

The Magazine

Of Hall Green United Community Church



March 2026
Issue 55

From Barbara Perks

Pre internet chat room using
An old version of windows...



Notices from Elaine

**Words found in the Daily Watchwords
and sent by Linda**

God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible
alone, but in the trees, flowers, clouds and
stars *Martin Luther*

Resentment is like drinking poison and
then hoping it will kill your enemies
Nelson Mandela

If God is asking you to do something,
He's also promising to go with you.
Amanda Stevens

Anything under God's control, is never
out of control. *Charles Swindoll*

The church is a hospital for sinners, and
not a museum for saints. *Vance Havner*



We are all travellers in the
wilderness of the World.
One of the best that we can find
in our travels is an honest friend.

Robert Louis Stevenson.
Thanks to Edna White.

The 3 S's

We love eating sats, salt and sugar
When we see them they're hard to resist,
But extra sugar should go
And the others kept low,
And soon you'll find they're not missed!



REALLY?



In the day to day routine of life
I take my friends for granted
I expect them too be good to me
Even when I'm in a miserable
mood.

But when I'm ill I start to think
How precious are my friends
How important they are to me.

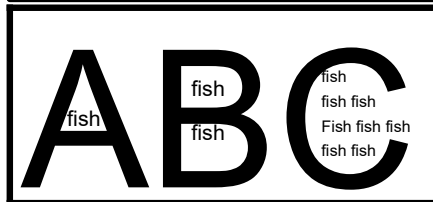
Lord thank you for my friends
Bless each one of them today
Wherever they are.

And thank you for Your Friendship
Thank you for the priceless treasure
Of your healing presence. Amen

*From The Missionary Society of St
Columban and sent by Edna*

TTTTTTTTIIIIIIIMMMMMMMMMEEEEEE
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPOQRSTUVWXYZ

dingbats



CHIMADENA

REVILO

HOROBOD

It's not our job to fix people,
change people or judge people.
It's our job to love people.
The rest is up to God.

Cleaning with children in the house is
like brushing your teeth with Oreos!

Silence is golden
Until you have children...
and then it's suspicious!

Don't forget Mothers' Day 15th March



The journey

At the beginning of my Christian journey in my late teenage years, I had the privilege of spending a lot of time with a couple who lived near me where I was studying in Leicester.

They had been closely involved with the renewal/charismatic movement in the Anglican church in the late 1960's and early 1970's and much of the time I spent with them I simply enjoyed hearing their stories about people they had met, been involved with, entertained, and worshipped with through that period.

I'm not sure whether it was due to their influence or other influences in my life but one of the things that I have found myself loving to read about has been, for a long time now, the stories of those people who have been involved in churches where God has worked powerfully, bringing new life, new hope and inspiration.

The books I've raced through where, typically, somebody has moved into a church where there hasn't seemed to be much hope, where numbers in the congregation have been dwindling, and then, in what seems to be something that happens suddenly, growth begins to occur and happens exponentially.

But also, in amongst those stories of growth, there has been tales of dispute, disagreement, fallings out, pain and heartache. The fragility of real human relationships shows through often.

And I think that, for me, it is those stories of brokenness that move me, that impress me, more than the "success" stories that sometimes churches want to focus on. Perhaps we find it easy to forget that our Saviour's success story resulted in him being martyred on a wooden cross, his naked body being placed on public display, and that following in his footsteps means taking up on our own cross and following?

Revd Canon David Watson, when dying of cancer, records in his book "Fear No Evil" that he was disturbed at one stage in his journey by God speaking to him about how his busyness had squeezed out the close intimacy he had with God in the first few months after his operation and also how he was not loving his brothers and sisters from his heart.

He felt compelled to write to twelve people asking

them for forgiveness for the hurt he had caused them... He writes:

"It was the most powerful purging and pruning I can remember in my entire Christian life...."

Maybe you and I would have stopped there in recording our experience.

Maybe we would not wish to show our vulnerability to others.

But David Watson continues:

"...But fruitful! Already some replies to my letters have reduced me to tears.

Whatever else is happening to me physically, God is working deeply in my life...I am clinging on to the Lord. I am ready to go and be with Christ...."

Canon Watson did die, although didn't know that was where his journey was going to take him when he wrote those words, and I suspect there were many who felt let down at the time because they had been praying to God for his healing and full recovery.

Sometimes things don't quite turn out the way you expect them to – how do we respond when this happens (or doesn't)?

My journey in 2026 has not been along the pathway I thought it was going to take and it has left me with more questions than answers but through it all I know that God is still here with you and me, with the church and out and about in the community around us.

Can we see what God is doing? Are we open to God's way in our lives?

As we journey through Lent, at the same time this year as our Muslim friends and neighbours will be going through Ramadan, are we able to embrace those within our community who may be different in some ways to us, but who share the human life with us?

Let us listen afresh to God speaking and not shut our ears when the message is announced:-

"faith comes from the risk of not knowing what's going to happen next." (Tina Beattie)



Your minister
Mark

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has released a new resource, **Ten Commandments of Climate-Responsible Banking**, calling on individuals, churches, and faith-based organisations to align their financial choices with climate justice and the wellbeing of future generations.

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF CLIMATE-RESPONSIBLE BANKING

1

Find out how much your bank invests in fossil fuels.



2

Write a letter to your bank urging it to end investments in fossil fuels.



3

Share **Save Children's Lives: Responsible Banking Survival Guide**.



4

Take legal action to address your bank's role in worsening the climate emergency.



5

Consider switching your money to a greener bank!



6

Learn if your pension is invested in fossil fuels.



7

Check if your insurance is in fossil fuels.



8

Consider investing with a values-based investor.



9

Watch videos illustrating how financial decisions influence the climate emergency.



10

Move to a greener pension fund.



World Council of Churches

"It is a moral duty of faith communities to protect God's creation and act in solidarity with vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by the climate emergency," says Frederique Seidel, WCC senior programme lead for Children and Climate. "Churches have both spiritual and societal influence, enabling them to advocate for transparency, accountability, and ethical finance while responding to scientific warnings and the appeals of young people for climate solutions."

The Walk Home

By Mary, wife of Cleopas

Isn't it funny how a day can suddenly change? How it can go from the most miserable, grey day imaginable to one you will remember for the rest of your life?

It happened to me one Sunday, a good few years ago now. I was walking with my husband, Cleopas, back home to Emmaus from Jerusalem. What we had witnessed on that Friday, just three days before, was still burning within us. We couldn't keep it in; we had to talk it out.

We talked about the hopes we had held, the stories Jesus had told, and the messages we had received. We went over the horror of the show trial before Pilate and the execution—the end of all those hopes. Or maybe, we thought, they were just dreams after all.

Then there was the confusing news we heard just before we left the city. Some of the women who followed Jesus went to his tomb early, but they found it open and empty—or so they said.

I remember thinking it was just wishful thinking. Grief does strange things to the mind.

As we talked, stumbling over our words and our sadness, we were joined by another walker on the road. This stranger began to walk in step with us and listened to a bit of our conversation.

To be honest, we were glad of the company to distract us, but then he asked, "What are you discussing as you walk along?"

We stopped dead in our tracks. My husband looked at him in disbelief and said, "Are you the only person visiting Jerusalem who doesn't know what things have happened this week?"

"What things?" He asked.

So we told him. We poured it all out—we told him about Jesus, that he was a prophet and a powerful preacher. We admitted that we had hoped he was the one to save Israel. We told him of the trial, the crucifixion, and we even told him the mad story of the women finding the tomb empty that morning. He listened patiently as we walked and talked.

Then, when we had finished our stories, he paused. He looked at us and—well, he called us fools.

He began to explain it all to us, starting right back with Moses and going through all the Prophets, listing exactly what they had said about the Messiah and his coming.

Clearly, this was an educated teacher.

It was fascinating to listen to him expound the



writings so well, so clearly, and with such intimate knowledge.

He was still talking when we finally reached Emmaus, and our own front door. The stranger thanked us for the company and looked as if he was about to carry on walking, but Cleopas insisted: "Why don't you stay with us? It's getting late. At least come in and have some supper."

So he did. We sat down around our own table. But then, something strange happened. He reached out, took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and passed the pieces to us.

And in that moment, we knew! It was Jesus! How we hadn't recognised him before, I honestly don't know. But as soon as we knew who he was, he just disappeared.

Suddenly, it was all clear. The Son of Man *had* to die, and the Son of God *had* to return three days later.

We left the food right there on the table and walked back to Jerusalem as fast as our legs would carry us. We found his disciples and told them our story, and they told us theirs—he had appeared to them too. It was all true. The women were right all along.

The years pass and my memory isn't as good as it was, but I remember every detail of that day. More and more people have come to know the truth of that Resurrection Sunday, and it looks like it may change the world.

But the most important thing for me? It changed *my* world.

Blair

Hall Green Youth - Supporting and Serving Young People

Hello,

You may or may not have heard of Hall Green Youth. We have been serving young people in our community for twenty years — and, God willing, for many more to come.

Hall Green Youth is a registered charity established by the three Anglican churches in Hall Green: St Michael's, St Peter's, and the Church of the Ascension, with the support of Churches Together in Hall Green. Our mission is simple yet vital: *"Supporting and serving young people in the Hall Green area."* We are passionate about walking alongside young people and supporting them holistically so they can grow in confidence and reach their full potential.

We are funded through grants, contributions from the Church of the Ascension and Christ Church Hall Green, and the schools we partner with.

School Work

Over the years, we have supported young people both in the community and in local secondary schools. We work in schools because it is not always easy for young people to come to us. Meeting them where they are helps us build trust and relationships, opening the door to wider community involvement.

In our early years, we ran lunchtime and after-school support groups. Schools identified students who would benefit, and we created safe spaces to explore topics such as self-esteem, confidence, identity, and acceptance.

When Covid restrictions prevented group work, we adapted by developing our mentoring programme. We now provide one-to-one mentoring for students referred by their schools, offering both short- and long-term support. Currently, we work in three secondary schools and mentor 50–60 young people each year.

Just Chill Youth Group

Alongside our school work, we run a weekly youth group called *Just Chill* at the Church of the Ascension. Sessions include discussions, cooking, games, and crafts. Just Chill offers a safe,



welcoming space where young people feel valued and supported. It is a place to build confidence, form friendships, and receive holistic support.

Some of our older young people enjoy serving in the community, helping at events and church activities such as Messy Church. We have recently launched a monthly 16+ group to continue supporting older youth, involving them in planning and offering training in leadership.

Each year, we hold a sponsored walk and an annual residential, giving young people the opportunity to get out of the city, try new activities, and have fun together.

Prayer Requests

You can support Hall Green Youth through prayer and encouragement. Please pray that the young people we work with would grow in confidence, resilience, and hope. Pray also for wisdom, energy, and discernment for our team as we journey alongside them.

Support

If you would like to support us practically, we welcome volunteers, partnerships, and financial giving to help sustain and grow this work. Please get in touch.

Website: www.hallgreenyouth.co.uk

Luke Boulton

2026 is The National Year of Reading.

This is a Department for Education initiative called Go All In, supported by over 60 partners and being delivered by a group of literacy sector charities. It's a UK-wide campaign designed to inspire more people to make reading a regular part of their lives. The thinking behind this is that instead of asking people to "find time to read", **Go All In** brings reading to them, through their passions. It's about showing that reading isn't a separate world but at the heart of all that we do.

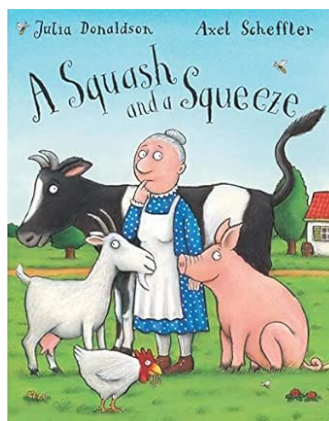
"By starting with passions, not pressure, we can create a stronger, more connected reading culture across the UK"

**GO
ALL
IN.**

When Pam asked me to write about my favourite for the magazine I replied "no problem" but of course it was!!

I have read avidly since I was a child, often escaping into the safety of books, and my love of reading has never left me. I am a regular user of my local library and am to be found in the book section of charity shops. I read most genres but most specifically thriller/detective/murder types (Lee Child, James Patterson, Lynda la Plante etc) with the odd easy reader too (Maev Binchy, Cathy Kelly etc). The problem, or the blessing (whichever way you look at things) is that I have trouble remembering what I have read.....

So I am going back to work mode for this task....On March 5th it will be World Book Day which is part of this year's National Year of Reading. World book day featured heavily in my working life, an opportunity for children and staff to dress as their favourite character from a book, and more importantly, an opportunity to nurture a love for books.



One of my favourite children's authors is Julia Donaldson and the book I have chosen is 'A Squash and a Squeeze' – I could have picked any of her books however!

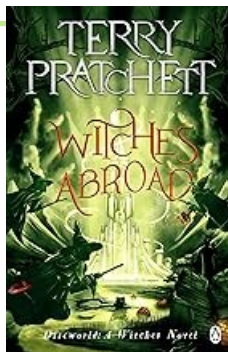
This book tells the story of a woman who is unhappy as she feels her house is too small so she asks advice from 'a wise old man'. He encourages her to open her house to a hen, a goat, a pig and a cow – all of whom manage to create mayhem. When the old lady cannot cope anymore she once again says "Wise old man won't you help me please? My house is a squash and a squeeze" One by one she empties her house of the

livestock and realises that actually all was well in the first place! There is always a moral to Julia's books and much for both children and adults to explore. A lot of Julia Donaldson's books have been adapted for TV and I have to say have not lost their appeal.

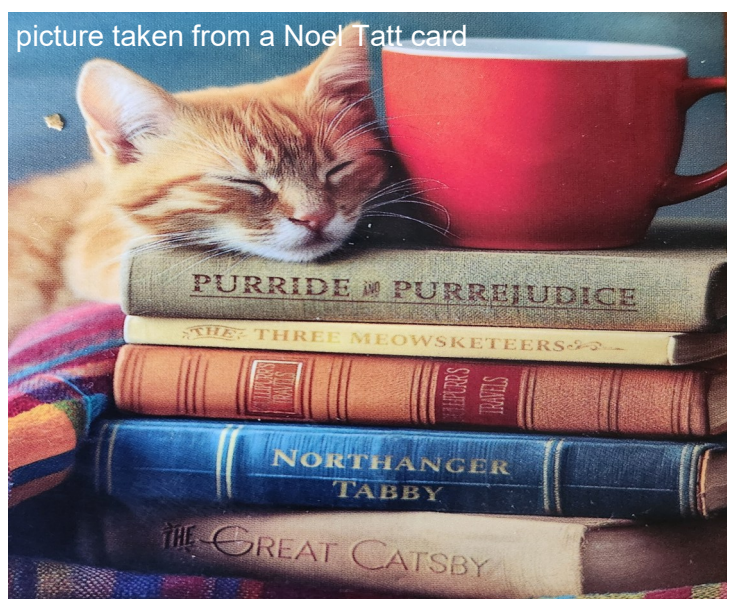
Happy World Book Day and National Year of Reading to you all. I urge you to extend your range of books and to visit your local library.

Ann Ford

It's always hard to pick a favourite book. It's like choosing your favourite child (I know who it is - but they don't). However, if I have to pick it will be "Witches Abroad" by the late Terry Pratchett. It is what most people would call fantasy, set in a world where magic exists but it is a wonderful allegory about the power of stories. It points out that if a story is repeated enough, it can start to become true, and we only have to look at Trump's America to see that happening for real. The book, however, is funny, uplifting and good wins conclusively in the end. **Blair**



picture taken from a Noel Tatt card



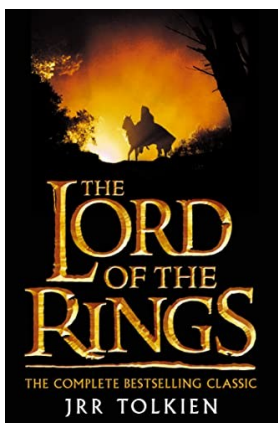
There are more favourite books on the next pages and hopefully we'll have more in the Summer edition.

Please send **your** favourite book review to pam247smith@gmail.com.

I don't have a single favourite book. I have read so many good books it is impossible to single one out. However, I have selected two that I have re-read several times and will almost certainly re-read again.

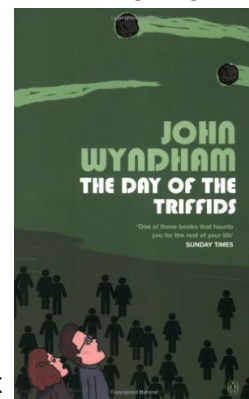
The first is *The Lord of the Rings* by JRR Tolkien. It is a heroic tale that, while never mentioning God, is still deeply religious. It isn't about questing for treasure or personal gain, but about overcoming the temptation presented by the ring of power (which was created by the Dark Lord Sauron) and destroying it and its corrupting influence. The book is filled with a love of nature and a rejection of industry. Since Tolkien grew up around Sarehole Mill until he was nine years old and then moved into the

rapidly growing industrialised city of Birmingham, it is easy to see the influence on his work. The fact that he also served in the First World War and witnessed the mechanised slaughter of that awful conflict is evident in the heroes of the tale being reluctant to fight, whereas the orcs and other monsters are bred for it.



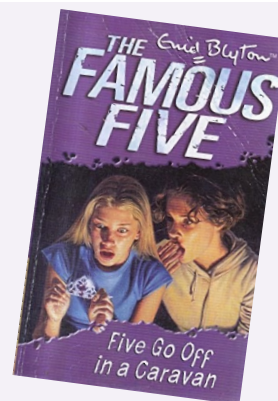
The second book is *The Day of the Triffids* by John Wyndham. The story is that the majority of people have been struck blind by lights in the sky probably caused by the competing powers of the Cold War. The triffids themselves are plants that have been engineered so that they produce more, and better, oil. However, while being plants, they can move and have a stinger to stun, or kill, prey that they can then feed off.

The hero of the story, along with others that weren't blinded by the lights, tries at first to help those that have been blinded, hoping that someone (probably the Americans) will come along and put things right. But in the end there is no salvation coming and the blind are abandoned so that only those who can see are able to survive. In many ways this is the complete opposite of *The Lord of the Rings* and a novel of self-interest and runs against the grain of Christian compassion. However, I think it is a really good read and it does highlight that not all people can be saved.

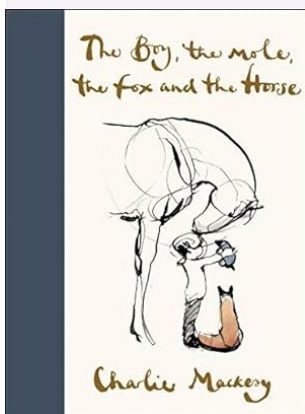


Mark Thomas

My favourite fiction genre is mystery crime solving. It is the only one that, for me, has a happy ending - the mystery is solved! If I have to choose a favourite book, I couldn't. It would be a tie between Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* and Terry Pratchett's *Nightwatch*. My earliest memory of reading for pleasure is a book of Edward Lear's nonsense poems, and of my father reading the Ramayan and Mahabharat to me and my sisters at bedtime. I still enjoy reading poetry of all types from epic to nonsense. I read all of Enid Blyton's *The Famous Five*. In one story (possibly *Five Go Off in a Caravan*) the children are scared by a face at the window. That paragraph scared me too! I think that is what sparked my interest in detective stories as well as gothic horror.



Jyoti (FCC volunteer)



There are many, many books that I have read and enjoyed, but I have never felt the need to read again, until a few years ago. Charley Mackesy wrote, "The boy, the mole, the fox and the horse" This is one that I have read a number of times, and the short film made from this I have watched on the television more than once.

It begins with a small boy, lost, a mole who befriends

him, an angry fox who needed help, the mole who was rescued by the fox, and the horse, offering shelter and help. Right at the beginning, the boy, when asked what he wants to be when he grows up, replies, 'I want to be kind'. When the boy finally sees his home in sight, feels that he would rather stay with these new friends. It's a story of fear - being lost, friendship, understanding, caring for others, forgiveness and love, real love. This is a book for all ages, and I would love to think that every child would be open to it, to read and understand the many emotions combined within.

Linda

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Matthew 16:24)

Jesus' words from Matthew are on the front cover of the book that has continued to challenge, inspire and give me hope over the years since I first made a commitment to Christ.

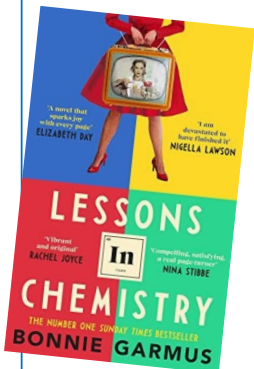
Discipleship by David Watson, first published in 1981 (my copy is the fifth impression which came out in August 1982), leads the reader through the steps of Discipleship in a way that is easy to read and follow, but which nevertheless continues to challenge as you read. I have often quoted from the book, and repeatedly go back to it as, for me, it very much seems to be an anchor for our faith – we are all disciples, we are all followers of Christ and David Watson in this book outlines clearly the cost of discipleship and what it might mean to follow Jesus.

He opens by quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer:-

"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die,"

Not an encouraging start, you would think! However, Watson instantly proceeds to outline how we need to begin *"to see ourselves as chosen, called and commissioned by Christ.."* and that, once we recognize the calling of God to us we need to acknowledge that God *"calls us to share our lives both with him and with one another in love."* It very quickly becomes an affirming message. The chapter headings give a flavour of the book: Call to Discipleship, Called into God's family, Creating Community, Making Disciples, Life in the Spirit, Prayer, The Word of God,

I have so many favourite books ranging from The Tiger who Came to Tea to A Christmas Carol. But I would like to recommend Lessons in Chemistry. It is a first novel by Bonnie Garmus and tells the story of a brilliant scientist who is mistaken for a lab assistant and/ or a secretary because she is a woman in the early 1960's! Her all-male colleagues take a very unscientific view of equality (except for one who falls in love with her mind!) The book reflects the injustices, the misogyny and discrimination which was common at this time and it can be frustrating to read about it knowing it was rife during our lifetime but it is often funny and makes for a great read. **Pam**



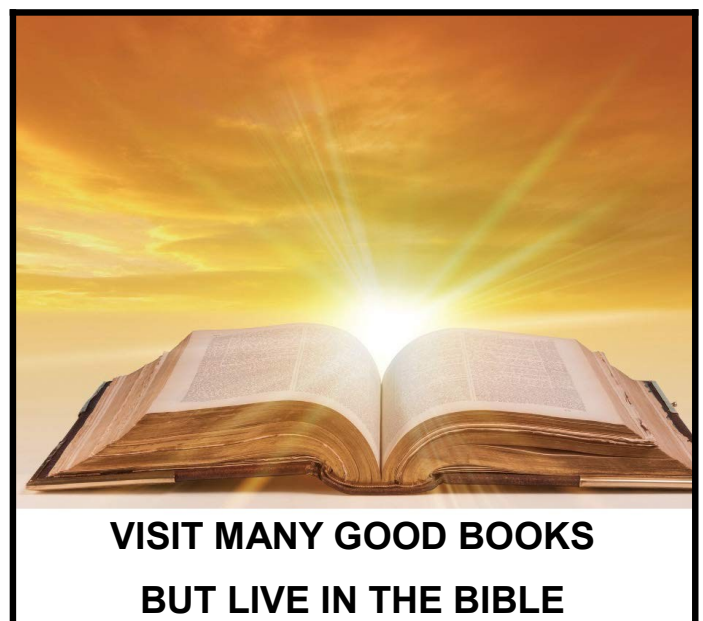
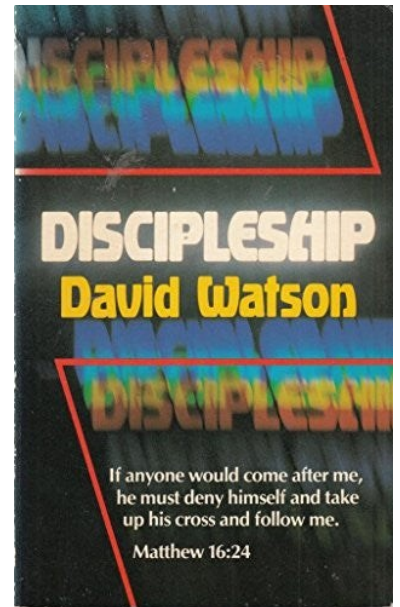
Spiritual Warfare, Evangelism, Discipleship and Simple Lifestyle, Cost of Discipleship and Abounding in Hope.

It is not an easy read, but is following Jesus an easy thing?

In my copy, which is now very tattered and torn, there is much that is underlined so nowadays it's easy for me just to flip through the pages and be challenged again by the simple words of David Watson, one little part of these I share for inspiration and challenge: -

"Today there is no shortage of pious words, affirmations of faith, discussions about hunger, or expressions of spirituality. But the world is still waiting for the demonstration, in hard, costly and practical terms, of what we proclaim with our lips. 'I was hungry, and you formed a committee to investigate my hunger...I was homeless, and you filed a report on my plight...I was sick, and you held a seminar on the situation of the underprivileged... You have investigated all aspects of my plight. And yet I am still hungry, homeless and sick.'"

Rev Mark Meatcher



Join the march?

On 28th March the Together Alliance will be marching in Central London to reject narratives of division and racism.

I don't know whether this is something you've ever thought about doing, but this is an action being taken by an alliance of over 80 organisations alongside artists and cultural figures that is mobilising and organising across the country to march together for love, hope and unity.

At least four coaches will be travelling down to London from Birmingham on the day.

The statement that the Together Alliance are making about the event is: -

"The voices of division in our country are growing louder. Those who preach division are becoming more confident.

For the first time the far right are driving politics at a national level, and far right protests on our streets mobilising the biggest numbers they ever have.

Their false promises seize on the very real economic problems people face, in order to scapegoat migrants Muslims, and refugees.

But we can change things together. The voices of unity can grow stronger. We can show that strength lies in solidarity. That the change we need comes from us working together for hope not despair, for unity not racism.

Together we can reject narratives of division and racism.

Together we can build solidarity across communities.

Together we can unite against the far right.

Our alliance of hundreds of organisations and hundreds of individuals is coming together to say enough is enough.

We are mobilising and organising across the country to bring a message of hope over fear, prior to holding a major demonstration in London on 28 March 2026.



Sir Lenny Henry, one of the supporters of Together Alliance says: -

"We stand for love over hate, hope over fear and unity over division. We're coming together against racism. Join us, be a part of it."

Melanie and I are hoping to be in London and will be joining the march on the day. It is true – we have joined similar marches and actions in the past, and so have a little understanding of what it may be like. If you haven't, and are a little unsure about joining in such an activity, please do ask us what it's like to be involved. We are sure that if wanting to stand up for love, hope and unity is something that is on your heart then you will find many kindred souls if you manage to join in.

If you want to join in on something closer to home there is a March and Rally on Sunday 8th March at 12 noon at Victoria Square, Birmingham.

Rev Mark Meatcher

Minister Health Update

The start to 2026 wasn't quite what Melanie and I were expecting as I experienced a transient ischaemic attack (TIA) on 7th January which has meant a lot of tests, scans, ultrasounds and electrocardiography monitoring to try and work out what happened and why, and to try and work out an appropriate treatment plan.

Although we are getting closer to finding out the answers to many of our inevitable questions and a gentle return to work has been approved by the doctor I am not allowed to drive or fly, as yet, and our plans for three months sabbatical in India have disappeared for the moment.

We are hoping to take a month of sabbatical finishing on 11th April but this is unlikely to involve travelling too far away.

May we both take this opportunity to say a big thank you to all those who have sent Get Well wishes to us – they have been very much appreciated – and we hope to be with you all again very soon.

Mark

WHERE DID MY GARDEN GO?

The snow fell so fast and it fell deep.

Must have been - when I was asleep

Conifers bent by the weight of the snow

No more embracing the garden, I know

Where is the pond the home of God's creatures. It's disappeared and so have the features

Where are the paths made with such skill,

They're here somewhere but all is so still.

I venture outside to unbend my trees,

I fell down a hole and started to freeze.

Then looked round me as snow fell so fast, got out the hole and went in doors, at last.

As winter still bites, it's end is so slow, I've plenty of time to ask WHERE DID MY GARDEN GO?

My greenhouse with apex white, glistened so brightly and sparkled by moon's heavenly light.

The shapes in the garden of things not put away. Till snow has gone, that's just where they'll stay. I thought for a while... "are they twigs of my brambles?" but no, they are just garden "fork-k-kandles"

The rains came muchly and washed away snow making me feel bubbly to watch my garden grow.

Up come some daffs with bright yellow heads. Soon there will be more to fill up my beds.

LENT is now here, temptations to try us, but God is close by, Holy Spirit to guide us.

Soon it is Easter, that special time of year, when we remember how Jesus gave his life to save us,
OUR SINS TO CLEAR

Praise be to God for our lovely land and for things we can grow made by his mighty hand.

May we sow seeds that we know and take pleasure to see our garden grow.

Dorrie



MY FAVOURITE BOOK (Dorrie)

Having undetected, progressive, high myopia, from small childhood I did not develop the love of story books like most children. Instead I concentrated my visual ability into sewing and could manage that, well, from a young age; only reading books for information gathering and learning purposes. Very few for pleasure did I read

At the turn of the century when Gordon and I were engrossed in 'Children in need' parties at home, many books, plus many other things, were donated for sale. When unpacking a large box of books I spotted "WIND IN THE WILLOWS".

Recalling someone, decades ago, saying that, as a child, it was his favourite book, I decided to read it, particularly as I knew it was very popular, not to mention, famous.

I love wildlife stories as told through the eyes of children, and the adventures of Mole, Ratty and Badger as they tried to get Toad back into Toad Hall, amused me greatly, therefore, I could not put the book down thus becoming a child again myself. Imagine reading a child's book at my age – then! (it would be worse now) but I did not have any regrets' Everyone should let themselves become a child once in a while. What can I read next?

He looked at the cross
And He looked at me
'It's worth it', He says
Unworthy, undeserving -
'You're worth it' He says.

Every lash, every whip
The pain -
'You're worth it'
Every wound, every bruise
The shame -
'You're worth it'

They spat at Him
Mocked Him
Left Him best for dead
Yet still He said -
'You are worth it'

'Lord, let this cup pass'
But still, went on

For His love drew Him on.

I look at my life
And I look at Him
'You're worth it' I say

Every tear, every struggle
My little cross that I bear
'You're worth it'

And so, I'll press on
Through the trials and the lows
Because one day I'll meet my King
And
It'll all be worth it.

My eyes fixed on the cross
Mind stayed on above
It's worth it, dear Child of God.

I picked up my cross
I followed Christ
For He is worthy

And all because
He thought me worth it.

From *Words of Faith*

Faith is a writer and poet based in Birmingham,.

THE QUIET REVIVAL

For those of us who aren't fans of popular TV, it is quite a surprise to know that two recent winners of shows have been Christians.

Richard Storry, a 60 year old composer and author won Big Brother, a title usually bestowed on the young, loud and over confident! Richard won by showing kindness and patience in the face of taunting and sometimes hatred from his



fellow housemates. He said the rules stated that you could not take any books or magazines into the house except for a religious text so he took the book of Psalms which he read daily and shared quotes when he felt that God was leading him to do so. Apparently he was bullied every day but said it was "water off a duck's back. I was reading from *The Message*, where it's all written in very up to date, contemporary language. And there was one day when there'd been a huge number of insults hurled at me the day before. I turned to the next page, and the first words it said, "Fear nothing. He is always with you." Richard has also adopted an adult refugee as his own son and has given his prize money to enable a young musician to get an album recorded.

Jasmine Mitchell is another Christian who has said that she relied on God to help her through some tough competition. Jasmine was last years winner of The Great British Bake Off. She believes her faith became stronger as she tried to balance being on Bake Off while also studying for a medical degree.

"Walking to the tent from the green room or just waiting I would just pray The Lord's Prayer a lot in my head... I felt like God was walking along beside me. I would look back at the end of the week and just feel

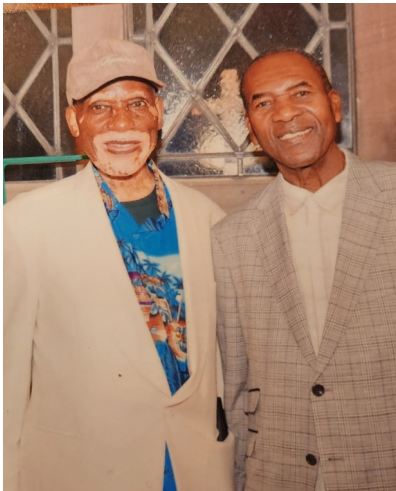
completely held by God. It was a complete kind of miracle ... that I had managed to get through it."



*Fear nothing.
He is always
with you*

THE TRAVELLING MEN BACK ON THE ROAD AGAIN WITH A STORY TO TELL

By John Richards



On the 10th February my long time friend and I were asked to travel to Birkenhead. Knowing how busy the M6 can be, we planned to leave early. 5am to be there for 8 am. Now Mr. Prentice and I have travelled together for over 30 years. We are experienced travellers. We were

told to take our steel drums and one spare drum as well. I did not know who was going to play on the spare steel pan but we knew there will be filming, maybe for the TV we think.

We arrive in good time at our first location. This turn out to be where the actors meet and get dressed and groomed before going on location where the filming is taking place.

Our host, James dressed us up and also the other actors start rolling in. We met 2 only in the building when we arrived and now we are told what the film was about and it involves the famous Beatles, John and Paul in the early days before they became famous. The man who was helping The Beatles on their way was a musician whose stage name was Lord Woodbine, from Trinidad. The film is about him and how he was frozen out of The Beatles' story.

Lord Woodbine came to England on the now famous Windrush ship in 1948. But before 1948 he lied about his age and joined the RAF at age 14 and fought in the Second World War.



When it ended he went back to Trinidad, started singing Calypso and playing the steel pan, returning to England in 1948.

He lived in London before moving and settling in Liverpool from where he and his Steel Pan Band went on tour around England also appearing on Opportunity Knocks.

He started helping the Beatles on their way up and drove them to perform in the German venue in Hamburg. Woodbine also performed with The Beatles there. He promoted them in their teenage days and they were even referred to as The Woodbine Boys.

But after The Beatles engaged Brian Epstein as their manager Lord Woodbine, or Mr Phillips, faded out of The Beatles picture. His profile is up on Google, a very interesting read. He married in 1949, had a family of seven girls and one boy. Both he and his wife were killed in a fire.

Well, Mr Prentice and I helped to remember him on film. No music was found from him and his band but you will be able to hear Mr Prentice and me playing!

Just go to Spotify and type in John Richards The Eclipse, and also Deliver Us. Yes I have them there.

Well it was about 9pm in the night when two weary travellers got back to Birmingham/ We are both in our 80's now but still Road Runners!



Lord Woodbine's blue plaque in Liverpool.



THE FOUR SEASONS

SPRING is often the season of new beginnings, yet for me it was filled with early challenges. In Chinese culture, the New Year brings bright colours, family gatherings, and red pockets to children. For an orphan, these moments often brought silence and loneliness. This season established my earliest experiences of life and resilience.

Poem – Lonely Spring

The flowers are flowering, the year is new,
But I got lost, with no one true.
Red pockets came with empty cheer,
They brought no warmth, just made me tear.
Children smiled with parents near,
But I stood silent, filled with fear.
Spring should be bright, yet I could see,
A lonely road ahead for me.

Meditation – N.A.T.E.M.A.

- N (Neurological): Reflect on childhood and write feelings in a journal daily.
- A (Acceptance): Accept my reality as an orphan.
- T (Talent): Begin discovering and developing my talents.
- E (Emotion): Replace loneliness with hope through prayer and creativity.
- M (Motivation): Encourage myself to grow instead of early challenges.
- A (Appreciation): Thank God for inner strength, toughness, and spiritual guidance.



SUMMER is the season of personal beginnings and spiritual cleansing. I was born in June, entering a world of both hope and faith. Baptism in April marked a spiritual renewal, a fresh start in God's grace. Summer experiences both the mission of my life's beginnings and the warmth of crashing protection.

Poem – Bitter Summer

The sun was hot, it burnt my heart,
Jealous eyes focused on me, tearing me apart.
Her sharp words cut me like a knife,
The summer heat traps all my life.
I was so sick, no fan, no breeze,
Insulated walls gave no release.
I heard their voice, so inhuman, unkind,
Only hot tears was left behind.

Meditation – N.A.T.E.M.A.

- N (Smart Goal): Pray and write my personal statement to strengthen emotional and spiritual resilience.
- A (Acceptance): Acknowledge challenges without guilt.
- T (Talent): insist on developing my own voice and God-given skills.
- E (Emotion): Transform hurt into understanding and spiritual growth.
- M (Motivation): Remember my life value is not tied to others' evil.
- A (Appreciation): Thank God for protection,



RELECTIONS BY DORIS

AUTUMN is gentle — not too hot, not too cold — when leaves turn golden and life feels soft. July marks my younger son's birthday, and August brings family gatherings, warmth, and laughter. September was a turning point: I began studying abroad, believing freedom of life, fruitful learning, and the happiness of independent life. Autumn is a season of personal growth, family relationship, and opportunities to cultivate both spirit and mind.

Poem – Grateful Autumn

Leaves were turning gold, a gentle breeze,
The air is soft, it feels at ease.
We gather close beside the fire,
Sharing warmth, our hearts' desire .
Birthdays, smiles, family near,
Autumn's glow makes love appear.
Learning, freedom, hearts that grow,
Blessings around, a golden glow.

Meditation – N.A.T.E.M.A.

N (Goal): Focus on personal and academic growth while abroad.

A (Acceptance): Accept life's opportunities and responsibilities.

T (Talent): Develop talents through study, creativity, and family involvement.

E (Emotion): Replace fear with faith, hope, love.

M (Motivation): Drive out learning, family love, and spiritual growth actively.

A (Appreciation): Thank God for family, education, freedom, and spiritual blessings.



WINTER is a season of meditations, peace, and preparation. October and November bring the birth of my elder son, expanding our family's joy. December is a holy time, ready to celebrate Jesus Christ's birth — the ultimate gift of love and protection for all, especially for orphans. Even when the outside is cold, the warmth of home, family, and God's presence fills every heart.

Poem – Thankful Winter

Snow falls softly, the world is cold,
Yet inside, warmth and joy unfold.
October and November bring new life,
A family grows, free from strife.
December comes, a holy night,
Jesus is born, our guiding light.
An orphan's heart now safe and strong,
In warmth and peace, where we belong.

Meditation – N.A.T.E.M.A.

N (Neurological Level/Goal): Reflect on family and spiritual growth; prepare heart for the new year.

A (Acceptance): Accept God's love, protection, and the blessings of family.

T (Talent): Talent to develop family members' gifted.

E (Emotion): Believe joy, love, and gratitude over past loneliness.

M (Motivation): Share warmth, faith, and encouragement with those around you.

A (Appreciation): Give thanks to God for family, Christ's gift, eternal life, and spiritual protection.



NOTICES

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Palm Sunday 10:30 a.m. worship
led by Gill Woolf

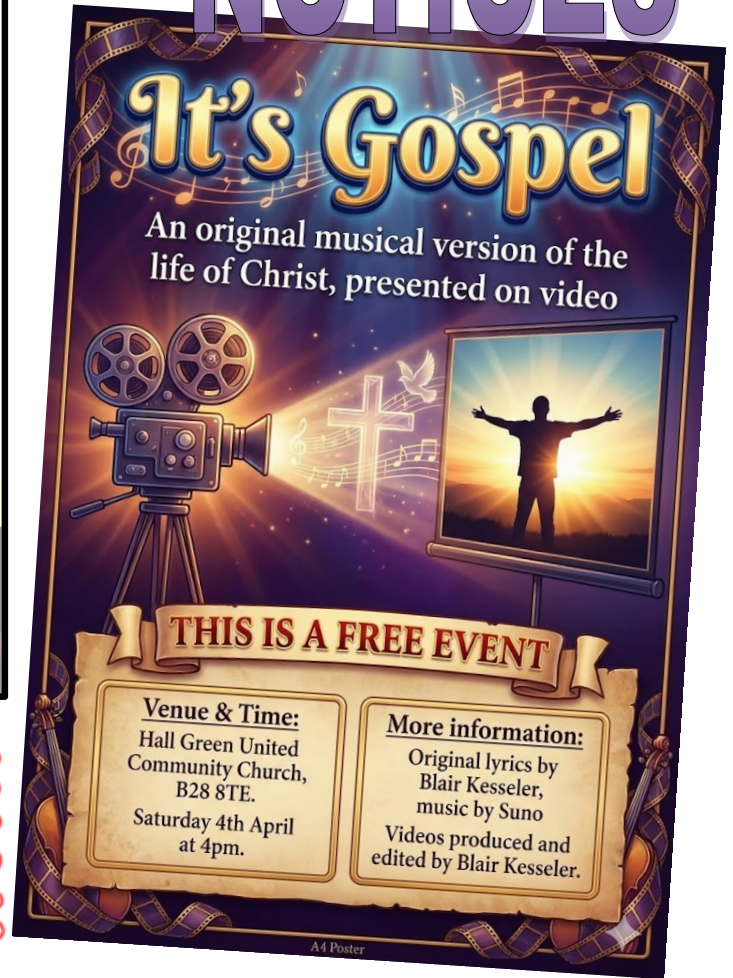
6,30 Moravian Midland District Joint Service,
with the opportunity to share a pot meal
and dessert at 5pm

Good Friday 11am walk of witness beginning at
the Friends Meeting House and ending at
HGUCG

7:30 p.m. Reflective Service of Words and Music.
Led by Blair Kessler .

Easter Saturday, 4pm, "It's Gospel" Presentation

Easter Sunday 10:30 a.m. Communion
led by the Reverend Novette Headley



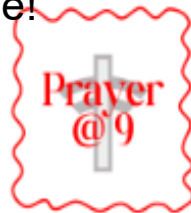
Announcing a new prayer time!

Saturdays from 7th March onwards

on Zoom 9.00 –9.20am

Meeting ID: 959 4401 4733.

Passcode: 977749



Check it out ...
<https://thebigplasticcount.com>



Long time no see; made in China; Oliver Twist; Robin Hood; plenty more fish in the sea



To worship God
 To know Jesus
 To serve others

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