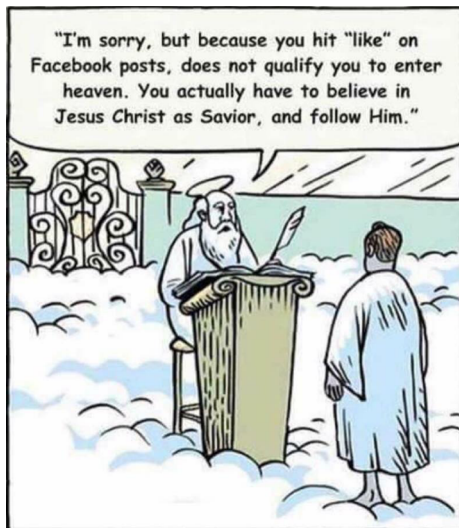
*The pigeons had gone to the tower of the church  
And all the hens were on their perch,*

*Up in the barn, and I thought I heard  
A piece of a little purring word.*

*I stopped inside, waiting and staying,  
To try to hear what the hens were saying.  
They were asking something, that was plain,  
Asking it over and over again.*

*One of them moved and turned around,  
Her feathers made a ruffled sound,  
A ruffled sound, like a bushful of birds,  
And she said her little asking words.  
She pushed her head close into her wing,  
But nothing answered anything.*

**Taken from ‘Poems in the Waiting Room’ Written by Elizabeth Madox Roberts  
Submitted by Jill Fradley**



In support of

**Ukrainian  
Medical Charity**

**DONATIONS  
WELCOME**

# **COFFEE MORNING**

**FRIDAY 16th FEBRUARY 2024**  
**9:30-12:00**

**At the United Reformed Church**

Rother Street  
Stratford upon Avon

**Fundraising for medical equipment, supplies  
and logistics to Ukrainian hospitals!**

**All proceeds  
go to Ukrainian  
Medical Charity**

**ENTRANCE  
FREE**





# Lent Course

During alternate years, Stratford Churches Together usually organises a Lent Course. This year Holy Trinity has kindly invited everybody to join their Lent Course, centred on the writings of George Herbert. It is expected to be held in the Church.

## Stratford Churches Together Lent Course 2024

### 'Quick-eyed love ' Lent with George Herbert

Join us as we travel through Lent with the poet George Herbert, guided by the Rev. Richard Cooke. All sessions take place at Holy Trinity church. The final one on Easter Day will be given as the sermon at Choral Evensong at 5pm.

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Weds 21 Feb      | 'Love Bade Me Welcome ' - Love (III)              |
| 2. Weds 28 Feb      | 'No more ' - The Collar                           |
| 3. Weds 6 Mar       | ' The soul's blood ' - Prayer (I)                 |
| 4. Weds 13 Mar      | 'The famous stone ' - The Elixir                  |
| 5. Weds 20 Mar      | ' Come ' - The Call & 'Sin and love ' - The Agony |
| 6. Sun 31 Mar (5pm) | 'As larks, harmoniously ' - Easter Wings          |



*George Herbert (1593-1633) was the writer of some of the most powerful poetry on spiritual themes in the English language. In these sessions during Lent we will explore a different poem, its background and what it might mean for us, each week, in a way suitable both for those who feel they have little knowledge of poetry and also for those whose passion it is! Copies of the poems for each week will be available.*

*Richard Cooke is Rector of the Ilmington Downs and Stour Valley Churches, and was Principal of the Coventry Diocesan Training Partnership from 2010-2021.*



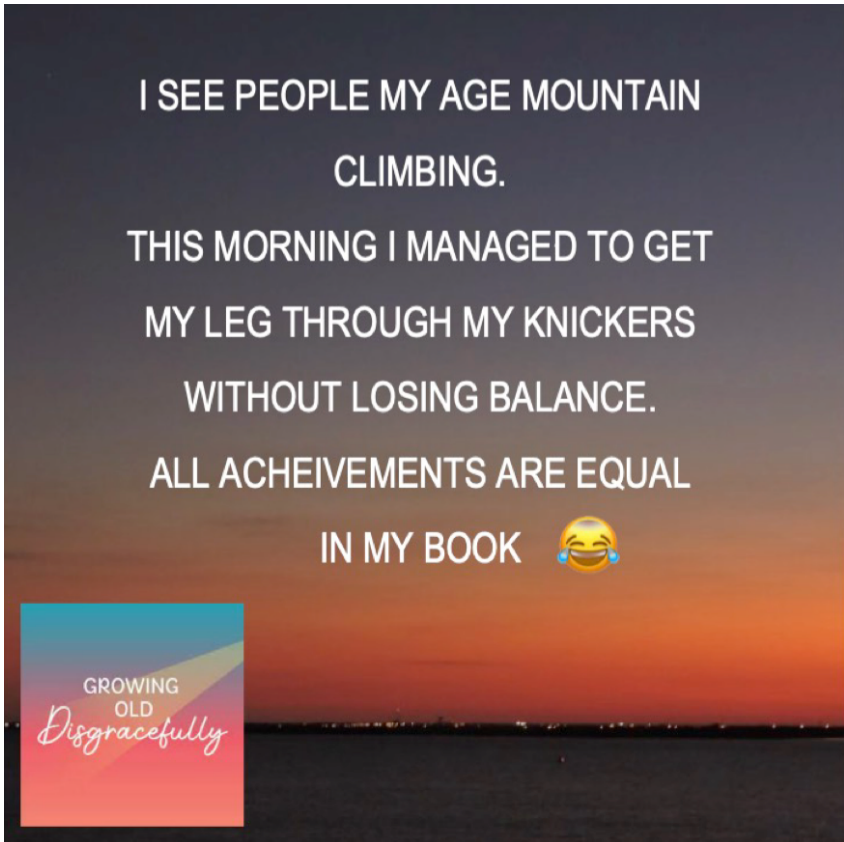


# Growing Old Disgracefully

Linda and I saw this recently on Facebook - it made us giggle - especially after some of us have had hip replacements and back problems!!

The Facebook posting was followed by 30,000 comments! Some of those were also hilarious.

We all need to find the humour in getting older!



## EcoChat

EcoChat has moved from the first Saturday in the month to the fourth Saturday. We still meet in the New Room at the Methodist Church.

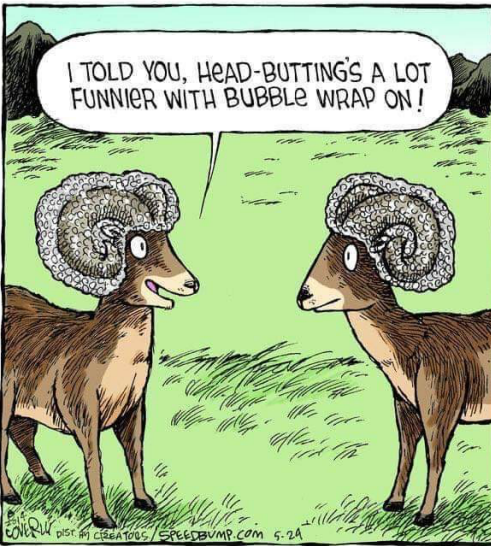
For the first few months of this year the sessions have been stimulated by the

report entitled 'State of Nature 2023'. We featured this in Link in November 2023. The sessions will feature Biodiversity, Farming issues, Wildlife health and The right to a clean and Healthy Environment. There will be different speakers at each session.

Do come along and see how Climate Change is adversely affecting our wildlife and what we can do about it. 10.30am on the fourth Saturday in the month.

At the same time the Stratford-upon-Avon Repair Shop will be active in the Methodist Church Hall. If you come to EcoChat you could also bring along a household item that needs repairing.

**Peter**



# Sunday Services at 9.30am

4th February	Holy Communion	Peter Horrocks
18th February	Morning Service	Elders
3rd March	Holy Communion	Revd Robert Maloney

## F&F Rota February

Please report any problems with the buildings in February to:

Sarah Salmon: 01789 295976 / 07816565371

or

Iain Kelso: 01789 2998698 / 07770 688984

## Flower Rota

4th February	Ann Walters
18th February	Sarah Salmon
3rd March	Wendy Sprake

## Link

**Because of the way our Sunday services are now structured, the editors have decided that the physical copies of Link magazine will be available on the 1st Sunday of each month rather than the last Sunday of the month. The electronic version may well be available before then. When there are 5 Sundays in the month the Link will be available on that 5th Sunday.**

**The March edition of Link will be published on the 3rd March 2024.**

The deadline for submission to the next edition is Monday 26th February 2024

Please send us your articles, pictures, humour etc.

**Editors contact details:**

**Telephone: 01789 750971 Email: [peterhorrocks@doctors.net.uk](mailto:peterhorrocks@doctors.net.uk)**

# TARANTARA

A performance to raise money for  
**WARWICKSHIRE VISION SUPPORT**

at the **United Reformed Church**

Rother Street, Stratford-upon-Avon

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February**



## **VENUE**

**United Reformed Church**

Rother Street, Stratford-upon-Avon

## **DATE + TIME**

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

at 7.30 pm (doors open 7.00 pm)

## **PRICE**

**£12 a ticket**

with a licenced bar

## **CONTACT**

TICKETS FROM: Ann Jones 07580 557163

Mairi Macdonald 07702 862042

Or on the Tarantara website:

[www.tarantara.org.uk/events](http://www.tarantara.org.uk/events)

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