



March 2018

Ministers Muse

Dear Friends,

On a shopping trip in the middle of January I noticed that one shop had Easter eggs for sale and I made a comment about them to the sales person. "We've had them since November!" was her reply. I was still savouring Epiphany and hadn't even finished eating my Christmas chocolates yet. I couldn't imagine wanting to buy Easter eggs so soon after Christmas.

Now we have begun the journey leading up to Easter. Lent is a time of reflection. The passage of time has always been important to God's people from Old Testament times when people followed the seasons and the religious festivals and feast days, to the twenty first century when we follow the liturgical year and look forward to the highlights of the Christian year. In modern times life is often lived in the fast lane with no time for reflection, but Lent gives us a time to slow down, to savour the time we are in. It gives us the chance to reflect on the past, live for the present and look to the future. Some people often think of Lent as being a time for raking over past mistakes, but God is the God of new starts, not old loose ends.

In the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 the father welcomes the lost son back with open arms, putting a ring on his finger, shoes on his feet and celebrating with a feast. Not the sort of behaviour the son expected at all.

The father could have reacted differently: he could have insisted that the son put right all the harm he had done - pay back the money he'd wasted, make up the time his brother had had to cover for him on the farm, etc.

But he didn't - he was only concerned with the now. The one who was lost had been found.

Many Christians ruin their lives by constant regrets about the past and repeated attempts to relive it. We can't change the past, but we can learn from it, and that's quite another matter. What we can affect is the future - but only if we allow ourselves to get to it!

If we are going to be able to move forward, we really have to trust God - and we can't do that if we don't let him near us. God is very loving and he only wants the best for us. We need to come to him, trusting that he will help us to change and begin again, to live our lives as new people, today, tomorrow and for all time.

As we look now at the season of Lent we can ask God to help us to keep that as our focus. We can remember all the lessons he has helped us to learn from the past, but we should ask him to help us to unload it and move on.

Take to God the things that hold you back - the mistakes, the wrongdoing, the guilt - put them behind you so that you can journey forward with God.

Jesus was not defeated and Paul says that we are not either, for he says, "We are often troubled but never crushed; sometimes in doubt, but never in despair; there are many enemies, but we are never without a friend; and though badly hurt at times, we are not destroyed".

Let us pray as we continue our journey that God will strengthen our faith and hope. That he will give us humility and patience, wisdom and knowledge. That he will fill our hearts with his love and enable us to show his love and compassion to our neighbour, whoever and wherever he or she might be.

I wish you all a thoughtful and challenging Lent,

Your friend and minister, *Janet*

Deacons Muse

Dear Friends

The Lent season is a time to intentionally spend time doing something different. I think about this as a journey of reflection.

As Ephesians 3: 18 – 19 says ‘I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.’

This Lent is a new beginning as it is the first time for ‘AT Church’ the magazine of Allen Memorial and Trinity Methodist Churches.

The prayer spaces in each church both take the form of a journey. I invite you to look at them and read what’s there and to ponder. There are opportunities to spend time in each Church at the Lent Prayers either Tuesday or Thursday.

I came across this affirmation of faith and share it with you for you to ponder on in your Lent journey.

We believe in a God who is never confined to our imagining,
Is never in bondage to our beliefs, and never held fast in our dwelling places.

Our God is the mystery of divine and human bound together,
Of power and vulnerability, of crucifixion and resurrection.

Our God is the wonder of truth and compassion, of liberation and responsibility,
Of eternal wisdom and costly grace.

We celebrate this God who leaps free of all our boundaries
In love stretching out from horizon to horizon,

And in mercy bending deep into fragile human hearts. *Dorothy McRae-McMahon*

May God enfold you in his love day by day in this Lent season and may you know his richest blessings.

Grace and peace, Deacon Gail

A childhood hidden inside

At first glance, grandmother Habsou looks like a sick and elderly lady. She is blind and uses a stick as she struggles along the dirt track in the blistering heat of the sun in Niger. It is not old age that has savagely attacked her 57 year old body, but leprosy.

Across this ultra-poor Maradi region of Niger, there are thought to be thousands of people literally hidden away with untreated leprosy. Habsou was one of these people and it started when she was a little child. She first showed signs of leprosy at 5 years. But instead of taking her to Danja Hospital (where the Leprosy Mission has provided services free of charge to leprosy patients for many decades) her terrified parents hid her away inside a hut.

It sounds so cruel, hiding an innocent child from the world; taking away her freedom to play with other children and go to school. But the fear of the whole family being verbally and physically abused and hounded out of their village was just too great for Habsou’s parents. If they’d had to go, how could they have survived in this parched land where having food to eat is a daily struggle?

So little Habsou was given traditional herbal medicine, which did not stop her leprosy, and she stayed inside a small mud hut in sun-scorched Niger for many years. Can you imagine what that would have been like? Her untreated leprosy steadily attacked her young body and permanent damage was done.

Habsou finally came to Danja Hospital at the age of 13, but by then she had already lost her fingers and toes and her sight was fading. At the hospital her leprosy was finally treated and her wounds were tended to. The Leprosy Mission provided her with a basic house in Danja and this is where she and her leprosy affected husband lived. When Habsou was pregnant with their youngest daughter Mariama, her husband died.

Alone and disfigured by leprosy, with 4 children to feed, Habsou begged on the streets to survive. Who would have employed someone so obviously disabled and scarred by leprosy?

When Mariama was just 15, her mum told her that she could no longer afford to keep her and that she should marry a leprosy-affected man much older than her. Despite Mariama never having leprosy herself, she was considered “dirty” because her parents had been treated for the disease. No boy from a respectable family would ever consider marrying her.

It was against Mariama’s will to marry this older man but she had no choice and soon was pregnant with Saoude, now 8. Little Saoude is a bright, vibrant little girl who dreams of becoming a nurse so she can help people like her granny. But she needed a decent secondary school education.

Mariama knows what leprosy is and that it can be treated. Should she spot a tell-tale numb skin patch on Saoude’s body she would immediately take her to Danja Hospital. With prompt treatment she would not become blind like her granny.

The latest statistics from the World Health Organisation show that almost a quarter of people in Niger diagnosed with leprosy in 2016 already had lifelong leprosy-caused disabilities- just like Habsou. This is devastating as it is so unnecessary. Fear stands between people knowing they need help and actually coming to the hospital to receive it.

The Leprosy Mission cannot simply travel to remote villages where they believe there could be three or more people with untreated leprosy, expecting them to come out and be examined. The fear surrounding the disease is just too great. Leprosy is seen as a curse and something to be ashamed of. So it is a case of gaining the trust of the village chief and literally going from door to door and finding the hidden people, bringing the cure to them.

It is the hope of the Leprosy Mission that it can reach out and cure these people, just as Jesus did in his earthly life, and demonstrate the love and acceptance He showed people with leprosy.

“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them” Ezekiel 34. 11 (NIV)

From “New Day”, the newsletter of the Leprosy Mission.

Please pray...

- For the Team at Danja Hospital, which meets the physical, spiritual and social needs of people affected by leprosy, helping them to reintegrate into society. Give thanks for the work already accomplished.
- Pray for the safety and security for staff and partners at TLM (The Leprosy Mission), Niger, who often drive for long distances in a country with very poor roads. Ask God to protect them.
- Give thanks for the life-changing opportunities to go to school or train for employment that TLM can give to people affected by leprosy, like the class Mariama attended, which has enabled her to read and write. This gives her a better chance of employment and she can then support her family.

Prayers for the World

Glory be to God for the riches of earth and sky:

For rainbows and mudslides, for rivers and spring tides,
For robins and daffodils and everything your providence provides.

Glory be to God for the riches of science and technology:

For lab coats and tinfoil, for medicines and merchandise,
For computers and clipboards.

Glory be to God for the riches of art and craft:

For songs and symphonies, for poems and paintings,
For chisels and storyboards and soldering irons.

Praise and honour and thanks be given to our wise and loving Creator, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the fullness of the Spirit.

Rev'd Jock Stein, Starters for Sunday; churchofscotland.org.uk

A Prayer of the Church

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,

The moon and the stars that you have established;

What are human beings that you are mindful of them,

Mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God,

And crowned them with glory and honour.

You have given them, dominion over the works of your hands;

You have put all things under their feet. (Psalm 8, 3-6 nrsv)

The greatest and most instructive thing about this psalm is the way it balances pride in what God has made us, with humbleness in the face of the responsibility God has laid on us. Pray to live in a way that is mindful of God and our neighbour, and careful of God's creation, that treads carefully on the earth we steward.

Prayers for Trinity and Allen Memorial

Lord, we are your people.

You have called us by name and lavished your love upon us.

We go out into the world bearing your name on our lips

And your love in our lives.

As your people, may we so live and speak that our neighbours will give thanks to God and their lives to Christ. Amen.

May God's arms surround you and embrace you; may the Holy Spirit fill your hearts with truth, beauty and love; and may Christ Jesus our Lord walk with you and guide you every step both now and for evermore. Amen

The Irony of Life



On a Wednesday morning I always get up at 6.30 to sort out the recycling and rubbish. The bins need to be out by 7 am. You can put them out the night before but most people, myself included, prefer to put them out in the morning, mainly to avoid the animal wildlife (including fox and badger) that comes out here at night and that would make a real mess rummaging in the stuff we throw away. This week I noticed that it was quite light when I put the bins out. Until now the

early mornings have been dark but the lighter mornings and the longer evenings before nightfall are becoming noticeable. It makes it much easier when you can see clearly what you are doing even if you have got a security light to help. There's no light to compete with natural light. The other day I was also able to hang the washing outside to dry. When I brought it in the house again it was completely dry. I had managed to wash, dry and iron the clothes all before our evening meal. I haven't been able to do that for quite a few months.



Anyone who knows me knows how I love my garden. When living in England, I have always had a garden, except that is when I first came to live in Yeovil. My son and I shared an upstairs flat. The thing I really disliked was that I had no plot of land to grow anything and when we opened the (only) door of the flat all you could see was stairs. Ugh! You couldn't even see outside - just stairs. So I was over the moon when we were able to move to the house we now live in as I have a nice big rear garden. The thing is now at 74 I wish I had the energy I had 10 years ago but I still manage to potter around and enjoy it.

The thing about these three experiences is that having experienced the down side of things, I have come to appreciate the positive side. If I were always able to put the bins out in daylight, then I wouldn't appreciate the lighter mornings. During the winter months, the drying of clothes has to be done indoors and I really prefer to hang things out to dry by the natural warmth of the sun and the movement of the breeze. I think clothes smell nicer if they've been dried outside. At least that's my opinion. So, I really like it when I can get things washed and dried all in the same day without having to live with damp clothes hanging around. Having lived in an upstairs flat made me realise just how much I enjoy having a garden and how much I missed not having one. So, it seems that experiencing the negative side of things helps us to appreciate the positive side more.



Just this week I read something that brought this home to me. It said:

Life is so ironic that we have to have known sadness in order to savour happiness, noise in order to appreciate silence and absence in order to enjoy someone's presence.

I think that is a sentiment we can all relate to. Take time and dwell on each one for a while. It's a bit like the two sides of a coin. You can't have one without the other. So even out of the not-so-nice experiences in life, we can gain something good.

From the Blog of Mavis Andradez.

Yarm Road Methodist Church (YRMC)

a place where I used to worship.

It is every Sunday at 10.30am prompt we worship God in YRMC. The assistant steward, first person to speak out, welcomes people, thanks the congregation, the organist, the readers and the preacher of the day. And then, the preacher takes over. But before the welcoming, there is five (5) minutes of silence while the congregation thinks about **Why am I here?**

So, you can understand why that moment is very quiet. It is also the moment where for anyone taking part in the service has to go in the vestry with the preacher and the readers to implore the Holy Spirit to assist them during the service.

The preacher starts his/her service with greetings and goes straight away to the first hymn. We do have in total five during the service. And the hymn books are 'Hymns and Psalms' and / or 'Songs of Fellowship'. Both books can be used during the service. Some preachers prefer a third book or simply print out some sheet of paper just for the circumstance.

YRMC has 2 organists and 1 Hymnal Plus (this is the machine in use in Trinity Church in Wallsend). All three are playing in rota through the year.

The first part of the service ended with 'children talk'. Yes, YRMC has Sunday School for an average of 8 children (sometimes more). They go out just after the second hymn with their leaders.

Then the service continues with the readings, sermon, collection, intercessory prayers etc... and other hymns according to the order the preacher puts in place.

The blessing comes at the end as usual and this after the last hymn.

The minister of YRMC is Christine Hey.

Information about YRMC

Christine Hey is going to retire in August 2018.

YRMC worships sometime in the main hall (church) and sometime in the back premises (community hall). This is because of the weather. It will cost a lot of money to heat the main hall when it is freezing therefore the service takes place during the winter and the cold weather in the back premises.

YRMC has an afternoon service every first Sunday of the month, starting at 4pm.

YRMC has four (4) stewards and approximately 12 assistant stewards.

The back premises are hired and used for community services.

YRMC has a 'Church Magazine' which comes out one in Easter (regular) and another one in Christmas (regular). Between Easter and Christmas there is the third one but this is not regular.

YRMC is undertaking a big work to repair the church's clock tower.

To finish...

YRMC building was opened in 1904.

A bit more information.

Like every church, YRMC develops many activities in and outside the congregation. From Carpet Bowls (every Monday) with an average of 10 people to Zoom children (every Friday) 28 people, going through:

- On Tuesday: ‘Senior drop in’; Prayer group; RASPS (Refugees and Asylum Seekers Project Stockton)
- On Thursday: RASPS (Refugees and Asylum Seekers Project Stockton)
- On Friday: little munchkin (toddlers play group) etc...

Once a year, there is a ‘Holiday Club’ in YRMC for 5 – 11 aged. This has an average of 60 young people attending often starting in the last week of July.

We also have house groups. This is a home bible reading in a small group of friends but in fact everybody is welcomed. Both take place every Wednesday, I do not know why Wednesday, but what I do know, one is in the morning and the second one in the evening.

Leroy Lawson

Bible a Month: Central African Republic

“God lifts the poor and needy from dust and ashes” Psalm 113.7 (CEV)

The Central African Republic is a landlocked country in central Africa, surrounded by South Sudan, Sudan, Chad, Cameroon, Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It covers an area of 622000 sq km, which is approximately 2.5 times larger than the UK. It has a population of 5.6 million, which is 9% of the UK. The Literacy Rate, people who can read and write, is 36.8%. French is the official language but there are other local languages.

The CAR is a dangerous place. Tensions are high due to the ongoing conflict between Muslim and Christian militia groups. Highly lucrative diamond, gold and oil mines are at the centre of the fight for control. Violence, looting and kidnappings are widespread. Three-quarters of people live in extreme poverty.

Bible Society has been doing what it can to keep providing God’s Word throughout the years of war, but conditions are extremely difficult. Electricity is only available for three hours a day. The freight containers where Bibles are stored often leak. Our nine staff share a tiny office.

In 2018, more of your regular gifts will support this struggling team- and provide the Bible to people who need it. We’d like to buy three motorbikes to distribute Bibles round the country, create a proper Bible distribution centre and sales kiosk, and invest in fledgling literacy work among women.

Prayer Pointers

- Pray for peace in this war-torn nation. Ask that God will intervene to bring order and stability, and restore the hearts of people damaged by violence and trauma.
- Give thanks for the resilience and commitment of our team in CAR. They tell us, “There are places we can’t go. But we want to share the Bible in the places we can go” Pray God will use them as tools in his reconciliation work.
- Pray that Ken Dachi, Bible a Month’s programme adviser for Africa, can offer active and practical support which will help the local team share God’s word more widely.
- Pray for the 20 women attending our literacy class in CAR; pray that their lives will be transformed as they learn this vital life skill, and their faith will be strengthened as they read the Bible for themselves.

Thank you so much for your support which is bringing the Bible to life at home and around the world.

Beans for a Bible

By Claire Smith, the Bible Society

What do two buckets of maize, three pumpkins, a piglet (depending on size) and a chicken have in common? In Swaziland they're all fair currency to buy you a SiSwati Bible.

So when our truck rolls into a rural village in a swirl of dust, and the staff leap out to pop up their banner and table, local people emerge from their houses and down paths with bags of grain on their shoulders and squawking livestock in their arms- and the trading begins.

This is the unique way we sell Scripture in a country where three quarters of people are subsistence farmers. It's called "Bible Bartering". The idea came about back in 2015, when boxes of Scripture were stockpiling in the warehouse and no one was coming to the book shop to buy them. Bible Society had a new leader in Swaziland- Ngcebo Mbuli. He's an entrepreneur at heart, and his solution worked; they now sell three times as many Bibles per year as they used to.

Mbuli says, "There's minimal cash in our society. People didn't have money to afford Bibles and many couldn't travel to our two bookshops. So we worked out a bartering system. And now we go to the villages to exchange Bibles for whatever people have"

It costs £7-9 for a Bible in Swaziland, the price driven up by import costs and the relatively low print runs needed in this small country. It's equivalent to two days' salary for a standard labourer or factory worker. For hand-to-mouth farmers, it's an unthinkable amount of money. But after a good harvest, when the rains have been plentiful, its possible for families to exchange their produce for Scripture. That's exactly what is happening in Ntondozi village.

Phumaphi Maseko trades a small bucket of valuable dried beans for a Siswati Bible. She's never owned a Bible before- and she's thrilled with this copy. "I am very excited. I never have cash so from the bottom of my heart, I thank Bible Society for allowing me to exchange what I grow for the Bible"

Meanwhile, Lomagugu Ndzimandze is handing over a chicken in exchange for a large print Bible. She immediately turns to Jeremiah 11.29, her favourite verse, and begins to read, "God is my help" she says. "I appreciate the fact that even though I might not have money , I can afford a Bible with what I do have"

The team drives up the road when they hear that one elderly woman is too poorly to walk to the Scripture sale. Jabu Diamini used to be the teacher in the village school, and wants a large print Bible because of her failing eyesight. She hands over a deep bucket of maize, enough to feed a family for a week. She can't buy a Bible as she is retired now but is happy with the exchange.

At the end of a day's trading, the livestock goes straight to market in Manzini. Swaziland's capital, to be sold. The team are careful; they stockpile the grain till it is not so plentiful then get a higher price at the market when they sell.

After the harvest, from May to September, "Bible bartering" sales like this take place every week in villages across Swaziland's countryside. Most people from rural Swaziland are now buying their first ever Bible this way. They have the fulfilment of owning a Bible, but it's also special- because they are giving something they've grown or reared.

These simple transactions carry real weight and meaning. The maize could feed a family for a week. The chicken can provide vital protein in its eggs. The beans have been grown from seed and picked by hand. Is it a fair exchange?

One of the women says, “This chicken is worth a lot, that’s true....But Christ is more. Jesus is life”

From Word in Action, Winter 2017/18.

I’m sure you’ve seen this in one form or another, but it’s worth reading again. Editor.

Comparing a Pack of Cards to the BIBLE

Consider a set of cards from Ace to King and:

- When I look at the **Ace**, it reminds me that there is only **ONE** God,
- When I look at Number **2**, it reminds me that the Bible is divided in **TWO** parts: Old & New Testament,
- When I look at Number **3**, it reminds me the **TRINITY** of God: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
- When I look at Number **4**, it reminds me the **FOUR** disciples who preached the gospel: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
- When I look at Number **5**, it reminds me the **FIVE** virgins, who cut the wicks of their lamps,
- When I look at Number **6**, it reminds me that God created Heaven & Earth in **SIX** days,
- When I look at Number **7**, it reminds me that God took the **SEVENTH** day for rest,
- When I look at Number **8**, it reminds me the **EIGHT** good people God saved when he destroyed the world,
- When I look at Number **9**, it reminds me the leprosy people God healed. **NINE** of the ten who did not thank him,
- When I look at Number **10**, it reminds me the **TEN** Commandments,
- When I look at **Jack**, it reminds me the **DEVIL**
- When I look at **Queen**, it reminds me the **VIRGIN MARY**,
- When I look at **King**, it reminds me there is only one **KING** in the Heaven: the Almighty God.

So then...

When you count the total number of points, there are **365** which represent the days of the year;

- There are **52** cards, the exact number of weeks in the year;
- There **12** personalities, the exact number of months in the year;
- There **4** colors, the four seasons in the year.

Leroy Lawson

1950's version of an E-Mail...?????

Long ago and far away, in a land that time forgot, before the days of Dylan, or the dawn of Camelot, there lived a race of innocents, and they were you and me;

For Ike was in the White House in that land where we were born, where navels were for oranges, and Peyton Place was porn. We longed for love and romance and waited for our Prince; Eddie Fisher married Liz, and no one's seen him since. We danced to 'Little Darlin', And sang to 'Stagger Lee' and cried for Buddy Holly in the Land That Made Me, Me.

Only girls wore earrings then, and 3 was one too many, and only boys wore flat-top cuts, except for Jean McKinney. And only in our wildest dreams did we expect to see a boy named George with lipstick, in the Land That Made Me, Me.

We fell for Frankie Avalon, Annette was oh, so nice, and when they made a movie, they never made it twice. We didn't have a Star Trek Five, or Psycho Two and Three, or Rocky-Rambo Twenty, in the Land That Made Me, Me.

We had our share of heroes, we never thought they'd go, at least not Bobby Darin, or Marilyn Monroe. For youth was still eternal, and life was yet to be, and Elvis was forever in the Land That Made Me, Me.

We'd never seen the rock band that was Grateful to be Dead, and airplanes weren't named Jefferson, and Zeppelins were not Led. And Beatles lived in gardens then, and Monkees lived in trees, Madonna was Mary in the Land That Made Me, Me.

We'd never heard of microwaves, or telephones in cars, and babies might be bottle-fed, but they were not grown in jars. And pumping iron got wrinkles out, and 'gay' meant fancy-free, and dorms were never co-Ed in the Land That Made Me, Me.

We hadn't seen enough of jets to talk about the lag, and microchips were what was left at the bottom of the bag. And hardware was a box of nails, and bytes came from a flea, and rocket ships were fiction in the Land That Made Me, Me.

Bathing suits came big enough to cover both your cheeks. And Coke came just in bottles, and skirts below the knee, and Castro came to power near the Land That Made Me, Me.

We had no Crest with Fluoride, we had no Hill Street Blues, we had no patterned pantyhose or Lipton herbal tea or prime-time ads for those dysfunctions in the Land That Made Me, Me.

There were no golden arches, no Perrier to chill, and fish were not called Wanda, and cats were not called Bill. And middle-aged was 35 and old was forty-three, and ancient were our parents in the Land That Made Me, Me.

So now we face a brave new world in slightly larger jeans and wonder why they're using smaller print in magazines. And we tell our children's children of the way it used to be, long ago and far away in the Land That Made Me, Me.

*If you didn't grow up in the Fifties,
You missed the greatest time in history,*

Crazy !!!!!!!!!!!!!

And Jesus said unto the theologians, "Who do you say that I am?"

They replied, "You are the eschatological manifestation of the ground of our being, the kerygma of which we find the ultimate meaning in our interpersonal relationships"

And Jesus said, "What?...."

Oscar Romero; www.Kissingfish

Count your Blessings 2018 (cont'd)

Through daily reflections, share your Journey through Lent with your Sisters and Brothers around the world.

How to count your blessings

1. Read the daily reflection
2. Count the blessings
3. Pray and act with Christian Aid to share your blessings.

Weekend 3rd and 4th March

“He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables” John 2: 15.

When Jesus saw His Father’s house being exploited, he immediately took action to restore justice. *This weekend, ask yourself, Who exploits power in our world? Which tables need to be overturned?*

Aisha’s journey

Monday 5th March.

Aisha has witnessed more than anyone should. When Boko Haram attacked her hometown, her sister-in-law was killed in front of her eyes. They threatened to marry Aisha to a stranger. She fled. Even in bloody violence and the darkest of times, Jesus is there. *Raise our sisters like Aisha up to God today.*

Tuesday 6th.

Since 2013, Boko Haram have used brutal tactics to terrorise people in north-eastern Nigeria. Women and children are particularly vulnerable. Millions have been displaced. Christian Aid’s partner has been supporting affected people and their communities. *Imagine the fear our global neighbours endure.*

Wednesday 7th.

Imagine walking from Manchester to Leeds through the night. Could you manage it? Heavily pregnant, Aisha walked more than 45 miles with her children to safety. The journey took 3 days.

Where have you travelled this month? How easy was it for you?

Thursday 8th. International Women’s Day.

When Aisha reached safety she began to build a new life with her children. She used her talents to make handmade cards, selling them to pay rent for a new home.

We pray for all women living in poverty. Offer their hopes for themselves and their families to God.

Friday 9th.

Christian Aid’s partner Jireh Doo Foundation is working with displaced people in Nigeria to help them thrive. They train men to become gender champions, helping them to understand women’s rights and stand up for them.

Education changes lives. How many unread books do you have at home?

Weekend 10th and 11th. Mothering Sunday.

“I gave birth to my child and we were sleeping in the open, so the cold was too much for the child and me as a mother” Aisha.

After Aisha gave birth in the camp, she struggled to look after her baby. When she rented her new home, her landlord saw her difficulty and refused to take any more rent. She said, “I am thankful to God and to our landlord for giving us this space”

Reflect on who has shown you compassion. Write them a thank-you letter for their love and care.

Sori’s journey

Monday 12th.

Sori and her husband, Galgallo, live in northern Kenya with their six children. The drought forced them to move to find water. Galgallo often looks after the animals away from home and Sori misses him a lot. She prays that in the future her family will be together.

What are your prayers for the future? This week, include Sori’s family in your prayers.

Tuesday 13th.

Sori made sure all her children are in school. “I haven’t been to school, but people who have are now self reliant” she says. “The future of my children is really important to me”

Sori’s children walk to school. How many schools are within walking distance from you?

Wednesday 14th.

Sori and her husband used to be able to pay for their children’s schooling, but the drought made this difficult. Now, Sori uses the money she received from Christian Aid’s partner to keep her children learning.

How many years of education have you had?

Thursday 15th.

**“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord”
John 1: 23.**

Internally displaced people are often overlooked by the international community. This year, we’re speaking up for them at the UN.

Friday 16th

Although their situation is still uncertain, Sori is hopeful. “We’re not willingly moving away from our homes, but we remain optimistic, looking forward to a good season when families will be reunited.”

How many years have you been able to live in your home?

Weekend 17th and 18th.

“I pray for health for my children, family and animals, and so we can be strong for each other” Galgallo Elema.

Isn’t it amazing, that, whenever we are in the world, whatever our situation, we share many of our prayers with our brothers and sisters, How can we be strong for our global family?

This weekend, share a meal with come family or friends.

Ayuba's journey

Monday 21st.

In Maiduguri, north east Nigerian, Christian Aid distributes emergency food to displaced people and their host communities. For some, this is the only support they are receiving.

How many meals have you had today?

Tuesday 20th

Maiduguri's population has doubled because of people fleeing there. Even though the communities are already living in poverty, many are opening their homes in hospitality to displaced people.

Ask our politicians to speak up for all displaced people.

Wednesday 21st.

Ayuba has opened up his home to those who've fled violence. Although his house has only nine rooms, at one point he was sheltering more than 100 people. He told us, "They have no one else to help them but me"

How many rooms and bedrooms do you have?

Thursday 22nd World Water Day.

In Borno state, Nigeria, water facilities can't cope with the growing numbers of displaced people. Christian Aid's partner is providing lifesaving water and sanitation.

Have you had a bath or shower today?

Friday 23rd.

The money Ayuba loses in rent means he struggles to care for himself and others. Christian Aid has been providing food for Ayuba and those living with him. "I'm happy someone is thinking about us somewhere. Pray for us so our lives can return to normal"

Pray for Ayuba and everyone staying with him.

Weekend 24th and 25th. Palm Sunday.

"They took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord- the King of Israel." John 12, 12-14.

The crowd held branches high, waving them for a man on a donkey. How do you welcome newcomers, weary travellers, arriving with little splendour? How can we celebrate their coming? How can we lay our coats on the ground for them?

How many people will you greet this weekend?

Holy Week: Journey to the Cross.

Monday 26th

Elema from Kenya prays, "Firstly, I pray for peace and secondly for what we don't have. By peace I mean everyone being together, for people to come home, for people to live happily. And thirdly, rain!"

Did you check the weather forecast today?

Tuesday 27th.

“The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother’s womb he named me” Isaiah 49: 1.

We believe everyone is made in God’s image. We know that 40 million people are displaced within their countries by conflict, but the true figure is likely much higher as many displaced people are overlooked. Let us remember all displaced people as children of God.

If you had to flee your home, what couldn’t you bear to leave behind? Carry it with you wherever you go today.

Wednesday 28th.

Deborah works for Christian Aid in Maiduguri, Nigeria. She helps to care for displaced people living in camps, providing food and hearing their stories. She says “you have to be strong for them. It’s very difficult, but you find a way to take it in”

Do you ever ignore stories which are hard to bear? How can we listen with compassion?

Thursday 29th. Maundy Thursday.

“Not my will but yours be done” Luke 22: 42.

Bread is broken. Wine is shared. Jesus’s journey to the cross begins., In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays, “Not my will, but yours be done”. Even on this, the most difficult of journeys, Jesus trusts that God is with him, guiding him in the darkest of moments.

Do you fully trust God? How can you place more trust in him today?

Friday 30th Good Friday.

“He said, “It is finished”. Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” John 19: 30-31.

Jesus walked the most difficult of human paths. For those today who have faced grief and fear on their own journeys, Jesus shares their suffering. They do not walk alone. We walk with them, we grieve with them, in solidarity, as sisters and brothers. We know this is not the end of the story.

Look back on your Lenten journey. How will you continue to walk with those in need?

Weekend 31st March and 1st April. Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

He is Risen! Death turns to resurrection, despair turns to hope. Around the world, wherever our neighbours are on the journey, we are there. We extend our hands to communities torn apart by violence, to our neighbours forced from their homes. We proclaim the message of hope.

We believe in the joyful, glorious world that Jesus’s resurrection brings. We will walk together until we arrive.

At Easter, we celebrate a hope which cannot be contained.

Three signs of Easter: a new hymn.

(to the tune "Battle Hymn"- *Mine eyes have seen the glory*)

In the cross we find a sign of love
within a sign of pain,
for it speaks of our desertion,
how God looked to us in vain,
yet it tells of Jesus facing death
to win us life again:
the cross proclaims God's love!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
The cross proclaims God's love!

In the empty tomb, the emptiness
proclaims God's bold reply
to the victory of sin and death
that nothing could defy.
Jesus' goodness had to mean that
even death itself must die;
that tomb proclaims God's love!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
That tomb proclaims God's love!

In our lives, the risen Jesus
can empw'r us to be true
to the cause of love and justice
in whatever deeds we do.;
we can let his Spirit guide us,
turn us round and make us new:
our lives must show God's love!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Our lives must show God's love! Trinity CCL 285240

Rev'd John Campbell.

John Campbell is a minister who has been writing new hymn words to existing tunes as part of his ongoing exploration of ways to help the Bible come alive for today's urban believers. The song texts are covered by a Christian Copyright Licence (CCL) so if the song is used in worship you must report the usage.

Back to Nicaragua

It's nearly time again!

How quickly my four months has gone over and here I am, with three crammed full suitcases ready to set off for another eight months. Believe me, it is never easy to say goodbye each time, but I know deep in my heart, Nicaragua is where God has called me.

I am so grateful to those of you who support the projects I work on out there and to those of you who sponsor children - it is through you that I can help make a difference in the community of Bluefields.

Thank you to those who came to the recent fun auction or donated things towards it - just over £600 was raised, which will be shared between Nicaragua and the Walking With project. A wonderful effort.

I will keep you updated with my newsletters and look forward to being back in cold England in November!

God bless you all.

Love Margaret.

Auction at Trinity

What a fantastic evening. The auction in aid of 'Walking With' and Margaret Storeys work in Nicaragua on Tuesday 20th February was extremely good.

Many people had a great night at Trinity.

First, we were entertained by Rev Sheila Hamill, Salman Aziz and Mehreen his daughter with 3 very good songs. Carole Parkins then updated us on the work of Walking With and then Margaret Storey showed us pictures of the recent work that our donations had funded in Nicaragua. Both reports were very well presented.

After a short break when we could buy from the lottery, tombola and stalls, Bob Hamill started the auction.

With Bob as the auctioneer the rest of the evening was just one long laugh. Every item had a story, and what did he mean when he said not to buy anything from someone on Wallsend High Street who was out of breath?

No one parted with a fortune but by the end of the evening there was £600 to split between the two charities and a great time was had by all.

If you missed this one I'm sure there'll be another event next year. Make sure you get to that one.

Alan Barker

Christenings!

In 1900 the Duck family lived in Ramsbury Manor, England. When it was time for their third son to be christened, the mother chose the name William. Unfortunately the father was too ill with gout to go to the church, so he told the nanny to name him plain Bill. The nanny gave this name to the vicar and the poor baby was christened Plainbill Duck.

Many years ago a baby was taken to be christened in Peckham, South East London. The parents and godparents arrived at the church but they still hadn't agreed on a name. When the vicar said, "Please name this child" one friend said, "John"; another disagreed saying, "Oh, no!". As no one else said anything, the poor baby was duly christened Ono Tichiner.

"I definitely want Brooklyn to be christened, but I don't know into what religion yet" (said a certain famous footballer in a TV interview.)

A few years ago, a popular baby website conducted some research into the most unfortunate names in Britain. Here are their results.....

Helen Back; Terry Bull; Tim Burr; Rose Bush; Pearl Button; Barry Cade; Justin Case; Mary Christmas; Chris Cross; Sonny Day; Barb Dwyer; Teresa Green; Ray Gunn; Doug Hole; Jo King; Lee King; Hazel Nutt; Max Power; Will Power; Stan Still; Paige Turner; Anna Sasin.

With thanks to www.thebabywebsite.com and "Bloopers and Blessings" published by the Leprosy Mission.

A Prayer/Meditation for Good Friday

Father, we seek your forgiveness for our ignorance, our blind stupidity, our weakness and our prejudice.

Forgive us that, so often and so easily, like Pilate we are swayed by the crowd.

We do not find it easy to stand out, to be different, or even to stand up and be counted as your people.

We are like Pilate: we know what is right, we know what we ought to say and do, but we find the price of doing it far too high.

We are like the crowd; we know deep down what our words, thoughts and actions are doing to your world, to other peoples' lives and to you.

We are like the soldiers: we find it so much easier to stand by, to excuse ourselves by claiming that all the suffering in your world is not our fault - there is nothing we can do.

We are like the disciples : here in the midst of those who believe we have made our proud confessions of faith.

Sunday by Sunday, we have met to praise, thank, and worship you.

We have gathered for fellowship with the faithful.

But Lord, we, like the disciples, have denied you, running away in fear of our Christianity being discovered.

Father, forgive us that who and what we are, and what we are not, cries out against your love; help us not to crucify again the Lord of glory.

We pray that our experience of your presence may give us the power to become living examples of your grace, that as we know you more and more as our Father we may have that conviction that enables us to place everything into your loving hands, even our sin and shame.

In the face of all the hatred, hostility and bitterness of his enemies, Christ offered nothing but love in return.

Lord, enable us to do the same and may we do it in his name, in his strength and for his glory.

Amen

From "500 more prayers for all occasions" by David Clowes

Signs of the Times

Some churches put witty messages on their notice boards. Here are some you might like:-

- We are soul agents in this area.
- Come to church this Sunday and avoid the Christmas rush.
- There are some questions that can't be answered by Google.
- Can't sleep? Don't count sheep - talk to the Shepherd!
- Hoot if you love Jesus. Text while driving if you want to meet him.
- Over 2000 years old and still under the Maker's guarantee.
- Church Car Park. If you park here, you are liable a) to be blocked in b) to be prayer for.
- If your problem is long-standing, try kneeling.
- Don't let worry kill you. Let the church help.
- Down in the mouth? Come in for a faith lift.

“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Proverbs 17, v 22. King James Version)

Points to Ponder

- If you don't have a vision, you remain stuck in what you know. And the only thing you know is what you've already seen.
- True masters are those who have chosen to make a life rather than a living.
- There will always be a reason why you meet people. Either you need them to change your life, or you're the one that will need to change theirs.
- Just because a person smiles all the time doesn't mean that their life is perfect. That smile is a symbol of hope and strength.
- A negative thinker sees a difficulty in every opportunity. A positive thinker sees an opportunity in every difficulty. *Zig Ziglar*
- It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change. *Charles Darwin.*
- The planet does not need more "successful people". The planet desperately needs more peacemakers, healers, and restorers. *Dalai Lama*
- Good deeds aren't done by walking into a church. They're done by walking out and helping others.
- Worship is an incredible privilege, not a religious duty. *Chris Tomlin*
- Stress can destroy much more than just our physical health. Too often, it eats away at our hope, belief and faith. *Charles F Glassman.*
- Maybe your life is not falling apart; maybe it is falling together. Don't fearfully hold onto what needs to end. The familiar life crumbles so the new life can begin.
- Start by doing what is necessary; then do what is possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible. *St. Francis.*
- If you don't leave your past in the past, it will destroy your future. Live for what today has to offer, not what yesterday has taken away.

Most of these quotes are freely available on the Internet and cannot always be attributed to a particular person.

Messy Church



My family and I have been coming to messy church for a few months now and what a lovely experience it has been for us all. We are regular attendees at Trinity Methodist Church and have been made to feel so at home whenever we come to Allen Memorial for Messy Church.

The range of activities available along with the Word of God that underpins everything that happens within Messy Church on our termly Thursday evenings gives myself, my husband and our two young children a great sense of joy and community spirit.

All of the volunteers that come together to plan the activities and special occasions at Allen are truly wonderful and have made us feel so welcome from the beginning. It is lovely to see the passion and commitment that shines from each and every one of them. Nothing is too much trouble for anyone and they always have huge smiles on their faces which in turn spreads throughout the children and also to the many other mum's, dad's and grandparents.

The meal that is provided near the end of the get together provides me with a welcome break from chef duties at home and always tastes fresh and tasty. The Messy Grace before home time always fills my heart (and my eyes) with tears of joy, knowing that once again we have brought our children and ourselves to experience the love of God with lots of like minded people. All in all Messy Church has become a welcome addition to our family journey in faith and really challenges the notion that "church is only meant for Sunday's". We love Messy Church and long may it continue. God bless all.

Gemma Alabi and Family.

Smile!

Some One-Liners from the Edinburgh Fringe (last year)

1. I'm not a fan of the new pound coin, but then again, I hate all change. *Ken Cheng*
2. "I've given up asking rhetorical questions. What's the point?" *Alexei Sayle.*
3. "I'm looking for the girl next door type. I'm just going to keep moving house till I find her"
Lew Fitz.
4. "I like to imagine the guy who invented the umbrella was going to call it the "brella". But he hesitated.
Andy Field.
5. "Combine Harvesters. And you'll have a really big restaurant" *Mark Simmons.*
6. "I have two boys, 5 and 6. We're no good at naming things in our house" *Ed Byrne.*
7. "I wasn't particularly close to my dad before he died.....which was lucky, because he trod on a land mine"
Olaf Falafel.
8. "A friend tricked me into going to Wimbledon by telling me it was a men's singles event"
Angela Barnes.
9. "As a vegan, I think people who sell meat are disgusting; but apparently people who sell fruit and veg are grocer"
Adele Cliff
10. "I wonder how many chameleons sneaked onto the Ark"
Adam Hess.

With thanks to LIVErNEWS, the National Support Newsletter for Liver Patients, their carers and families.

Seasons of our lives

There is a winter in all of our lives, a chill and darkness that makes us yearn for days that have gone, or put our hope in days yet to be.

Father God, you created seasons for a purpose. Spring is full of expectation, buds breaking, frosts abating and an awakening of creation before the first days of summer.

Now the sun gives warmth and comfort to our lives, reviving aching joints, bringing colour, new life and crops to fruiting.

Autumn gives nature space to lean back, relax and enjoy the fruits of its labour, mellow colours in sky and landscape as the earth prepares to rest.

Then winter, cold and bare as nature takes stock, rests, unwinds, sleeps until the time is right.

An endless cycle and yet a perfect model.

We need a winter in our lives, a time of rest, a time to stand still, a time to reacquaint ourselves with the faith in which we live.

It is only then that we can draw strength from the one in whom we are rooted, take time to grow and rise through the darkness into the warm glow of your springtime to blossom and flourish, bring colour and vitality into this world, your garden.

Thank you Father, for the seasons of our lives.

Author unknown.

Trinity Coffee Mornings

The Saturday coffee morning at Trinity really needs more volunteers to go on the rota to run them and more people to come and enjoy the fellowship.

At the moment we have an average of 15 people coming to the coffee mornings and I'm sure that all of them would tell you that it's a wonderful way to have fellowship with your fellow friends and other friends of Trinity.

We only have four couples on the rota now and this means that they are running the coffee mornings about once a month. I think this is too often and would love to see others come onto the rota and help to spread the load.

The tables and chairs are normally put out by the Youth Club on Friday nights, so you just have to take the kettles, cups and coffee/tea makings through to the hall, make teas and coffees and wash up afterwards. Thanks to Mick and Bill the tables and chairs disappear at about 11.30.

Although the coffee morning is not a fund-raising event, 2 or 3 times a year we run it in aid of a charity. Macmillan, Christian Aid etc. This usually brings in a lot more people and all takings are given to the charity.

It seems quite simple, a couple of people give a couple of hours of their time, and the result is a good way to get people to visit the church and witness its fellowship and warm atmosphere.

Alan Barker

Toddlers at Allen Memorial Church.

Wednesdays between 9:30am and 11:30.

The Toddler Group meets at Allen Memorial each Wednesday between 9:30am and 11:30am.

At present we have around 24 children attending.

There are a variety of toys available and usually a craft table using play dough and card making or coming up Easter bonnets.

In addition, everyone is supplied with tea, coffee, orange juice and a never-ending plate of biscuits.

This is a popular group with a very happy atmosphere.



Preachers and Services

Allen Memorial

Trinity

March

4 th	10.45 a.m. 6.00 p.m.	Mrs Chris Carroll. Mrs Margaret Harrison.	10.45 a.m.	Pastor Tom Leighton.
11 th	10.45 a.m. 6.00 p.m.	Rev Glynn Lister. Rev Janet Jackson Communion Service.	10.45 a.m.	Mr Tim Rogers.
18 th	10.45 a.m. 6.00 p.m.	Mr David Stabler. Rev Harold Stuteley	10.45 a.m.	Rev Janet Jackson Communion Service.
25 th	10.45 a.m. 6.00 p.m.	Rev Janet Jackson Communion Service. Circuit service at Brunswick.	10.45 a.m.	Mrs Pat Gurr.
29 th	7 p.m.	Joint Service at Trinity	7 p.m.	Maundy Thursday service led by Deacon Gail.
31 st	10.40 a.m.	WCWT Service at Trinity	10.40 a.m.	Good Friday Service Followed by walk to service at Park Bandstand.
April 1 st	10.45 a.m.	Rev Malcolm Newman Communion Service united with Trinity.	8 a.m.	Rev Janet Jackson Early Easter Communion joint with Allen Memorial followed by breakfast.

Trinity Saturday Coffee Morning Rota

March

3rd Mick & Zoe Watson

10th Susan Bewley &
Lynda McQuillan

17th Maureen Mills &
Lorna Morgan

24th Sylvia Aston &
Janis Duff

31st Mick & Zoe Watson

April

7th Susan Bewley &
Lynda McQuillan

Trinity Door Stewards Rota

(All 10-45 a.m. unless otherwise noted)

March

4th Mr L Lawson

11th Mrs J Scott.

18th Mrs S Aston.

25th Mrs S Filmer.

April

1st Mrs L Morgan. **8 a.m.**

Allen Memorial Prayer Corner

On Wednesday 21st March 6 to 7 p.m.

Everyone is welcome to join in.

Toddlers at Allen Memorial.

Wednesdays between 9:30am and 11:30.

Trinity Flower Rota

Sunday 4th March

Renata Burley

Sunday 11th March

Doreen Kirtley

Sunday 18th March

Maureen Mills

Sunday 25th March

Susan Bewley

Sunday 1st April

Bill & Shirley Filmer

Last month our communion table flowers brought their beauty and our prayers to Bill & Agnes Paterson, Sylvia Aston, Eileen & Alan, Olive Lindsay & Doreen Kirtley.

Trinity

Audio Visual Operators

Church Steward

March

4th

Alan Barker

Susan Bewley

11th

Susan / Lynda

Mark Burdon

18th

Alan Barker

Bill Filmer

25th

Mark Burdon

Alan Barker

29th **7 p.m.**

Alan Barker

30th **10.40**

a.m.

Mark Burdon

April

1st **8 a.m.**

Alan Barker

Susan Bewley

Articles By?

All articles for the April edition of AT Church should be handed in by Sunday 25th March.