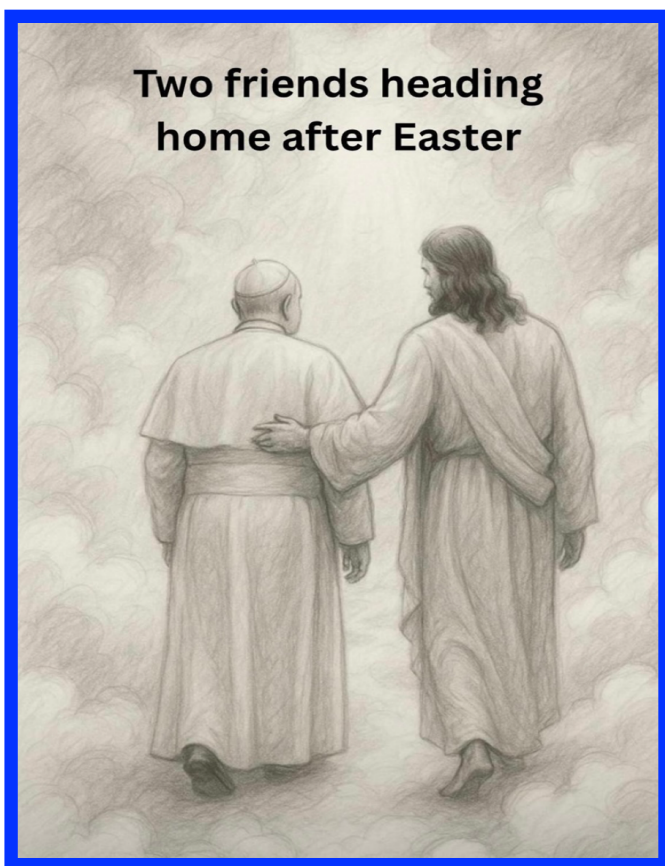




Link

May 2025

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



**Two friends heading
home after Easter**

Worship, Witness and love for others through Jesus Christ

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Thoughts for the Month

Decluttering

Three things have recently come together to stimulate my thoughts for this month:

Firstly, there was the cartoon below, which appeared on Facebook, recently.



Secondly, I read an article about Döstädning. And thirdly, I have been up in our loft looking for possible furniture for the Alvarez family.

The last of these made it all personal! There is so much of our past up there – from old furniture, to Bank accounts (from the year dot!), to 'A' level and university notes, to photographs and old books, to boxes of our daughters' possessions (including rocks from Joanna's PhD research in New Zealand!), to toys and games we played with our family, to framed pictures which used to hang on our walls etc, etc!

Have you heard about Döstädning? The English translation is 'Swedish Death Cleaning' – a cleaning trend resulting from the Swedish cultural tradition of decluttering and organising one's life before we die. A book by Margareta Magnussen, "The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning: How to free yourself and your family from a lifetime of clutter", has popularised this concept. This is different from Marie Kondo's decluttering methods of keeping things that give you joy. The idea is that you declutter your home before you die to lessen the burden on your family after you have passed away.

"Sometimes you just realise that you can hardly close your drawers or barely shut your closet door," writes Magnussen. "When that happens, it is definitely time to do something, even if you are only in your thirties. You could call that kind of cleaning

Döstädning, too, even if you may be many, many years away from dying.”

The Swedish death cleaning method suggests the "red dot system" of placing a red dot or sticker on items you want to get rid of and a green dot or sticker on items you prefer to keep. Or alternatively:



When it comes down to it, Swedish death cleaning simplifies your life because it requires you to pare down to the bare essentials, there is less mess, it reduces stress by eradicating the extra stuff, helping you to feel calmer, it benefits your family who can focus on the grieving process and it helps you to focus on what is important. If you want some advice on the process, please see the Checklist printed later in the magazine. You can also look it up on the internet.

When I was in the loft I was posed with many personal questions. Do I really want to keep three decades worth of stuff I no longer want, need or even remember how I came to possess in the first place? After all there are only two of us now living in this house, whereas previously it was a bustling place with three daughters. Memories pour out of every item, up there. Memories of the Beatles era in the boxes of LP's, holiday memories from beach equipment, university memories with notes and textbooks, thoughts about all the time I have invested in making furniture, private patient notes taking me back to my working days (I must shred those!!) and computer equipment – there's a history of computing up there from ZX Spectrum to computers with floppy disks and more recent PC's.

As I get older and take more funerals, I am faced with my own mortality – not that I'm expecting to die soon! but it's going to happen sometime. Indeed, as Magnusson writes in her book, Döstädning isn't the story of death and its slow, ungainly inevitability. But rather, as she puts it, "The story of life, your life, the good memories and the bad. The good ones you keep. The bad you expunge." The valuable items you keep, the useless ones you throw away or sell or recycle. Of course, it's not just the loft, but also the kitchen cupboards, the clothes drawers and the wardrobes. Then, of course there are the garden sheds! And the garage is

something else! How many of those tools do I still need? Will all those pieces of wood ever be turned into beautiful bowls or pieces of furniture, will I ever use all the second-hand screws and nuts & bolts?



Anyway, enough of my personal life. There is a message for all of us in this. We are not good at un-burdening ourselves, of discarding things from the past that no longer work in this present time.

I know that we have Jesus walking with us all the time, and he shares our burdens. But burdens of the past often stop us from doing good things in the present. They often inhibit our discipleship; they often stop us being relevant to today's generation.

Let's think about what we need to declutter in our religion, our services, our faith, that will make our church more relevant to a modern generation. Let's face it, the younger generation doesn't relate to our present liturgies and practices. Let's throw out from our 'loft' what is no longer relevant apart from the good memories of years gone by.

Peter

Family News

We wish the Alvarez family peace and happiness in their new home in Studley after months of uncertainty. Belated birthday wishes for Ashly who celebrated her 18th birthday on 27th April and success to Ashly and Nathalia in their upcoming A levels.

Rob had an appointment with a heart specialist and now knows what he is dealing with. Please hold Rob and Jill in your prayers as they manage their varied health problems.

We trust all goes well for Sue as she undergoes an operation on 6th May and pray

that the outcome will be successful.

Carole is awaiting the result of a recent scan.

All good wishes to Bruce and Bobby who have downsized from their long-term home to a more manageable flat at Romeo Place.

We hope that Ashley recovers well after his operation

Ileen Fisher

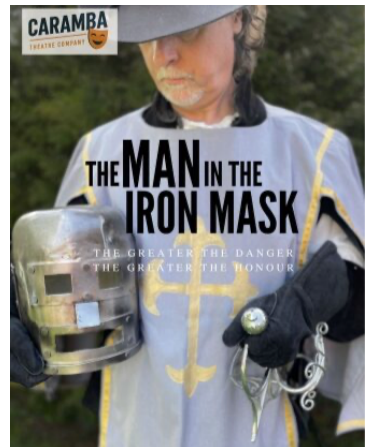
What's on at the Bear Pit

The Man in the Iron Mask: 7th to 10th May at 7.30pm
Matinee Saturday at 2pm

A Caramba Theatre Company Production

Who is the man behind the iron mask? The musketeers, Athos, Porthos, Aramis & D'Artagnan, are once again brought together to right a wrong that could tear France apart. Royal intrigue, sword fights & a daring jail break, makes this the musketeers most dangerous mission yet! Are you ready for adventure?

Tickets: £15 (concessions £13)



Dr Strangelove: 11th May at 7pm



The National Theatre Live production of Dr. Strangelove is a stage adaptation of Stanley Kubrick's iconic comedy masterpiece. This world premiere features the talented Steve Coogan in an impressive performance, playing four different roles. The production is co-adapted by Armando Iannucci and Sean Foley, who also directs the play.

The story revolves around a rogue U.S. General who triggers a nuclear attack,

leading to a series of darkly comedic events. The play captures the satirical essence of the original film, exploring themes of political and military absurdity.

The creative team behind this production includes Emmy Award-winner Armando Iannucci and Olivier Award-winner Sean Foley, ensuring a high-quality and entertaining experience. The production is known for its impressive staging and sensationallly unhinged performances, making it a must-watch for fans of the original film and newcomers alike.

Tickets: £14

Football Anthems

Since singing “You’ll Never Walk Alone” at Barbara’s Thanksgiving Service and learning the history of the song and Peter’s reflection that it is as good as any hymn in Rejoice & Sing, I thought I should carry out some research into my football club’s anthem, my club being Birmingham City, for those of you who don’t already know!

Our anthem is “Keep Right On To The End of the Road”, written and recorded by Harry Lauder, a Scotsman, lamenting the death of his son, killed in action, during the First World War. It became very popular with Lauder’s audiences, often closing his shows, and was played at his own funeral in 1950.

The original lyrics are:

*Ev’ry road thro’ life is a long, long road,
Fill’d will joys and sorrows too,
As you journey on how your heart will yearn
For the things most dear to you,
With wealth and love ’tis so,
But onward we must go.*

Chorus:

*Keep right on to the end of the road,
Keep right on to the end,
Tho’ the way be long, let your heart be strong,
Keep right on round the bend,
Tho’ you’re tired and weary still journey on,
Till you come to your happy abode,
Where all the love you’ve been dreaming of
Will be there at the end of the road*

*With a big stout heart to a long steep hill,
We may get there with a smile,
With a good kind thought and an end in view,
We may cut short many a mile.
So let courage ev'ry day
Be your guiding star alway.*

I think the lyrics reflect Lauder's belief that, whatever life throws at you, you must keep going. The journey may be long, with ups and downs, but, in the end, we will reach our "happy abode" and meet with all those we have loved, which I take to be heaven.

The story of how the song came to be associated with Birmingham City is that it was adopted during an F.A. cup run to the 1955/56 final. On a coach to Highbury for the quarter final, the players sang songs to ease the tension and Scottish winger, Alex Govan, was asked for his choice. He started to sing "Keep Right On" and the players were still singing on arrival at the ground, with the coach surrounded by Blues fans. The song was sung to celebrate a 3-1 win that day. The fans quickly adopted the song, singing it at the semi-final win over Sunderland that same season. The song was first played at St. Andrews (Blues' ground) a week later, with song sheets handed out to spectators. The song has been sung at St. Andrews ever since, albeit with some of the lyrics altered to reflect the team. Every match starts with 4 lines of the Harry Lauder original, before the fans take over, singing the version below:

*As you go through life
It's a long long road
There'll be joys and sorrows too.
As we journey on,
We will sing this song
For the boys in Royal Blue
We're often partizan, la la la,
We will journey on, la la la*

*Keep right on to the end of the road,
Keep right on to the end,
Though the way be long,
Let your heart beat strong,
Keep right on to the end.
Though you're tired and weary,
Still journey on,*



*Till you come to your happy abode,
Where all the love,
You've been dreaming of will be there,
Where? at the end of the road
Birmingham! Birmingham!*

The song is affectionately known as “KRO”, an acronym which we use in messages to each other, features on much of the merchandising and can be seen on many registration plates as you walk through the car park on match days!

As a life long Blues supporter (blame my mum!), I can attest to there being rather more sorrows than joys, although this season has been one of almost unsurpassed joy!

KRO!

Ann Jones

Barbara Lister

Following Barbara's death on the 12th March there were subsequently services at the Crematorium on the morning of 7th April, followed by a Thanksgiving service and celebration of her life, at the church in the afternoon. Tributes to Barbara were delivered by Nick, her two daughters-in-law Lorna and Annette, her two sons Philip and Stephen, followed by her grandson, Jack.



Nick started by thanking a number of people. He thanked the Staff at Warwick Hospital who looked after Barbara in her final illness and the staff at Ambleside Care Home who looked after and befriended Barbara for 9 months. The family had chosen and donated a painting as a gift to the Care Home. Nick also thanked his family for their support during the previous 18 months, and a cohort of friends who regularly visited Barbara in the Care Home. Many commented on Barbara's smile

and laughter, especially when remembering old times. Nick quoted John Betjeman who wrote shortly before his own death: *"Give me the bonus of laughter, as I lose hold"*. Nick also thanked the church for its support. He then delivered the following tribute:

"Shortly, my family are going to talk about their Mum and Granny, so I'll confine myself to a few words including the often-told story of how we met:

It was on a Leeds University badminton court in September 1962 - Barbara was already there studying German, and was a member of the University Badminton team - actually it was a very good women's team that won the UK University women's team championship. So, she was watching this new intake of aspiring male freshers being assessed - and apparently, she just said to one of her female team members 'I want him' and thus we were put together as a mixed doubles pair, and that lasted for 62 years. By the way there is apparently another version of the story which is simply 'I'm going to marry him' So even at that age my wife obviously had impeccable judgement of people.

Barbara gave me so very much: but in those 60 years by far the best were two simply wonderful sons, Stephen and Philip - Barbara always used their full names - they are best friends, and of course now men at the height of their professional careers - one can even call on the corporate jet - I almost managed to stow away on it several months ago until the pilot realised that was not a good idea flying into the States.

As mum to Steve and Phil, she was the one who held the family together while I was intermittently away from home, and later she was a driver to both of them, taking them all over the county and much beyond, during their very successful badminton playing days.

After Steve and Phil left home, she became a leading member of several local groups - ranging from being President of the local WI, to organising an area of the Warwickshire Association for the Blind, to being an Elder and Secretary of this church we are in today. And whatever she took on, she always gave it her full support.

During this time Barbara was a greatly loved teacher at the Willows School in Stratford, specialising in children's Special Needs.

And I'll just have to skip over Barbara's role in the archaeological dig at New Place in Stratford - by the way she's on both the BBC and Channel 4 programs - still online -

that they made of the investigation. I'm also there, but I'm just a hat.

More recently her attention was on her family - including our two amazing daughters in law - Lorna and Annette (who you will hear from soon), to our terrific grandchildren; Jack, Patrick and Gabriella, And even more, to the two brilliant ladies that Jack and Patrick introduced to us - Nicole and Mary - both now in the final weeks of their medical degree courses. Barbara loved all of you, and right up to the end wanted to see the latest WhatsApp photos of what you were doing.

So, wherever we turned in our family we have really exceptional people - and my obvious point in talking about them is that this family is Barbara's legacy, which will continue for decades to come.

So, thank you darling Barbara, for giving me all of this, and much more. Barbara simply made the world better for those around her, and I am sure you all remember her wonderful smile, which is on all the images of her that we showed before the start, and you'll see again at the end.



We are in Shakespeare country, and Barbara loved going to the theatre to see his plays. She used to drag me along in the first of the 50 years we have been here, and even though I was a scientist - she made me into a convert.

Now, it says on your order of service that there is a poem, so this is not from his plays, but it is one of the most famous poems in the English language; some of you

very probably know it by heart:

*Shall I compare Barbara to a summer's day
She is more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:*

*So long as we can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives she, and Barbara's family and friends, will always give life to her.*

With apologies to Will, for a few changes to your words.

Finally, I have just a single slightly changed Shakespeare line; it's frequently quoted, but it did come into my mind when I was holding Barbara's hand only just after she had left us:

"Goodnight, my sweet princess, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

Following Nick's tribute, Annette and Lorna spoke about and quoted Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte. They finished by saying that the whole family felt that Barbara embodied the true love and devotion expressed by Austen in *Northanger Abbey*:

"There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends. I have no notion of loving people by halves, it is not my nature"

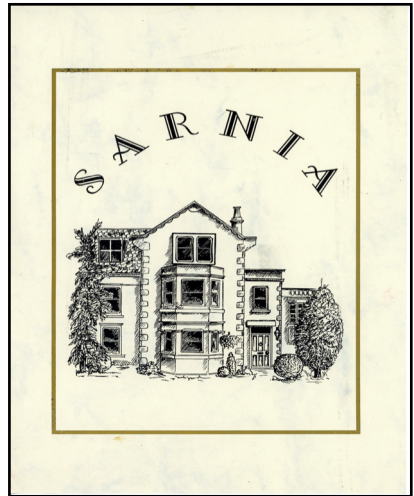
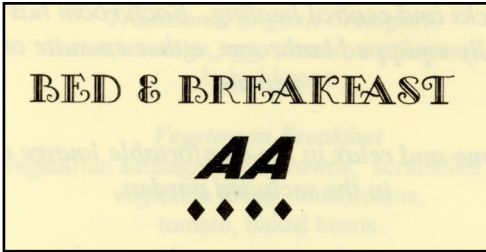
Philip, Stephen and Jack talked about how Barbara as their mother and grandmother had influenced their lives and taught them. Stephen also talked about his mother's passion for watching tennis.

Peter

Donation

Nick has given a generous donation to the church following Barbara's death. We would like to use it to honour her memory. If you have ideas about how we do that, please let us know.

Sarnia: Our B&B



In 1994 we bought a house in Bath with the intention of running a guest house. Rob retired from the Police Force after 30 years and I finished teaching. We thought it would be good to work for ourselves and do something completely different.

We had to apply for permission for a change of use for the house to become a B&B. This was only approved on the day we moved in - a bit nerve-wracking to say the least!

After taking out a large mortgage and spending all our savings on setting it up, we wondered at first if we had made a sensible decision. We had finished paying for Rebecca's 3 years at Warwick University, but Matthew still had another 3 years to go at Southampton University. We didn't realise that we had missed the deadline for advertising in the 'where to stay' books. So I went back to my old school and did some supply teaching, and Rob became an NVQ assessor.

We needn't have worried, though. Some of the local B&Bs started to send us guests they couldn't accommodate, and we got very good grades, when we were able to advertise. It became a most interesting and successful experience. We met thousands of lovely people from all over the world, and only had a handful whom we wouldn't wish to come again!

We had visitor books for guests' comments and received many glowing reports. These books came with sayings, and one we particularly liked was "Visitors always give pleasure - if not in the coming, then the going". How true!

Jill Fradley

Tik Tok Vicar

Here's an article found by Mairi. It's from The Telegraph Newspaper and is written by Natash Leake. We have been given permission to use it in this magazine. I'm not suggesting that this is something that we should or can emulate, but it has been put in to make us think!

TikTok vicar preaches Jesus was a feminist (from the Telegraph newspaper)

Reverend Pippa White has gathered an army of social followers as she spreads the word on social media.

A vicar using TikTok to connect with younger generations has told her audience that Jesus was a feminist and to consider "giving up men" for Lent.



Reverend Pippa White, 29, has amassed millions of views on the social media platform as part of her efforts to reduce the gap between young people and organised religion.

With 20,000 followers her videos come amid a rise in a new phenomenon call known as 'God Tok' with the social media platform fast becoming the community hub for young Christians all over the world. In the UK, weekly attendance for Church of England services among children under the age of 16 was up by almost 6% in 2023. This was higher than the overall rise of 5% which marked a third consecutive year of growth among congregations.

Since moving to a parish in Shropshire a year ago. Reverend White, who used to be a barmaid, has become known as the TikTok vicar and amassed 10s of thousands of social media followers.

Her content includes behind the scenes videos of her life at Saint Alkmund's church as well as attending Taylor Swift concerts and playing rugby.

In one video which has amassed nearly 900,000 views, and 129,000 likes, she jokingly told her audience that they should consider giving up men for lent with the caption "Jesus was such a girl's girl".

Another features the caption: “when another straight white man becomes Bishop” with her sarcastically putting her thumbs up. Underneath she has written “Joke’s on me. I’ve sworn obedience to them”.

One video teaches Christian women how to go to a concert in four steps.

Reverend White, originally from Norfolk, and now living in Whitchurch, said it was her sister who first suggested she should be a Tik Tok vicar.

She explained: “When I moved to Whitchurch I was like, ‘Well maybe I’ll give it a go.’

I made a few videos, and they weren’t getting many views but I was having fun. I was just making them for myself, to be honest”.

“And then one of them went viral and I felt like I might as well carry on. It’s mostly a very joyous thing, which is really fun”.

She said forming this connection with younger audiences requires challenging the youths’ perception of the church and Christianity.

She added “For Gen Z, there is a high spiritual awareness and drive, but that’s not correlating to church attendance figures and things like that. There is a gap between young people and organised religion - I think it’s the organised part of religion that Gen Z really struggles with.”

“A big reason why I started doing these Tik Toks is because I think for a lot of Gen Z, the Church of England is either irrelevant, or let’s face it, the reason why we’re often in the news is not for good reasons”.

A recent study by Theos, the religion and society think tank, discovered that although about half of British adults now say that they have ‘no religion’ 42% of those believe in some form of the supernatural. They are being attracted towards a range of different spiritual beliefs and practises including Catholicism, Chime MacDonald ,Theos director, told the Telegraph.

“In short , the young people I’m seeing come to coming to faith are seeking the opposite of the expressive individualism that’s being offered to them” said the Reverend Glen Scrivener, director of evangelistic ministry, Speak Life.

“They are wanting something ancient, deep, communal, embodied, challenging and transcendent.

The Reverend White does everything from wakes and weddings, to hospital

chaplaincy and teaching teenagers ethics.

She visits care homes and members of the congregation who have become too frail to leave the house. Much of her time is also spent writing sermons.

While her TikTok has grown significantly, the vicar said she recognises it does not replace the work she does at the church itself.

She explained “This is where I do get a bit concerned with the TikTok stuff. I'm very aware social media is not a replacement for the church”

There is a really interesting bit of academic theology, right now, asking: ‘Can you have virtual religion’.

“For me, I come down quite hard on the ‘no’ - because I think there is something about human communities that has to be face to face. I don't want to encourage people to stay online”

Reverend White's social media messages:

‘Good morning girlies just a reminder from your friendly local priest that Lent does start next week and I thought for Lent we could all just give up men. I don't mean this in a dating way. I mean this in the way that Jesus would argue back to time wasters, and threw people, who refused to understand, out of rooms. Jesus was a revolutionary’.

How to go to a concert as a Christian woman:

Step 1: Wear whatever you want because Jesus never told women to be modest around him.

Step 2: Dance and have fun, because Jesus' first miracle was celebrating joy.

Step 3: Remember you're made from love, for love.

***Written by Natasha Leake
Submitted by Mairi Macdonald***

**I'm writing about all the things I ought to do
before I die. It's called an oughtobiography.**

Pope Francis' Last Message

We were all saddened to hear of the death of Pope Francis, on Easter Monday. We thought it fitting that we presented some of his last Easter Message from the day before his death. Below are excerpts:



"URBI ET ORBI" MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS EASTER 2025

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 20 April 2025

From the empty tomb in Jerusalem, we hear unexpected good news: Jesus, who was crucified, “is not here, he has risen” (Lk 24:5). Jesus is not in the tomb, he is alive!

Love has triumphed over hatred, light over darkness and truth over falsehood. Forgiveness has triumphed over revenge. Evil has not disappeared from history; it will remain until the end, but it no longer has the upper hand; it no longer has power over those who accept the grace of this day.

The resurrection of Jesus is indeed the basis of our hope. For in the light of this event, hope is no longer an illusion. Thanks to Christ — crucified and risen from the dead — hope does not disappoint! Spes non confundit! (cf. Rom 5:5). That hope is not an evasion, but a challenge; it does not delude, but empowers us.

Christ is risen! These words capture the whole meaning of our existence, for we were not made for death but for life. Easter is the celebration of life! God created us

for life and wants the human family to rise again! In his eyes, every life is precious! The life of a child in the mother's womb, as well as the lives of the elderly and the sick, who in more and more countries are looked upon as people to be discarded.

What a great thirst for death, for killing, we witness each day in the many conflicts raging in different parts of our world! How much violence we see, often even within families, directed at women and children! How much contempt is stirred up at times towards the vulnerable, the marginalized, and migrants!

On this day, I would like all of us to hope anew and to revive our trust in others, including those who are different than ourselves, or who come from distant lands, bringing unfamiliar customs, ways of life and ideas! For all of us are children of God!

At this point Pope Francis appealed for and prayed for peace in all parts of the world:

Palestine, Gaza and Israel

Lebanon and Syria

Yemen

Ukraine

South Caucasus – Armenia and Azerbaijan

Africa especially the Congo, Sudan, and South Sudan, the Horn of Africa

There can be no peace without freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and respect for the views of others.

I appeal to all those in positions of political responsibility in our world not to yield to the logic of fear which only leads to isolation from others, but rather to use the resources available to help the needy, to fight hunger and to encourage initiatives that promote development. These are the “weapons” of peace: weapons that build the future, instead of sowing seeds of death!

May the principle of humanity never fail to be the hallmark of our daily actions. In the face of the cruelty of conflicts that involve defenceless civilians and attack schools, hospitals and humanitarian workers, we cannot allow ourselves to forget that it is not targets that are struck, but persons, each possessed of a soul and human dignity.

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the Lord's Paschal Mystery, death and life contended in a stupendous struggle, but the Lord now lives forever (cf. Easter Sequence). He fills us with the certainty that we too are called to share in the life that knows no end, when the clash of arms and the rumble of death will be heard no more. Let us entrust ourselves to him, for

he alone can make all things new (cf. Rev. 21:5)!

Happy Easter to everyone!

Pope Francis

RNLI

After a break of several years, the Stratford Branch of RNLI is organising a garden themed charity stall to raise funds for the brave men and women who risk their lives saving others. It will be held on Friday 23rd May. The stall will be located within the Friday Rother Street Market, look for the RNLI flag or RNLI shop sign.



Hopefully we will have some home-grown plants but not to the extent that we used to have. We will also have a selection of pre-loved garden tools for sale.

If you are not into gardening, how about a book about gardens or perhaps a garden themed jigsaw.

It would be lovely to see members of the URC at the stall or you might see us having a coffee break in the church.

Cathy Davies

A promotional poster for a 'Ladies' Breakfast' event. The background is a light blue wooden plank texture. On the left, there are illustrations of golden croissants, a jar of strawberry jam, and a pat of butter. On the right, there is a vase of colorful flowers (tulips and daisies), a bottle of milk, and a cup of coffee with a latte art design. The text is as follows:

Ladies' Breakfast
Saturday 10th May 2025
at Stratford Baptist Church
9:00am to 11:00am
hot drinks served from 8:45am

Guest Speaker
Bryony Brooker from
Red Hill Christian
Centre

To book, tel: 07718 689453

Swedish Death Cleaning Checklist

EXAMINE CLOTHING, SHOES, & ACCESSORIES

- Sort through clothing
- See what still fits
- Make a "toss" pile
- Get closet in order



GO THROUGH FURNITURE & OTHER ITEMS

- Start with items that take up the most space
- Work your way down to smaller items
- Decide what to keep and what to discard
- Make a dedicated pile for mementos

ADDRESS DIGITAL CLUTTER

- Gather login credentials for loved ones
- Declutter desktops/laptops
- Declutter hard drives

GATHER IMPORTANT PAPERWORK

- Designate an area for important files
- Make sure loved ones know where to look
- If you have a will, make sure it's up to date

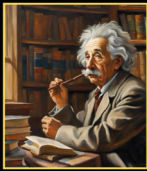
SORT WITH INTENTION

- Make a "Donate" pile
- Make a "Sell" pile
- Make a "Keepsakes/ Mementos" pile
- Make a "Discard" pile



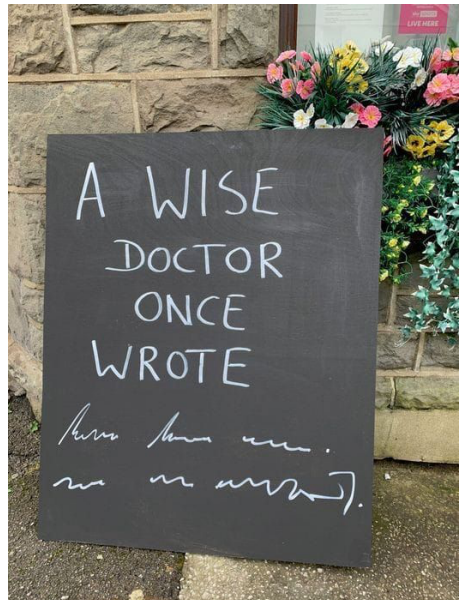
**Just got my electricity bill
and I believe I got charged
for the sunlight, the
moonlight, the street light,
the light of my life, the speed
of light, and the light at the
end of the tunnel**

**I hate it when people act all intellectual and
talk about Mozart when they've never even
seen one of his paintings.**



Albert Einstein

“Two things are infinite: the
universe and human
stupidity; and I'm not sure
about the universe.”



Climate Resilience – A Rocha

In the first two months of 2025 the climate records have continued to tumble. January was the warmest start to a year on record with temperature over 1.7C above the long-term average. What this means is that the impact of climate change, through phenomena such as super-intense rainfall, more frequent floods, prolonged droughts, wildfires and killer heatwaves, will get worse. That is scary.

When we look at the climate data alongside some of the global political trends, it is easy to despair. Yet, we read in the Bible of men and women of God who overcame overwhelming disasters and odds: Nehemiah, when he worked to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem despite intense opposition; Ruth, as she fought back against hunger and poverty to be accepted by Boaz; and Paul, preaching the gospel from prison with the looming prospect of torture. This is resilience, a word derived from the Latin verb 'salire', or somersault. It implies the ability to somersault backwards, or 'bounce back' and recover quickly to a blow or shock. And that is what society is going to have to learn to do in the face of climate 'shocks'.

Of course, governments have the greatest power to act; but local leadership and knowledge are needed too. In response, A Rocha UK is about to launch a pilot community climate resilience project, based at our Wolf Fields reserve in West London. Our aim is to train at least two hundred people from three boroughs neighbouring Wolf Fields, in climate resilience techniques which they can deploy at home and in the local community over the next two years. In the process we will develop tools which can be used by others, such as groups of Eco Churches working together, to increase the resilience of nature and people in their own communities.

One workshop will focus on how to manage gardens and other outdoor spaces to help nature adapt to changing weather patterns, including heatwaves and droughts. That means looking at new ways of planting, deploying new varieties of plants, creating shady spaces and catching and conserving rainwater. Other workshops will focus on subjects such as food growing (as climate shocks increase food prices) and creating new habitats for nature.

With climate change the odds are now stacked against us in so many ways. But as Christians we can take inspiration from the biblical characters such as Nehemiah, Ruth and Paul, whose determination, faithfulness, hope and trust in God made them resilient – and God did more than each of them could have imagined.

A Rocha UK Team

Sunday Services at 9.30am

4th May	Holy Communion	Peter Horrocks
	Followed by the AGM	
18th May	Morning Service	Eric Jones
1st June	Holy Communion	Peter Horrocks

F&F Rota May

Please report any problems with the buildings in May to:

Tom Purves 01789 293013

or

Iain Kelso. 01789 299698 / 07770 688984

Flower Rota

4th May	Jill & Rob
18th May	Sue
1st June	Marion

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 June edition of Link will be published on the 1st June.

The deadline for submission to the next edition is Monday 26th May.

Please send us your articles, pictures, humour etc.

Editors contact details:

Telephone: 01789 750971 Email: peterhorrocks@doctors.net.uk

**Holding hope
in her hands.**

Aurelia holding the
fertiliser she learned how
to make with our partner
Congcoop's support.



The climate crisis is ravaging
the farms of Indigenous
communities in Guatemala.
Please help fund vital tools
and training, so farmers like
Aurelia can support their
community to escape hunger.

christian
aid 80
years

Christian Aid Week
11-17 May

