

Saints ALIVE

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

September 2024

70p

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2024

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The Need to Grieve

By Rev'd Noel McGeeney

The human instinct is to block suffering and pain. This is especially true in the West where we have been influenced by the “rationalism” of the Enlightenment. As anyone who has experienced grief can attest, it isn't rational. We really don't know how to hurt! We simply don't know what to do with our pain.

Many of us have been taught that grief and sadness are something to repress, deny, or avoid. We would much rather be angry than sad. In Gaelic they say “*sadness is on me*”, it comes for a time but is not lasting.

Perhaps the simplest and most inclusive definition of grief is “unfinished hurt”. It feels like a demon spinning around inside of us and it hurts too much, so we immediately look for someone else to blame. We have to learn to remain open to our grief, to wait in patient expectation for what it has to teach us. When we close in too tightly around our sadness or grief, when we try to fix it, control it or understand it, we only deny ourselves its lessons.

Saint Ephrem the Syrian (303-373) considered tears to be sacramental signs of divine mercy. He instructs: *‘Give God weeping, and increase the tears in your eyes; through your tears and [God’s] goodness the soul which has been dead will be restored.’*

What a different kind of human being than most of us! In the charismatic circles in which I participated in my student years, holy tears were a common experience. Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi reportedly wept all the time - for days on end!

The 'weeping mode' is a different way of being in the world. It's different from the fixing, explaining, or controlling mode. We're finally free to feel the tragedy of things, the sadness of things. Tears cleanse our eyes both physically and spiritually, so we can begin to see more clearly. Sometimes we have to cry for a very long time because we're not seeing truthfully or well at all. Tears only come when we realise we can't fix and we can't change reality. The situation is absurd, it's unjust, it's wrong, it's impossible. *She should not have died; he should not have died. How could this happen?* Only when we are led to the edges of our own resources are we finally free to move to the weeping mode.

The way we can tell that our tears have cleansed us is that afterwards we don't need to blame anybody, even ourselves. It's an utter transformation and cleansing of the soul, and we know it came from God. *It is what it is and somehow God is in it.*

Noel McGeeney



Our present pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team

All Saints

Sundays:

8am Holy Communion

9.30am Parish Eucharist

11.30am (usual pattern but can vary occasionally)

1st Sunday: Messy Mass

3rd Sunday: All Age Service

2nd & 4th Sunday: Holy Baptism

6pm Evening Prayer

1st Sunday: Choral Evensong Plus

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

2nd & 4th Sunday: Said Evensong

Weekdays:

Holy Communion

7.30pm Tuesday

*(temporarily 1st & 3rd Tuesdays only,
with Service of Healing on 3rd Tuesday)*

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

Morning Prayer:

9.00 am Tuesday - Friday

St. Barnabas, Linslade

Sundays:

8am Said Eucharist

10am Parish Eucharist

6pm Evensong

www.stbarnabaslinslade.uk

St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach

Sundays:

8am: Holy Communion

11am Holy Communion (in church & via Zoom)

1st Sundays: Family Service

Tuesdays: 7pm Holy Communion

Morning Prayer via Zoom:

9.00am Monday - Saturday

www.saintleonardschurch.com

St. Michael's, Eggington

9.30am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

9.30am 2nd Sundays: Family Communion

4th Sundays: Holy Communion

St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington

11.15am Holy Communion

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

Sundays at 9.45am:

1st Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

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

3rd Sunday: Family Service

4th Sunday: Bring and share breakfast and Holy Communion

Free pop-up café every Sunday from 9.45am

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

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

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

Bereavement Café: a support group offering friendship and understanding.

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

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

Bellringers: Practice on Monday, 7.30 - 9.30pm.

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

Contact Details on Page 2.

News Roundup

The Coffee Shop reopens on Tuesday 3rd September at 10am, following the summer break. It is with regret, however, that the management have concluded that as from September, the Coffee Shop will no longer open on Saturdays. Although we are often short of helpers, it is the fact that we have no managers to cover this day which has caused us to take this decision. If the situation should change in the future, we shall certainly make every effort to re-open on Saturdays. In the meantime, Tuesdays and Fridays will operate as usual from September.



Worth a smile

A bishop visited a primary school in his full episcopal attire – with his mitre, robes and bishop’s crook or crozier. A little lad’s mother asked him later what he had thought of the bishop’s visit to his school. The little boy replied: “It was great – now I know what a *real* crook looks like!”



A small boy asked his mother for a cucumber to take to Junior Church. A slightly puzzled mother complied. Later she asked what it had been used for. “Sorry, mum,” he confessed. “I got it wrong. We were supposed to bring a newcomer.”



After the fall in Garden of Eden, Adam was walking with his sons Cain and Abel. As they passed by the ruins of the Garden of Eden, one of the boys asked, “Father, what’s that?” Adam replied, “Boys, that’s where your mother ate us out of house and home.”



Dear Minister: I know that God loves everyone, but He has never met my sister. Love Peter (aged 7)



What did the egg in the monastery say? “Out of the frying pan and into the friar.”



A notice outside Chichester Cathedral advertised lunchtime concerts with the encouragement that: “Sandwiches may be eaten.” Someone had scribbled underneath: “So if you are a sandwich, don’t come!”



A South London clergyman who was appointed to another living received a letter from a firm of furniture removers. It assured him: “Dear Sir, we would like to remove you. In the last year we have removed 40 South London clergymen, to the entire satisfaction of all concerned.”



The Seven Last Words of the Church: “We never did it like that before.”

Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, July:

4: Karl Lambert & Elizabeth Hartnett at All Saints;

27: Shubin Lal Kunnath Thanicheri & Neethu Ann Thomas at All Saints

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

Holy Baptism, July:

14: Joshua David Jones, Frederick Christopher Hulatt;

28: Lily Dawn East, Sophie Maisie Phillips, Aurora Elizabeth Ayres, Leonardo Gabriel Ayres

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. July:

10: David Warren at St. Leonard's; 19: Joan Spencer at Bierton; 25: Colin Major at All Saints;

31: George Turney at Vandyke Road Chapel

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

Years Mind, September:

1: Peter Rolls, Ruth Cursons; 2: Sheila Binns; 3: Stella Aris, Bryan Gilbert;

5: Betty Hill, Jim Bright; 6: Brenda Burchell; 7: Patricia Jakeman; 8: John MacDonald;

9: Les Wood; 10: Edith Boyce, Leslie Scheu, Edward Pyman, Milbrough Mary Morgan;

11: Peggy Wallace; 13: John King; 14: Rose Magee; 16 Peggy King, John Tennant;

18: Stuart Mead, Leslie Howard, Vernon Jessup; 19: Alison Day;

21: Jim Wright, Margaret Austin; 24: Joyce Pim; 26: Freda Goodger; 28: Sandra Keen;

29: William Brantom, Gordon Durrington, Maureen Comber; 30: Margaret Madigan



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Please see links on the website, www.lbmusic.co.uk

Leighton Buzzard Music is a registered charity no: 1183681





***Come to our sustainable fashion clothes swap
“Swishing” Party
24th September from 7pm
Entry £5***

Just bring from 1-8 items of adult clothes / accessories which must be in good condition. No junk or jumble please. You will be given tokens in return which you swap for other items which are “new to you”. There will also be stalls, a raffle and refreshments as well as videos and information about the impact of fast fashion on the planet and how to make a difference.

You can drop off items from 7pm – then grab a coffee and browse stalls while clothes are displayed; the swap will start at 7.45. Early drop off at All Saints on the day from 12.00 - 2.00pm

We all like to look our best and Swishing is a great way to update your wardrobe very cheaply. It also reduces waste and helps us fight the damage to the planet caused by fashion. The fashion industry accounts for 8.3% of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. In the UK, one third of the clothes in our wardrobes are never worn and 300,000 tonnes of clothing ends up in bins each year, going to landfill or incinerators.

This month is also known as Secondhand September – our Swishing Party is a great way to join in and we look forward to seeing you. If you would like to help with the event or find out more please speak to Jaine Holford or Katrina Grant.



**TO HOPE AND ACT
WITH CREATION**

SEASON OF CREATION 2024

The firstfruits of hope 1st September – 4th October
(Rom 8:19-25)

***A Creationtide Event
at All Saints***



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Selections

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selections_pet_garden

On a musical note.....

the choir went on tour



In March 2020, preparations were well in hand for the choir's residential trip to Exeter to sing the services in the cathedral for a few days in August. Then Covid hit and put paid to our well-laid plans. With those dreadful days well behind us, the trip was rearranged for this August. The robes were washed and ironed, the ruffs were starched, music planned and rehearsed.

Finally, the day came. Led by Pulford school minibus, a convoy of cars headed down the motorway aiming for the choir school next door to the cathedral itself. We'll be honest - this accommodation is pretty basic, dormitories with not-very-large bunk beds, and school dinners, but even the choir adults seemed to cope.

Fortified by breakfast, we spent an hour rehearsing in the choir school each morning, before heading out for some fun, such as a visit to Exeter's medieval underground passages, designed to make maintenance of the town's water supply less disruptive than having to dig up the roads.

We also had a trip to a semi-automated dairy farm where the cows wander into the dairy when they feel they want to be milked. Robots manage the whole process. If the cow has given sufficient milk already she is gently persuaded to leave the barn and come back another time. The robots take the cows' temperatures, check that they don't have any infections, have drunk enough water, haven't walked too far today ... so cool.

The evenings were spent relaxing, playing games at the house, or (for adults) a trip to the pub. One evening we went ten pin bowling, and discovered just how competitive people can be!

Before services, we rehearsed in the cathedral for an hour so, getting used to the organ, the acoustics, and the feel of this amazing building. Sam (our former organ scholar) played brilliantly and was a very reliable source of confidence for the choir. Some treble parents stayed in the city and came to listen, while a few others travelled down towards the end of the trip to pick up their children and go on elsewhere.

Sunday was pretty exhausting, with both Choral Eucharist in the morning and Choral Evensong in the afternoon before returning late that evening to Leighton Buzzard.

These residential trips are great for bonding and for improving the choir's singing.

A very warm welcome to our new Head Chorister and Deputy Head Chorister whose identities were not public knowledge at the time of writing.

Paul Dickens

Calendar of Events

Creationtide 1st September – 4th October
Events all month, including the *Swishing Party*
September 24th 7pm £5 entry [See Pages 7 & 22]



1st September

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



4th September

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



7th September

Licensing of Preb. David MacGeoch by Bishop Alan All Saints 4pm

14th September

Bike n' Hike 9am – 5pm
All Saints and in churches
all around the diocese



15th September

Services as usual including All Age Communion All Saints 11.30am

20th September

Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm



9-24 September

Fairtrade fortnight



26th October

Eggington Quiz Night:

*For tickets and other details,
contact Angela 01525 210420 or Martine 07826 905009.*



FOCUS

on ...

Everyone's a Winner Holiday Club 2024



Following on from Covid-19, disruption in 2020 meant the Olympic Games took place in Tokyo 2021, handing over the Olympic flag to France. The world's athletes looked forward to competing in the games to be held in Paris in July 2024. This year's Holiday Club themed "Everyone's a Winner" saw All Saints Church become their very own version of Paris, complete with the Eiffel Tower and the Olympic flame lit up in the background. Here are a few pictures to give a flavour of the highlights ...





A week of Olympic fun & games, singing & story-telling



Each morning once the children had entered via the Euro Tunnel at the West door, the Olympic flame was lit up by chosen children from the groups: Little Liberties, Jumping Joeys, Phantastic Pharaohs, Perfect Parisians, and Groovy Greeks. Songs and actions were led by Siân and Lindsay, accompanied by the backing dancer band, "The Pringles", whilst Rev and his Olympic coach taught the children about Perseverance, Bullying, Friendship, Good news, Fairness and Wisdom. Billy and his Assistant Coach along with other cast members acted out Olympic events including Hurdles, Shotput, Boxing, Swimming and Musical Statues.





*Everyone
is indeed
a winner*



Special thanks for helping this year's Holiday Club to be a fun week must go to the many volunteers (too many to name individually) for their amazing help, but especially the theme song written by Ed Price, tune composed by Philip Stopford with backing track added by Paul Whittington, set designers Chez Pike, the Gudgeon and Otterway families, and a special thanks to Lindsay, Chief Co-ordinator and Boss!

Sally Kerr

Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Stuart Blofeld; Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

Where God is already at work ...

As you may know if you've followed our activities for a while, Church of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is outward-facing and we place a strong emphasis on welcome and hospitality as a way of sharing Jesus. On Sundays during the football season this includes providing free coffee and cake to the teams out on the field at Astral Park where we meet. Over the summer it's much quieter.

Recently those of us setting up on a Sunday morning arrived early to get everything ready and make the coffee, only to find that a group with two gazebos was already out on the grass in front of the community centre! It looked intriguing and very soon Neil, the leader of the group came to introduce himself.



Sundon RC (= Remote Controlled Cars) Meetups is a community group that started during the pandemic to bring people together and help improve mental health. Like CGS, they met outside as much as possible during lockdown. They have members all over the area and visit different venues each week, Astral Park being a favourite. It turns out that not all communities are as friendly as ours, but we got on very well and several of the Sundon RC members came in for a coffee or tea.

Chatting with Neil we found many things in common, including the strong belief that God is active in his world – whether or not we are a regular member of a church. Neil himself is involved in many activities to support his community. As church, we aim to spot where God is already at work and consider prayerfully how we can respond. The Sundon RC group will be back soon; we look forward to getting to know them better.

Meanwhile, at the time of writing, our summer holiday drop-in at Astral Park is in full swing on Wednesdays during August, providing a welcoming and free place for families and children to hang out. It's been great to see some of our regulars come along, as well as meeting new faces. The conversation has flowed, fuelled by coffee and cake!

Katharine Reedy

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Brian Speller: 210565; Tom Ware



Conversation is key to growing community ...

On 20th July, we had the second of our open Church cream teas this summer to welcome parishioners from around the town and those from our local community. There was a steady flow of people keen to choose from the variety of cakes including the traditional cream tea; jam before cream for my scone! The event raised £140 plus further donations made through our card machine which is very much needed towards the massive cost we face on fabric repairs. A big thank you to all those who baked cakes, helped set up, serve and clear away on the day.

Family life beyond our conversations over tea/coffee after our Parish Communion is an important part of our Christian fellowship as a community of faith. Events like cream teas provide the opportunity to socialise as church family and welcome visitors from the community in which we are placed. They allow us to share more about our lives outside of the time we share in worship and fellowship on a Sunday morning. They provide that added bonus to have those extended conversations, so we find out more about each other; they allow visitors to see the more informal life of our church family, outside of the formality of worship. This is particularly important when our village church only hosts Parish Communion on two Sundays a month.

Village life resonates amongst those parishioners who gather on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. That is precious time as we share in the Eucharist. Being fed spiritually is vital in our Christian journeys of faith as we spend the rest of the week nourished as Christ's disciples, sharing our secular lives with those we live and work with.

I am reminded of those comfortable words of Paul in his letter to the Christians at Phillipii. [Phil 2.5-7]: *'In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.'*

As a Christian community we may be consciously mindful that we carry a responsibility to live our lives in a way that bears witness to the truth of the Gospel message. It is really important that know we do so blamelessly as God's children - to reach the unchurched families that we minister amongst.

May God bless us at St. Nicholas as we seek to grow the Christian community amongst the homes and businesses of Hockliffe.

Geoff Marchant

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Julia Haviland 850380; Tina Thompson 378411



We welcomed Steve Marsh back from his sabbatical on 25th June and enjoyed tales of his retreats. This clearly is a time for our hard-working clergy to relax, reflect and renew their own relationship with God and this all showed in Steve's stories of his time away.

Our annual parish meeting was our first opportunity to enjoy Steve's return and it was an occasion when he was able to give thanks to Sandra Brewin for her 28 years as church warden. The congregation gave her an enormously heavy tawny owl nesting box, which caused the table to creak and groan under its weight! The box is made from a mixture of concrete and wood fibres and we will have to find a very strong tree in the churchyard on which to fix it!



The formal election of the church wardens had confirmed Julia Haviland continuing in post and Tina Thompson taking over from Sandra. James Cook continues his assisting role. The church is in good hands!

The annual Italia Day Lunch in memory of much missed Peter Albertella, was held in the village hall on 29th June and was a triumph for Jean Albertella and her team of volunteers. The hall was full to overflowing, the weather was just right, and the lunch was one of the best I can remember. Peter would have been proud! Guests came from both near and far and even included some from South Africa and South Australia, which says something about the Events Group's reputation!



A grand total of over £560 was most gratefully received and will go to the church fabric fund. Our thanks go to everyone who supported the occasion and especially to Jean and the Events Team.

Geoff Haviland

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeny

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861



Following Angela's mention of The Triangle in her July/August article I thought I would continue with my perspective. We moved to Eggington just over five years ago and our house is almost opposite St Michael's Church. It's known to most long-term residents as 'Joan's house'. Joan is now at rest in the churchyard after an amazing life lasting over 106 years, and still watching over her garden I think.

With my love of gardening, I soon became involved in the annual plant sale alongside Julie. Between us, and with the help of others, we supply the majority of the plants sold from our own gardens. It's a very sociable occasion attended by many villagers.

The idea of renovating The Triangle, which was in a sorry state, soon became a reality when Gordon and Geoff took on the task of clearing the bed. Help was at hand from Richard and his tractor to dig out massive tree roots. Funding was then agreed by the village council and Julie and I undertook buying and planting for the first season. It took quite a lot of maintenance during that first season as things established and we were a small team lugging watering cans!

Now in its third year, we are a group of six regulars, Julie, Josie, Trish, Suzie, Kerry and me. We usually go to weed and deadhead every couple of weeks with 4 or 5 of us there each time; it has become a lovely sociable enterprise. The group allows Julie and me to take the lead on buying, planting and deciding what is a weed and what stays. We have lots of laughs about naming plants and who is showing off. We were once referred to as 'The Triangle Fairies' on our community group and the name has stuck. It is a pleasure to be part of this team and to enhance one of the entrances to the village. Every time we are there, someone stops to say how lovely it looks; and once a Dutch HGV driver stopped to say he enjoys seeing it and how it changes every time he comes to make a delivery. We did enquire about tulips but no luck! What was sad and neglected is now beautiful.



Every year the planting becomes more established and due to continued funding we are able to add plants and bulbs to extend the seasons of interest.

We would welcome anyone who is interested in joining the group and with more members could consider planting other areas in the village.

Lorraine Hurst



Advance notice: Eggington Quiz Night - Saturday 26th October.

For tickets contact Angela 01525 210420 or Martine 07826 905009.



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Sponsored Bike 'n Hike
BEDS AND HERTS HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

Support our Bike 'n Hike team on 14 September

Please support the All Saints Team taking part in the sponsored Bike 'n Hike on 14 September. Half the sponsorship money we raise comes straight to All Saints, while the rest goes to the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust which gave over £160,000 last year in grants to help with repairs to churches in the two counties. All Saints has received very generous support in past years from the Trust. If anyone else would like to join in on the day, please speak to Katrina Grant. Our team will be visiting local churches en route.

All Saints will be open from 11am to with the Warburtons on duty to welcome Bikers and Hikers so please do pop in. You can sponsor us using the forms available in church or donate online via our team Just Giving page. This QR code will take you there.



Pictures from previous years to whet your appetites ...



Sponsored Bike 'n Hike
BEDS AND HERTS HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

Bike 'n Hike

Saturday 14 September 2024

9am to 5pm



For more information please make contact:

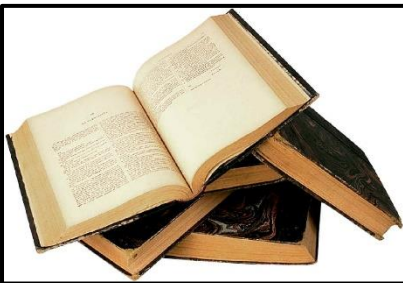


- ▶ Have fun visiting over 600 churches and chapels
- ▶ Raise funds for your local church or chapel
- ▶ Help save other churches in Beds and Herts



BEDS & HERTS
Historic Churches Trust

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Biblical Genres

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

This month:

***The Gospels ... God's story & our story
by Katharine Reedy***

"He was not the king they expected." So starts the book by Tom Wright, "Simply Jesus".

To understand our Christian faith, we have to engage with the person at the heart of it. The gospels are a set of four eye-witness accounts of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. The word "gospel" derives from the Anglo-Saxon "god-spell" meaning "good news" or "good story."

So, why are the gospels good news?

They are not just a set of stories about a man who lived and died in first-century Palestine, but a whole new and transformative way of viewing life. The gospels reveal God's plan to reconcile all people and all of creation to himself, establishing His kingdom on earth. God's new order was launched by Jesus on the day he rose from the dead.

Jesus does not do away with the Old Testament scriptures, but reinterprets them in the light of himself – seeing them through the lens of God's perfect love. He is not ever saying that violence, misogyny and oppression of the poor, all things we come across in the Old Testament, are OK. Quite the opposite: the headline message of the Old Testament is about social justice and caring for the poor (summed up by the prophet Micah). Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies and teachings and he quotes them extensively in his earthly ministry.

The gospels show God's faithfulness to his people and beyond that, to all people – but all linked back to the promise to Abraham. The story of Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac is illuminated through God sending his son Jesus to be sacrificed on the cross. Moses and the people of Israel spending forty years in the desert is referenced when Jesus spends forty days in the desert being tempted by the devil.

The four gospels are distinctive, yet also consistent with each other. These slightly varying eyewitness accounts provide compelling evidence of Jesus's life and death. Matthew, Mark and Luke have broadly similar roots; John's gospel is different.

- Matthew is the most 'Jewish' of the gospels, presenting Jesus's genealogy from Abraham to Joseph husband of Mary. Matthew highlights how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies and is also Emmanuel, "God with us".

- Mark's gospel is the shortest but the most action-packed. The word "Immediately!" crops up frequently. The question of Jesus's identity ("who do you say I am?") is a thread throughout, shown through Jesus's deeds more than his teaching.

- Luke may have been a doctor or an artist or both, and his gospel takes a more scholarly approach. He is a polished story-teller, who encourages the reader to immerse themselves in the narrative (for example, imagine yourself walking with Jesus along the road to Emmaus). Prominent in Luke's gospel are women, and the Holy Spirit.

- John's gospel has a visionary quality: Tom Wright observes that John is writing a new Genesis and a new Exodus, commenting that "John has put into the first paragraph of his book what the others [i.e. Matthew, Mark and Luke] want us to work out step by step." (*Tom Wright, The Bible for Everyone, p.1029*) John's gospel contains much teaching, including the 'I am' sayings of Jesus.

Jesus's upside-down kingdom is one where the last will be first and the first will be last. Everyone is invited to the table, and Jesus notably goes to people on the margins of society who would have been considered outsiders. Jesus had harsh words for those who put burdens on people regarding religious observance.

The message of the gospels is wonderful news for those who struggle in this world, as summed up in the Beatitudes. The healings and miracles of Jesus demonstrate the reality of his words, pointing to God's promised kingdom with life to the full. Jesus's own death and resurrection are foreshadowed when he raises Jairus's daughter and Lazarus from the dead. Jesus's disciples are the means by which God's kingdom is to be accomplished – a risky strategy if ever there was one!

Throughout all four gospels, the question of Jesus's identity and how exactly he will bring God's kingdom is always present. The early disciples failed to grasp who he was, and we can be the same. The gospel stories invite us to make our own personal and collective response to Jesus. When we encounter the living Jesus he is not static on the page, but interacting with us, challenging us and inviting us to follow him wherever he might take us, modelling our lives on his example and making new disciples. As we engage with the good news of Jesus, we allow God's amazing story to transform our own lives, and we become part of God's story of hope.

A question to consider as you read the gospels: who is Jesus to you? And your church?

Katharine Reedy



Why count churchyard plants?



In June during the “Great Big Green Week”, we were asked to do a “Nature Count” for “Caring for God’s Acre”. The aim of this charity is to identify the quality of burial grounds and to detect any changes in biodiversity caused by climate change.

We attempted to count plants in most of the churchyard excluding the woodland and the boundary wall area south of the church. We recorded 86 species of flowering plants including some grasses, shrubs and trees.



So our churchyard is certainly of a rich quality and the charity has been interested in it for several years. It contains grassland (managed and uncut), flower meadows, hedgerows and woodland. Plants can be used to distinguish between different types of soil such as neutral, acid and calcium-rich. They can also be used as “a canary in the mine” to detect dangers to the environment. Most of the plants in our churchyard grow on neutral or acidic soils with the exception of a beautiful orchid, a pyramidal orchid, *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, near the North Door. This is typical of plants on calcium-rich soil which may have resulted from the historic dumping by stone masons.

Plants are often overlooked but without them there would be nothing to eat, no animals or oxygen to breathe. We are privileged to have a beautiful churchyard, an island of biodiversity in an urban environment. So we have an urgent duty to “Care for God’s acre”.

Margaret and Brian Bainbridge

*** **

Creationtide



The Season of Creation is the period in the annual church calendar, from 1st September to 4th October, dedicated to God as Creator and Sustainer of all life.

We are celebrating this at All Saints with the Swishing Party event and with a display about our Eco Church work and the nature and biodiversity in our lovely churchyard.

Season of Creation is a worldwide ecumenical movement and this year’s theme is the Firstfruits of Hope – inspired by St Paul’s letter to the Romans. It is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration and commitment together joining our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family in prayer and action for our common home.

Katrina Grant



REPAIR CAFE LB 2024 DATES

Runs from 10.30-13.30

Royal British Legion,
Bossard Hall, West St,
Leighton Buzzard

- March 23rd
- April 27th
- May 25th
- June 22nd
- July 27th
- September 28th
- October 26th
- November 23rd
- Free to attend
- Book online or just turn up
- Donations welcome
- Bring 1 portable item
- Cake & refreshments available
- To volunteer let us know!



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