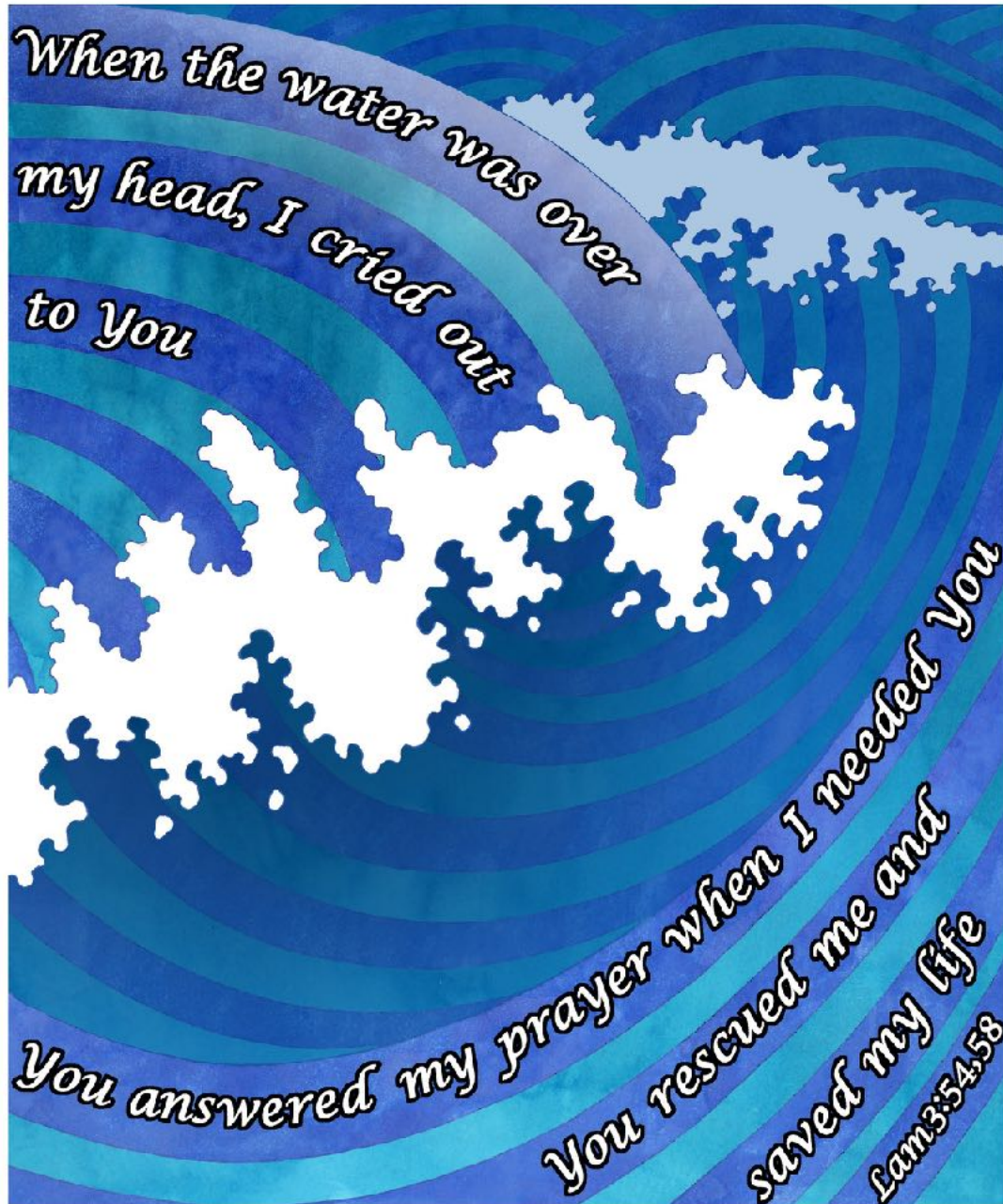


CONTACT



Magazine of Erdington Methodist Church
Station Road - March 2023

GROWING GOD'S KINGDOM IN ERDINGTON, THROUGH WORSHIP,
PRAYER, ACTION AND FRIENDSHIP

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Mothering Sunday - 19th March 2023

Mothering Sunday is a day of mixed emotions. For many it's a happy, joyous day, but for others it's one of pain and grief. A day to celebrate love, while acknowledging those who cannot have children or have lost them and those who have no relationship with their mother.

In the dying moments of His life, Jesus honoured Mary his mother by showing her love and care. He entrusted His mother to John's protection:

'When Jesus saw His mother there, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.' (John 19:26,27).

While affirming the importance of mothers, Jesus reminds us that the love we show on Mothering Sunday is just a token of our continuous appreciation of them.

Jesus also creates a new way of being family, marking the beginnings of the church. In the past, people would go back to their 'mother' church on this Sunday, to acknowledge its importance in their lives. Jesus invites us into this new family of love and mutual belonging, where we can find a place, irrespective of our own family circumstances.

Church is not always an easy place to be, because we are shaped by our own experience of mothering. We may find it hard to give or receive love without ourselves getting in the way.

However, God's help is available to change things, *'because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.'* (Romans 5:5)

The mother of three difficult youngsters was asked whether she'd have children if she had it to do over again. 'Yes,' she replied. 'But not the same ones.'

Canon Paul Hardingham - Parish Pump

Tuesday Club

Tuesday Club is on March 14th at 2pm.

Rod Evans will be the speaker this month - subject to be revealed on the day!

Come along to find out what it is & enjoy a cuppa & chat.

Everyone welcome.

Breakdown

Yesterday I broke down on the M1. One of those emergency vans charged me £200 to tow me to a service station. I think it may have been the abominable towman!

HERE AM I - SEND ME

So says the banner hanging in church at present. Seeing it in church, brought back the memories of the day it was made.

As a church family we were having a 'Quiet Day' at Alrewas Anglican Church and it was my opportunity to involve the children in making the banner as part of the day

The fabrics had been donated to us and the only place with sufficient space for the whole group to work was the floor at the rear of the church. So sitting and kneeling we began cutting out the shape of the figure, the design of which was copied from the Good News Bible. I had drawn the outline on paper so the youngsters pinned the paper copy to the fabric and cut out the image. While this was going on, some of the group were stitching the hems to take the pole on which it was to hang and roughly tack the bottom up.

Because of time we decided to use fabric glue to fasten the figure to the backing, which sometime later had to be stitched as the glue wasn't permanent. Then came cutting out of the letters which was quite a challenge for some of the group. Placing them correctly on the banner was another challenge as the lettering had to be straight, which kneeling on the floor, (and endeavouring to keep excited youngsters quiet-ish!) proved difficult. And by now the knees were definitely complaining!

At the end of the day we hung the banner up in an appropriate place to display it for our closing epilogue, along with results of other groups' activities (and to be admired by the congregation!)

So there it is - the challenge!



There are several positions to be filled within the church. Are YOU able to volunteer and help?

Ann Tomes

Musing on Daily Life

What's a perfect gift for a person who has everything?

Storage space!

Rod's Ponderings

I cut this article from the newspaper nearly 7 years ago. At the time I felt indignation at the couples behaviour - reading it today I realise I now have a different take. I began to think the situation was more complicated than it first appeared.

I need first to give some background to my thinking and what has made me change my rather simplistic view of seven years ago.

An evangelical preacher called R T Kendall was booked by Spring Harvest to give the morning Bible study sessions. During one of the morning sessions he talked about John Newton's experience of becoming a Christian. He apparently remained a slave trader for a significant time after his conversion. It took him time to realise that dealing in humans was not compatible with Christ's message

What R T Kendall teased out about this was that Christian life was a changing process, that as we matured in our faith our view of human behaviour often changed. I do not compare myself with Newton. However, I have changed as a Christian in seven years. I now think differently



Back to the newspaper article. . . I now divide it up. The folk who donated the £640 did so to help someone. Is that not a good work, whatever the outcome?

In the parable of the good Samaritan there is no record of the saved Jew being grateful. Is there any need for him to be grateful? Wasn't the deed good in itself? How the recipient received may be relevant in some way but I don't think it is needed to legitimise the act.

Ms Elliott is sadly 'heartbroken' by her recipients behaviour, which is not surprising, but is sad if it makes her regret her motive of wanting to do good.

The book of James is quite helpful on this one - James says that the very presence of faith in Christ in your life should result in good works. It makes no mention of gratefulness of the recipient. It is purely a requirement of faith.

In a very small way my experience of being a nurse is another example I was not infrequently met with insults and aggression by the folk I tried to help but this was always 'par for the course.'

Now let's look at what the article decided the money should be used for. Was it appropriate? Could it have been spent more suitably?

The young couple were probably rough sleepers. They may well have spent much time on the streets, and in squats. If one is living in a derelict house, your behaviour is probably quite different from that of a hotel room. The doors come off and are burned for heat next the upstairs floor boards go up in smoke and the banisters or

even the stairs themselves into the hearth. So was a hotel room over Christmas going to be cherished?

This is in no way intended to affect the motive of wanting to help - it is just a suggestion that we could learn positively about unintended errors rather than feel heartbroken.

Well, this is a bit of a ramble I know, but I would like to conclude with a further quote of John Newton, by R T Kendall. Newton was supposed to have said of his faith:

*I am not what I want to be
and I am not what I should be,
but thank God I am not what are used to be.*

Rod Evans.

Traidcraft goes into administration !

Traidcraft PLC – a Christian group that has spent years campaigning for fair trade – has gone into administration.

The stands were familiar to many churchgoers, with almost 3,000 churches in the country selling Traidcraft products at some point in their 40-year history.

The brand cited the coronavirus pandemic, the war in Ukraine and soaring energy prices as the reasons behind the severe financial difficulties.

Random Acts of Kindness Day 2023

'One kind word can change someone's entire day'.

I just wanted to share this with you because it was such a lovely thing to happen.

My colleague Claire, who is also a very close friend, and I both had a particularly arduous day lecturing at the university with a large group of students (70) several of which clearly didn't want to be there and had been quite disruptive in the group. We were tired and fed up by the end of the afternoon and decided that we had really earned a coffee and cake.

En route to the coffee shop we spotted a delightful sight; a small truck being pulled by two adults. The truck held six young toddlers all around the age of three or four who looked cheeky, very happy and jolly, clearly enjoying their trip out in their unique mode of transport. We were gestured over to them and asked if they could give us something.



It was a lilac-coloured tulip which had a tag on it containing a 'kindness' quote. The children were giggling and smiling as they passed them to us. The tag also explained that it was 'Random Acts of Kindness Day 2023' and the children were from a local day nursery out on the streets with their carers giving out 'random acts of kindness'. This was such a better tonic than the coffee and cake we were going to have, less calories for a start! It really did cheer us both up. The look of happiness on their faces was amazing and so heart-warming. They no doubt had little idea what they had actually done but were responding to the joy we were displaying on our faces. The woes of the day were quickly forgotten although we still topped it up with the coffee and cake!!

Having checked out Random Acts of Kindness Day 2023 on the internet I have learnt that it is an organisation which has been going for many years and is encouraged to improve and promote mental health and wellbeing for both the giver and the receiver. Schools and organisations are encouraged to participate and there is a wealth of resources on line. Random acts of kindness are defined as selfless acts given to another person to positively affect their mood or wellbeing and research suggests that performing random acts of kindness brings positive benefits to the giver both mentally and physically. So, simple acts of kindness can make more of a difference than we might realise. Sounds good to me.

Christine Rossiter

News from Rev Nichola Jones



The procession of 120 clergy and bishops in Jerusalem for the ordination of the first Palestinian woman to a Palestinian church with a determined Rev Nichola striding along talking to the Canadian Bishop in the red cape and being almost deafened by the Scout band who played 'Jingle bells' at this highly emotional moment! It was a stunning ordination for Revd Sally Azar where the majority of clergy were women : it's doubtful that such a gathering has happened like this ever before.

The photo above came from the BBC World Service online which announced with a flourish that it was a remarkable event making church history. What a privilege to be included.

How heartbreaking and sad after this marvellous experience to then have the worst violence since 2005 erupt across the Occupied West Bank, partly in response to the new government who is

extremely hardline. We saw photos on TV of the 13 dead Palestinian teenagers shot by Israeli soldiers and left bleeding in the streets of Jenin and then a Palestinian took a gun and killed 10 Jewish worshippers as they left synagogue the next day.

There is no simple answer to a highly complex situation which has been going on for over 74 years but until Israel ends its occupation by armed soldiers of the towns and villages of the West Bank there seems no end to the violence. Palestinians need a Prime Minister they can trust and respect to enable some chance of peace and justice.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu used to say, 'I am puzzled which Bible people are reading when they say religion and politics don't mix' since politics is about people and how they have a voice and religion is about the dearest things which motivate our hearts.

I have come home exhilarated by the emotions of Ordination and the hopes we place in a strong young Palestinian woman yet also heart sore and troubled since there is no end to the cycle of hopelessness and despair. May our prayers hold together both Arabs and Jews, both Palestinian and Israeli so both religions and histories can try to make a start towards reconciliation, justice and peace. Thank you for your prayers for my safe travelling . . . they were surely answered!

Rev Nichola Jones

Tipping point(s)

Years ago, I remember having a conversation with Nick about the merits and problems associated with electric cars. He was championing the concept of 'tipping points', when for some reason, what, until then, had seemed



implausible, suddenly becomes the norm. I can remember working at East Birmingham Hospital (Heartlands now) when I was fairly recently qualified and driving into Birmingham during my lunch time to buy one of those newfangled pots of yoghurt. Suddenly they were everywhere and now who could imagine the dairy aisle in a supermarket without yoghurts. Similarly, with 'continental quilts'. I grew up with sheets, blankets and eiderdowns, but as soon as people began to have continental holidays and experienced the convenience of simplified bed making 'duvets' no longer called continental quilts were suddenly the must have.

Why am I reminding you of this. Well, this year at the World Economic Forum in Davos a report was published about tipping points and climate change. A group of scientists at Exeter University were commissioned to write a report suggesting that there are three tipping points which could be used to mitigate some of the risks of climate change and which could be reached without too much difficulty. One of them caught my eye, the other two were much more complex and otherworldly.

The report suggestion that where government is responsible for the procurement of food, such as in hospital, schools and prisons 30% of sausages, burgers and fillets should be plant based. This would allow food manufacturers to scale up to meet the demand. This in turn should lead to improved quality and a more rapid achievement of the economic inevitability that plant-based products are cheaper than foods containing real meat. It would also create an increasing cohort of people for whom vegetarian sausages are not unusual or worthy of comment. This in turn would lead to a decrease in animal-based products without anything having to be banned. At this point it is worth remembering that that the production of meat accounts for 60% of all farmers' greenhouse gasses.

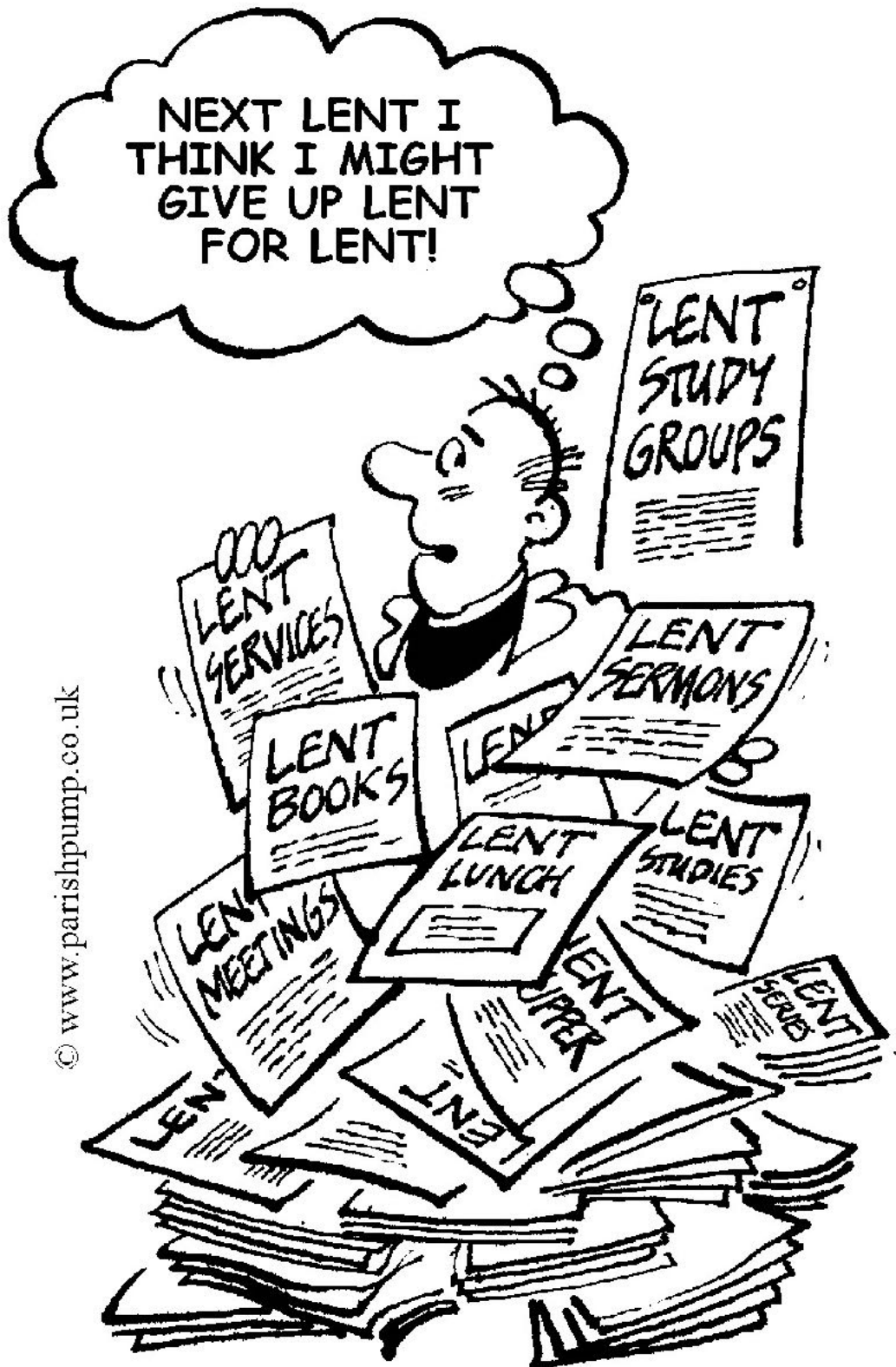
If you had asked me before we left Sutton about vegetarian sausages I would probably have reluctantly shrugged my shoulders. But times have changed and one of my grandsons has decided that he wants to be vegetarian and another is thinking about it, so we have perforce had to try plant-based convenience foods, sausages and burgers and there really isn't a problem.

So, could we change 30% of our meat to plant-based products? It might be difficult initially but once we had got over the logistics I am not at all sure that we would notice much difference.

Could you make a 30% change and contribute to speeding up the arrival of the tipping point?

Peter Farley

Lent Overload



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A prayer for earthquake victims

Even though the tragedy of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria has already started to drift out of the news coverage we continue to pray for those struggling with the circumstances - ed

Heavenly Father,

We look on with desperation at the events unfolding in Turkey and Syria and turn our faces towards you, our sovereign Lord.

Your profound and powerful love brings hope, even in the midst of the most devastating circumstances.

While we feel distant and helpless, we know that you are present and able to bring transformation.

Draw near, Father God.

Draw near to those who are grieving.

Draw near to those who are working tirelessly to provide essential aid.

Draw near to Jesus followers who are beacons of your love in the darkness.

Draw near to those in critical roles providing co-ordination, logistical support, and life-saving medical treatment.

Draw near to all those who need to know that you are with them.

We choose to trust in your unfailing love.

Amen

Time for some good news!

If you can't bear to watch or read the news, you're not alone.

Newly published research shows that more than seven out of ten news publishers are concerned about increasing levels of 'news avoidance.'

More and more people are turning away from the news because it's just too difficult to take. And that may present an opportunity for Christians to present our life-giving gospel message.

The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism has published its 'Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2023' report, based on a wide-ranging survey of 303 news leaders in 53 countries. It explores the latest developments in journalism and the priorities for the year ahead.

One area of deep concern was increasing levels of 'news avoidance' with 72 per cent of publishers worried about the phenomenon. Many readers and viewers were avoiding news, especially, says the report "around important but often depressing topics like Ukraine and climate change."

Does this widespread 'news avoidance' have any messages for the Church and for Christians generally? Well, maybe two.

The first is for ourselves. How guilty are we of scrolling past bad news on our social media feed, switching off the TV or radio, or pausing a podcast when the subject matter becomes tough to take?

That's tempting to do, but it's important for Christians to be aware of events and trends across the globe, to enable us to pray intelligently, and to be able to support organisations and people working to make the world a better place.

The second is about how we present our gospel message. We have 'good news' to proclaim, while we are living in a time when people are turning away from news of any kind, seeking instead to look for entertainment and distraction.

In our preaching, in our personal testimonies and in the wide range of ways that we communicate the gospel message of 'abundant life' through Jesus Christ, we are called to be positive and upbeat.

In a world that is turning away from bad news, we have good news to offer. Our mission is to present this good news in ways that can catch the attention of a distracted world that's tired of the gloom and looking for something better.

From the Parish Pump website

Present

For their elderly vicar's 70th birthday, the congregation at St Mary's decided to give him a present of a new suit. The vicar was so moved by the gift that the following Sunday he stood before everyone and began his homily with a tear in his eye, "Today I am preaching to you in my birthday suit."

GO!

A teenager was always asking his father if he could borrow the family car. Pushed to the limit, the father asked his son why he thought that God had given him two feet. Without hesitation, the son replied, "That's easy, one for the clutch and one for the accelerator."



Worship – March 2023

All worship at 10.30 am unless indicated otherwise

5th - LOCAL ARRANGEMENT

12th - Diana Bosman

19th - LOCAL ARRANGEMENT

26th - Rev Peter Grimwood

XSeed Worship - 4.30 pm

Please hand any items for the April CONTACT to me - Nick Riley by 21st March 2022 at the latest please, or alternatively email me:

nickriley@blueyonder.co.uk with the words 'CONTACT MAG' in the title.