

# + STOMP

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THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL  
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

£1

Cover Picture

The supper at Emmaus

*Roy de Maistre (1894-1968).*

*The Methodist Collection of Modern Art.*

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The Journey to Emmaus is such a profound and moving narrative from the Gospel of Luke (Luke 24:13-35). It describes the encounter of two disciples with the resurrected Jesus as they walk from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. What makes this story so compelling is its layers of meaning—it's about recognition, faith, and the transformative power of Christ's presence.

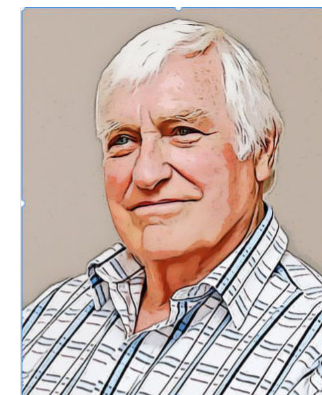
The disciples, initially unaware that their companion is Jesus, express their confusion and grief over His crucifixion. Jesus listens to their doubts and then begins to interpret the Scriptures, showing how the events align with prophecy. It's only later, during a shared meal when Jesus breaks bread, that they finally recognise him. This moment of realisation is often seen as a reflection of how Jesus reveals himself in the Eucharist and in moments of fellowship.

The story also carries a universal message of hope. It's a reminder that in moments of despair or confusion, Christ walks alongside us, even if we don't immediately recognise him. It's about being open to his presence and finding faith through shared experiences and Scripture.

*Via Copilot*

## FROM THE EDITOR

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### A Ladybird with me in the Sun

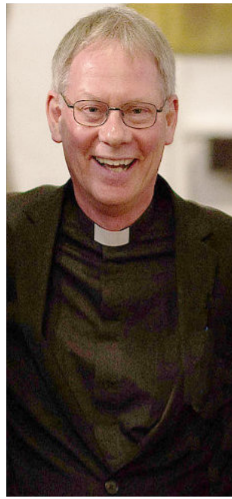
Am In the sun at the front of our house on Ash Wednesday, seated with a glass of Rosé in hand. Warmth and playful sun at last after a gruelling Winter play on my aging bones and seeming to warm my brain and soul. I feel a resurgence of life, and reflect understandingly on those especially in Scandinavia who worshipped their sun god, latter day.

Now, I spot a ladybird on the paving in front of me and am fixated and mesmerised for the next quarter of an hour, I follow every movement, as the beautiful insect moves widely away from me, almost in a figure of eight and then returns. It never stops and I wonder what is it doing, where has it come from, where is it going, is it searching for something? It trundles purposelessly, or not, over paving, moss and cracks. Finally, to the left of my chair it stops at, presumably to its mind, quite an obstacle, a mound of moss brought down from the roof by a magpie searching for bits to eat, no doubt. In the infiniteness of this quarter of an hour of movement in its life, its time with the moss is surprising.

It moves away but I'm still fixated as to where it will go next. Then, in a flash, it takes off winging away and disappearing from my life for ever. I'm left with no answers but just a sense of wonder of God's gift, the myriads and myriads of life before us waiting to be seen and loved for their being.

# From Canon John

*Pew removal work at St Mary's to open up the space to more flexible use by church and community.*



A few years ago when we were looking to install a kitchen and toilet in St Mary's (now regularly in use and greatly valued), the Parochial Church Council (PCC) made a trip to the church at Standon, near Bishop's Stortford, where we saw a kitchen that had been put in, under the guidance of our own church architects, and the way they had utilised one of the aisles in their church for various purposes including a café set up.

Up until that point some members of the PCC, notably Roger Sygrave, Chairman of the Fabric Committee, had been against removing any pews from the church even to enhance the seating areas or the possibilities for new display areas at some of our events. This visit was important however, because it showed us what could be done and how it might be possible to repurpose parts of the church to open them up for use in a different way.

Roger was pleased by what he saw at Standon and became a strong supporter for us to emulate what we had experienced. This made a great difference as, in many ways, he was a custodian of the history of St Mary's and had been very keen on retaining the pews so his change of outlook was central to us making new decisions.

So we looked at ways to remove the pews in the north aisle and also to give better access to the front of church so that we could have an area where wheelchairs, children and exhibition/festival visitors would be able to go around the whole church without having to reverse back down the middle aisle.

Although we had a vision for change we didn't have any funds at this point until Jenny Bowes was generous enough to support the project and that brought it within our reach.

As is often the case with conceiving a project within a grade one listed building, the ideas and vision are very hard to implement. Once the architect had drawn up the appropriate plans we had to get the approval of the diocese and the heritage organisations. The project then had to be costed and tenders sought from builders.

From the time of initially thinking of these things until their delivery a few years were to pass and

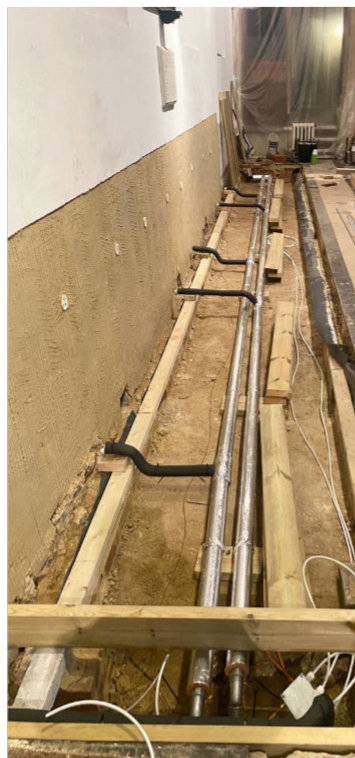


the cost of the project has gone up greatly, but the PCC was convinced that this project would allow us to continue our journey to keep St Mary's back in the midst of the community making it more accessible for the regular congregation, for visitors and for local businesses.

At the time of writing we are in the midst of the project and it is probably too early to draw many conclusions about how our vision will be finally realised and if it will work,

However a variety of people have already expressed themselves happy that new areas will be available at events throughout the year. These include the Market, Beer Festival and Art in the Nave. Amazingly, I've also seen three sets of wedding couples in the church whilst the building work has been going on and all of them have embraced the opportunities that the new space will bring but in a variety of different ways.

It is of course poignant that as this project drew to a close we learnt of the death of Roger and this causes me to reflect on the way he was willing to change his mind and come round to a different point of view based not only on experience but on a conviction that the building he loved should continue to evolve to serve a changing community. It is also fitting after the sad news of Roger's death that his service is now being planned to be one of the first in the newly adapted church that he loved so well.



# Faith in Later Life

## Could older people hold the key to church growth?

New research is highlighting the wide ranges of activities that churches are offering to older people – and the growing opportunities to present the Christian gospel.

These include lunch clubs, exercise sessions, singing classes, tea and coffee times, outings and a broad range of social activities open to the community. Some churches offered a 'holiday at home' with special events organised, and one provided a monthly chiropodist's visit.

Many churches are visiting care homes and holding services in their lounges. One respondent recalled "It was so uplifting to see the joy on their faces. Many with severe dementia were recalling words long forgotten and joining in."

Community work by the church goes hand in hand with reaching out with the gospel. The research showed that 83 per cent of those delivering social activities for older people are also running worship services, Bible study groups and groups to explore faith. A quarter of those who responded had seen people come to faith in the last year, and half had seen people grow in their interest in faith.

Faith in Later Life is a charity "dedicated to inspiring and equipping Christians to reach, serve and empower older people everywhere, through the local church."

The research highlights the important role of ministry to older people at a time when many churches are focussing on 'growing younger' – and perhaps overlooking increasing numbers of older people in our communities. Many respondents felt that ministry with seniors was marginalised or neglected within their church.

Alexandra Drew, chief executive officer of Faith in Later Life comments "The impact on the wider church of mission to older people is significant. More than half of those responding said their work is leading to greater recognition of older people, more age-inclusivity and greater awareness of older people's spiritual needs."

# God in The Arts

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## **'My First Sermon' by John Everett Millais**

There is a story of two men talking about their new vicar. One says to the other, "This new one's not a patch on the old vicar. With the old one preaching I was asleep in five minutes. With the new one it takes all of ten." Some churches in times past employed 'sluggard-walkers' who had long rods and walked down the aisles, ready to wake up the faithful if they had nodded off during the sermon.

Sluggard-walkers are not needed for this month's first painting, *My First Sermon* by John Everett Millais. It hangs in the Guildhall Art Gallery in London, which houses the art collection of our capital city. The Gallery is built on the site of an amphitheatre and was only completed in 1999, having replaced a building that was destroyed in the blitz of 1941. It has over 4,000 works, many of them from the Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite period. Among them is this painting by Millais which depicts Effie, his 5-year-old daughter sitting in Kingston Church. She is dressed properly and sensibly for the occasion with feathered hat, muff and a cloak of vivid red. Her mother's prayer book and gloves are by her side. Effie is listening with great concentration.

When the painting was exhibited in 1863, it was a great success. In the following year Millais produced *My Second Sermon* – a very different occasion, for Effie has now fallen asleep with her hat by her side. Millais was often criticised for his sentimental portraits of children as in *Cherry Ripe* and *Bubbles*. But in 1864 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Charles Longley, praised this second painting for reminding us of 'the evil of lengthy sermons and drowsy discourses.'

As we look at Effie alert one Sunday, asleep the next, we can smile. But we might also ask how we respond to the Word that comes to us through the medium of words in the weekly sermon.



*My First Sermon* (L)  
and (below) *My  
Second sermon*  
*Wikimedia Commons*

The preacher has the daunting task of using this everyday coinage of words to draw us into that mysterious, life-giving realm of the Word, Jesus. The words spoken must make a straight path for the Lord to reach each human heart.

The two paintings of Millais depict the reality and fragility of this endeavour. Sometimes our attention is engaged; at others, drowsiness closes our eyes and even our hearts to the good news of salvation. On occasions the sermon sows seeds, which can bear fruit. At other times, all kinds of factors mitigate against the sermon's success. Let us pray that as listener or as preacher, we may be aware of the dynamic power of the Word, which, as Karl Rahner wrote, calls us 'out of the little house of our homely, close-hugged truths into the strangeness of the mystery of God that is our real home.'



# How do we find the next Archbishop of Canterbury?

It is not a simple process. And now Stephen Knott, The Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments, has written to members of General Synod to confirm expected timings for the process of nominating the next Archbishop of Canterbury.

He writes: "The Canterbury Diocese 'Vacancy in See' process commenced in December and, late last year, it was announced from Downing Street that the Prime Minister had appointed Lord (Jonathan) Evans of Weardale to chair the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC). My colleagues and I are supporting Lord Evans, working with him on the detailed planning.

During February and March, Jonathan Hellewell (the Prime Minister's Appointments Secretary) and I will undertake an extensive consultation exercise and, as part of this consultation, it will be possible for you to contribute.

"The themes that emerge through this consultation will then sit alongside the 'Statement of Needs' produced by the Diocese of Canterbury, as well as other information provided by the National Church and Anglican Communion, in informing the CNC of the needs of the mission of the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion.

"It is expected that the full membership of the Commission will be known by mid-March, by which time the names of the three individuals elected from the Diocese of Canterbury's Vacancy in See Committee, the outcome of the election of the episcopal member(s), the Central Members and the Anglican Communion representatives will be announced.



*Canterbury Cathedral*

The election process for the episcopal membership will be overseen by the Central Secretariat and further information on this will be circulated in the next weeks.

"Once the Diocese of Canterbury's Vacancy in See process has concluded, the extensive consultation exercise has been completed, and the full membership of the CNC is known, the Commission will convene for its first meeting in May, followed by two further meetings – one in July and one in September.

"Through these meetings, the Commission will agree the 'Role Profile' and 'Person Specification' for the next Archbishop, as well as longlist, shortlist and interview potential candidates.

"While the discernment of the Crown Nominations Commission is necessarily confidential, we are committed to sharing relevant updates and information whenever available.

To provide clarity on the timeline and sequence of events concerning the appointment and CNC process, there is a dedicated page on the C of E website:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/governance/archbishops/appointing-new-archbishop-canterbury>

# Editor's Interview

## Dr Alan Younger

Alan was born on 5 May 1935 at Barnehurst near Bexley Heath, the only child of Harold and Gladys. His Dad was too old to be called up and anyway was in a reserved occupation with Vickers Armstrong, working particularly for the Admiralty. Like many of us of his age, Alan has vivid memories of the War. The family left Barnehurst for Staines a few days before the house next door was destroyed by a bomb. Arriving there, nights would be spent in the Anderson shelter as their house next to a main railway line, was subject of bombing attacks. His Cub hall and a row of cottages were destroyed in a raid. He remembers well the doodle bugs, one great V2 explosion nearby, and the commentary of a Warden on the dog fights going on in the sky above.

With peace there was the time for the serious schooling. From his junior school he gained a scholarship at Hampton Grammar School, from which he left in 1953, with 8 'O' and 4 'A' Levels, to take up his place at Birmingham University to study Metallurgy. He graduated in 1956 with a Upper Second Class Honours in Industrial Metallurgy and he continued there to be awarded in 1959 his PhD on the Warm Working of Steel. This was a momentous time for him, meeting Mary at a University dance in December 1956, getting engaged in 1958 and marrying in 1959. Mary had been a student nurse becoming a staff nurse at the Birmingham General Hospital, followed by work at the Women's Hospital in Moseley. This was to be the start of a long and very happy marriage which lasted for 62 years until Mary passed away in October 2021.

I see all of this as a first phase in Alan's story and we come to the second phase when he is aged 24. In the Autumn of 1959 he and Mary moved southwards to a new house in Aylesbury, as now he had a research job with Richard Thomas and Baldwin. The focus of the job was processing 50Kg cast ingots into thin sheet.

An interesting feature were the trips into the Welsh valleys and the Black Country to ancient steel plants.

The next phase came two years later when he became a research Fellow in the Department of Materials in Cranfield College of Aeronautics, a post funded by the USA army. Flying in June 1963 to Pittsburgh in a US plane, to present a paper at the International Carbon Conference he was given the temporary rank of Lt Colonel! This was followed by a tour of carbon laboratories in the USA. On return home he was promoted to be a Senior Research Fellow, with the role of overseeing and acquiring contracts. This phase was to last through to 1969 and was to be highly productive both professionally and family-wise, baby Mark having been born in 1960, Timothy joined him in 1963 and Louisa in 1965.



Indeed in 1965 we come to the next phase of Alan's career, now aged 30, becoming an emergency part-time metallurgy tutor at Watford College then being appointed there to a post as Senior Lecturer. This was the start of the final phase which was to last for three decades. In 1969 he transferred to Hatfield Polytechnic to be a Senior Lecturer, and later was promoted to be a Principal Lecturer following a significant contribution as a lecturer, tutor and as a contractor for the Science Research Council. He was involved with major initiatives as time went by. Three examples stand out. There was the setting up an association of small, local manufacturing companies to enable these companies to participate in a Teaching Company programme for highly qualified engineering and science graduates. Linked with this Alan spotted that a large number of female applicants were not being recruited and through an EEC grant he set up the successful Manufacturing for Women programme.

# A STORY FROM IONA

By now, the Polytechnic had become the University of Hertfordshire and Alan was appointed as Reader in Industrial Engineering. This was followed by an initiative to help small firms in the face of the requirements of quality control and quality assurance, in the context of BS 5750 and related later developments. Polyfield Services Ltd was set up as a trust, which at one time had 16 professional staff and the Department of Trade support and EEC technology transfer contracts. Alan for part of his time was Managing Director and when he retired from the University in 1992 he carried on part time as MD for four years.

Find a busy person and give him or her more to do, or does a busy person find more to do to make a further contribution to society? Anyway, Alan of course is well known for his long commitment to St Mary's Church and our local society. He has served as Warden for St Mary's for four years, and Parish Warden for five years and then Parish Treasurer for several years. He was Diocesan and Deanery rep from time to time. In the 80s and 90s first he was a governor of Highfield School and then of Astley Cooper School, being chairman there for four years. In 1998 Canon Peter Cotton asked him to take on the chairmanship of St Mary's House in George Street which he did for the next 20 years, retiring from that at the age of 83.

Asked about influences on his spiritual belief Alan talked about his time at university, and of the major influence of the Rector of Birmingham Canon Brian Green and his brilliant sermons, listened to by many hundreds of people each Sunday, this followed by the harangues from soap boxes in the Bull Ring as people left churches. This reminded me of the influence on me of Mervyn Stockwood in Cambridge at the same time of my life. It has been a pleasure and privilege to learn about Alan's story and much more could have been written but STOMP has a 1000 - word limit rule on these interview reports and I have reached 1030.

GG 07/03/2025



*Photo: Andrew Darby*

On Iona, in the early days of the Iona Community, it was decided to commission a well-known glassmaker to make six glass communion cups for use in the Abbey. The craftsman was asked to engrave a suitable biblical text on each of the cups: 'This is the blood of the new covenant', 'This do in remembrance of me', and so on. Now this craftsman, as it happened, was not a churchman, although he was sympathetic to 'Christianity' and when he received the commission he made one request: Could he choose one of the texts to engrave on the cups? His request was granted.

When the cups were delivered the folk on Iona were intrigued to discover that the text he had chosen was from the arrest of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, when Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. And the text that he had engraved on the cup was Jesus's question to Judas: 'Friend, wherefore art thou come?'

*©John Harvey from 'Eggs & Ashes' published by Wild Goose Publications, Iona Community*

# God in The Sciences

*This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.*



## The Love of Wisdom of Natural Things

Some time ago a scientist was invited to speak at the Dewsbury Women's Institute. He spoke about his research on polymers, hoping that the women of this Yorkshire mill town would connect with his desire to develop new fibres.

One person in particular, a woman called Betty who had worked in a mill since the age of 15, listened as if her life depended on it, and peppered him with questions afterwards. She had always been interested in how things work, but until that day had not found anyone to answer her questions. Whenever she had asked about the processes that they were using in the mill, she was just told to get on with her job.

From the outside, science can seem a closed speciality, hemmed in by intimidating jargon. When McLeish described science as 'the love of wisdom of natural things', however, he realised he was opening a door.

He was moved to see that Betty was not the only person who shed a tear when her questions were finally taken seriously, confirming that her enquiring mind was indeed probing in the right direction – only 50 years too late.

Hearing about people like Betty reminds me that science is a very natural activity for anyone to be involved in. McLeish is convinced that there is a future in 'science therapy'. In his book *Faith and Wisdom in Science*, where this story appears, he asks the question "If a reintroduction to the activity of representing both inner and outer worlds in paint, music and drama can help to heal minds, what hope might there be for a participation in a gentle and contemplative science in restoring a broken or misunderstood relationship with the physical world?"

This story inspired me to run a number of hands-on science activities with adult audiences in churches. I have extracted DNA from strawberries with a midweek group for older people, organised hands-on exhibits to liven up lecture or discussion events, and even had groups extracting DNA from their own cheek cells.

Every time I lead activities like these, I find that grown-ups are grateful for the opportunity to have a go at science themselves. I love helping church-based groups, in particular, to reconnect with science and celebrate what they find. Science is not just for children and professionals – it is for everyone to enjoy and explore the world God made.



# News from The Langa Trust

St Mary's Church, Old Town, Hemel Hempstead

Friday 30th May 2025

## SPRING CONCERT

featuring the brilliant Ukrainian pianist

### OKSANA HERMANCHUK

Music medley supported by special guests  
in support of UK Langa Township Pre-School Trust

Doors open 7.00pm (Pay Bar) Performance 7.30pm  
Ticket £10 in advance, £12 on the door

I am pleased to bring you the news that Oksana Hermanchuk will play for us again at St Mary's Church in Hemel Hempstead, on this occasion to support the work of our charity for pre-school children in Langa Township, Cape Town. She will be supported by special guests including Peter Lennon guitar and Revd Ricky Simpson-Gray on bass. The pay bar opens at 7pm, and set one of the concert, featuring Oksana playing classical and contemporary music, is circa 7.30pm. The second set, after the bar interval will feature all the performers and there will be a touch of South Africa within this set.

Tickets, £10 each, are available from me ordering by e-mail or by phoning on 07561 450633. Tickets bought at the door on the concert evening will be £12. Alternatively you can purchase tickets through Eventbrite at a cost of £10 plus the Eventbrite's charge of £1.55.

Gordon



## GOOD NEWS

LTPT supports Nomonde Pre-School in every way possible and this links with five other pre-schools in Langa's Ward 52. But the trustees are concerned about the need systematically to reach out to help many more children and have decided that this can be achieved through LTPT Nomonde and the Langa Early Child Development Forum in the quarterly provision of Nutrient Boxes to the least well-off members of the Forum.

Last January these boxes were provided to support help 1,000 children. The food was a boon and LTPT trustees now intend to provide these boxes quarterly starting this April for a two year trial period.

**There is considerable disappointment with political decisions in the USA and the UK affecting aid for developing countries. LTPT at least, with its little bit of soft power for one small area in this huge globe, will not give up and indeed we intend to try to do better.**



# St Mary's House - A Brief History

St Mary's House situated at 9 George Street in the Hemel Old Town is a distinguished old house that has had connections with St Mary's Church over many years, firstly known as Waverley and for the past forty seven years as St Mary's House. The notes below give a short history of the property and its inhabitants.

## *'The Waverley Years.'*

The house was built around 1850/60 in the Bellfield where presumably St Mary's bells had earlier been cast. The building was a substantial detached house with three floors and a basement. It had a stable at the rear facing St Mary's Road. The gardens were quite large extending beyond the present boundary to what was then a small alley leading to the Quaker Meeting House. The old school building, which still stands opposite, was also built at that time

The initial occupants were the Misses Helen and Ann Varney. They were wealthy spinsters who were noted benefactors to the church. They paid £3000 for the building in 1898 of the large St Mary's Hall which stood with its associated caretaker's house in George Street between Heather Way and Fig Tree Hill until its demolition in 1978. They also financed the rebuilding of the vestries at St Mary's Church and the building of All Saints Church in Piccotts End as a Chapel of Ease to St Marys. This church was closed in the 1960's with the organ going to the new St Pauls at Highfield. When sold in the 1970's the proceeds were used to help pay for the Church of the Resurrection at Grovehill. Another of their good works was the building of a laundry adjacent to their stables for the employment of fallen women. Around 1890 the Varney sisters moved to Queen St (now Queensway) and the house was occupied by the White family who had had a drapers business in the

High St. They were followed at the turn of the century by Mr Robert Smith who was a surgeon at the hospital.

In 1909 the house became the temporary vicarage of St Mary's Church and was occupied by the Rev. Lawrence Gee and his wife. Later it was occupied by the solicitor Walter Grover and then in September 1917 purchased by the Lawrence family.

Thomas Robert Lawrence was a London businessman who moved with his wife Edith and son Val and two daughters Edith and Florence to the rural peace of Waverly House. The house came into its own as a centre of gracious living and good husbandry amid spacious lawns and gardens cultivated to give an abundance of flowers fruit and vegetables. A horse and trap was kept in the stables and there were 11 beehives. Black and white grapes were grown in a vinery built for the Grovers and it was customary for neighbours to bring their precious plants for safe keeping in there for the winter.

Thomas Lawrence died in 1938 and was survived by his wife until 1961 at age of 99. Their elder daughter Edith stayed on while the younger Florence was away teaching until she retired as a headmistress in Stevenage in 1956. In 1963 the two ladies decided to move, breaking the long association of 46 years between the house and the Lawrence family.

The house was sold to the Commission for the New Towns and remained empty for a while. It was then leased to the Salvation Army as a hostel for Young Men. The resident wardens were Salvation Army Officers, Richard and Valerie Hope, with their family. During that time the stables became a games room and it was there that a group that became known as the Barn Fellowship, led by Geoff Bone, began meeting on a Sunday Evening. The group remained active around Hemel for some years. Lack of support and maintenance resulted in a further deterioration in the property. Finally, on 14th March 1978 it was bought to become an Abbeyfield House.



### *'The Abbeyfield Years'*

Abbeyfield is an idea that began in 1955 when a retired Guards Officer, Richard Carr-Gomm, became a home help in Bermondsey because he was so appalled by the number of lonely old people trying to cope on their own in Abbeyfield Street. He persuaded five of them to move into one house and paid the fittest of them a small salary to look after the others. By 1958 seven houses had been opened in Bermondsey and another in Macclesfield. By 1978 there were over 730 houses in 450 towns.

The Hemel Hempstead Society began in 1969 when the Rotary Club decided to 'sponsor' a house. They bought Sibley's Orchard in Leverstock Green with a mortgage from the council and set up a home for nine people that still operates today. The same group, largely Rotarians, searched for a second home and found 9 George Street. The house was redesigned by the local Architect, William Johnson, to provide ten bed-sitting rooms in the house and a new single storey wing attached to the north side of the house. The stables were converted into two small bungalows and a two storey building with two flats built adjacent to the stables and house. The second floor of the house was made into a housekeeper's flat.

Under the instigation of the then Rector of Hemel Hempstead, Revd Keith Arnold, who was Chairman of the National Abbeyfield Committee, St Mary's Church congregation were persuaded to provide the House Committee to oversee the running of the House. The first Chairman of the House Committee was Ken Wyatt, with others taking on designated duties like admissions, building maintenance, gardens etc. At that time most residents were in the early seventies and many were able to attend St Mary's services regularly. When they were unable to come an NSM usually went to give communion **after** the 9.30 service. Some of the initial residents remained in the house for twenty years! After Ken Wyatt's resignation due to ill health Miss Ann Rice who had just retired from being the Matron of West Herts Hospital took over. When she moved away in 1990 Alan Meadowcroft took over the chairmanship. All these people were from the regular congregation.

By the mid-nineties residents expectations had risen and a major project was undertaken to provide en-suite facilities into all bed sitting rooms. By the time I took over as Chairman in 1998 the average age and frailty of the residents had increased so it became difficult to use the first floor.

As the housekeeper's flat failed current standards we changed to non- resident House Managers and let the first floor to a suitable tenant. In 2005 a large conservatory was added. At the same time the roof was replaced, and the lounge modified. In 2005 a platform lift was introduced to serve the first floor and two two-room units were created there. The house now has a total of five en-suite bed-sitting rooms and seven two room units available for residents.

I retired as chairman of the house committee in 2014 and since there was no volunteer coming forward from St Mary's the link was lost. However, two of our congregation are now resident there.

*Alan Younger*  
*House Committee Chairman 1998-2014*



# *A Vist from the Bishop*

St Paul's Patronal Festival 19<sup>th</sup> January 2025

## **I am - we are**

This was a very special day early in the evening for our church, the patronal festival being presided over by the Bishop of Hertford The Right Revd Dr Jane Mainwaring and Canon John Williams. The Rev.d Luke Geoghegan gave the intercessions and the readings were by Julie Pollard and Jane Lynskey. We greatly appreciated the presence of Janette Hutchinson on the organ accompanying the hymns, as she has been doing in our church for the RC Ordinariate, on Sunday mornings over the last two years.

The theme of the sermon by Bishop Jane was, 'who do you think that I am?', the question posed by Jesus Christ to his disciples. Unfolded for us during the sermon was the gradual revelation of the identity of Jesus as the Son of God. This was not to be the case of Saul of Tarsus who faced abrupt transformation on the road to Damascus when he met Jesus. Up to then his social media profile might have included Pharisee, top hunter of Christians, not afraid to use violence, a high flyer in upholding the traditions of Judaism. His identity was such that he was greatly feared. Now, meeting Jesus Christ he was to find not the identity he had assumed for himself and had been given by others, but the real identity within himself, which later he described to Christians in Galatia in this way, 'But God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles'.



God through his love and grace had called him despite the evil he had been doing. Now Paul converted and with a new identity understood that the identity of others of all backgrounds, was to be found in God as children of God.

'Do we have that same confidence, Bishop Jane asked? Do we know deep down our identity in God? And how much do we let the identity the world or the identity that we put on ourselves, overshadow our identity in God?' She herself might be given many labels but if all that is stripped away who is she really and what is her true and everlasting identity? She knows that she is what God says she is, a child of God.

So now to us gathered in St Paul's Church in honour of St Paul, Bishop Jane asks 'do we have the same confidence as Paul in deciding that our identity is to be found in whom God says we are – may we know also that we are children of God'.

The Bishop's 'Amen' was followed by a profound murmured 'Amen' from the congregation. So be it! The congregation of 35 included representatives of all of the churches in the Hemel Hempstead Team Parish. Most people stayed on afterwards for the finger buffet and bar, and Bishop Jane, Canon John and Revd Luke happily circulated among us for a chat.

*Gordon Gaddes 20 January 2025*



### Good Friday

I was standing in line at the bank when there was a commotion at the counter. A woman, very distressed, was exclaiming, "Where will I put my money?! I have all my money and my mortgage here!! What will happen to my mortgage?! You can't do this to us!"

It turned out that she had misunderstood a small sign on the counter. The sign read:  
WE WILL BE CLOSED ON GOOD FRIDAY.

### Joseph's tomb

*Pontius Pilate:* "Joseph, I really don't understand you. You're one of the richest men in the region, and you've just spent a fortune on that new tomb for you and your family – and now you want to suddenly give it to this man Jesus?"

*Joseph:* "Well it's just for the weekend."

### Letter to God

A Sunday School teacher invited her children to write a letter to God. They were to bring their letter back the following Sunday. One little boy wrote, "Dear God, we had a good time at church today. Wish You could have been there."

### Twitter – X

A man walked into a church and approached the minister. "I need help. I think I'm addicted to Twitter-X." The minister looked at him, and said gently, "I'm so sorry, I don't follow you."

### Why Easter

A Sunday School teacher had been explaining why Easter should matter to us, and wanted to make sure her group understood. So she asked, "Can anyone tell me what you must do before you can obtain forgiveness of sin?"

There was a short pause and then, from the back of the room, a small boy spoke up. "Sin?"



*We're looking for something to help us survive our church's Winter services*

### Mr Bones

The orthopaedic surgeon I work for was moving to a new office, and we, his staff, were helping transport many of the items. I sat the display skeleton in the front of my car, his boney arm across the back of my seat. I hadn't considered the drive across town. At one traffic light, the stares of the people in the car beside me became obvious, and I looked across and called, "I'm delivering him to my doctor's office."

The other driver leaned out of his window. "I hate to tell you, lady," he said, "but I think it's too late!"

### What can I eat for Easter?

Can't eat beef.....mad cow.  
Can't eat chicken..... bird flu.  
Can't eat eggs..... Salmonella.  
Can't eat pork.....fears that bird flu will infect pigs.  
Can't eat fish..... heavy metals in the waters.  
Can't eat fruits and veggies..... insecticides and herbicides.  
Can't eat potatoes, pasta, bread, rice.....nasty carbs.  
Hmmmmmmmm! I believe that leaves.....chocolate.

### The taxi

The passenger tapped the cab driver on the shoulder to ask him something. The driver screamed, lost control of the car, nearly hit a bus, went up on the pavement, and stopped inches from a shop window. For a second everything went quiet in the cab, then the driver said, "Look mate, don't ever do that again. You scared me half to death!"

The passenger apologised and said he hadn't realised that a little tap would scare him so much. The driver replied, "You're right. I'm sorry. Really, it's not your fault. Today is my first day as a cab driver. I've been driving a hearse for 25 years."



*It's worth getting to church an hour early to grab a pew by the electric socket*

## Roger Sygrave RIP

I am sorry to have to inform you that Roger Sygrave - a member of our PCC and Chairman of St Mary's Fabric Committee - died peacefully at Watford General Hospital on Thursday evening, 5<sup>th</sup> April.

May he Rest in Peace.

Please pray for Lynne and the family at this difficult time.

Roger was a very special member of our church family, a former Churchwarden and deputy who had a great love of church history and architecture amongst many other talents.

I am sorry to have to bring you this sad news.

There will be a fuller appreciation of Roger's life in our next issue

John

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