The Welwyn Magazine

March 2021

www.welwyn.org.uk

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Editor's Note:

We normally publish reports on activities and meetings occurring in the village but these activities have inevitably been cancelled due to Covid-19. Hence, therefore, there is little to report!

We would welcome any articles on local matters from our readers. Please send details by email to: ***magazine@welwyn.org.uk*** *or contact St Mary's church office on* ***01438 840964***

EDITOR'S NOTES

Articles by the 1st of the month preceding publication, see details above.

The Editors reserve the right to shorten or omit articles or refuse advertisements.
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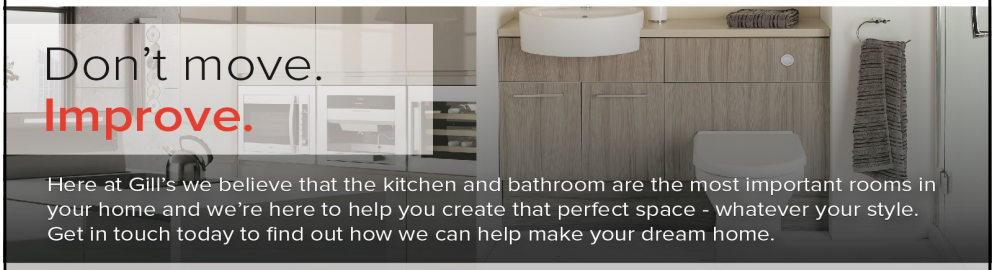

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The Rector's Letter

Dear Friends

Lent this year might seem like an ironic joke. What are you giving up for Lent? Well, where do I start? Going out, meeting people, etc. …. And of course, for many it isn't a very funny joke. Worries about the virus itself are supplemented by mental health issues, educational issues, employment and economic issues – the list goes on. Also, ironically of course, we hope, given the progress of the vaccination programme, that during this time restrictions will start to be relaxed – who knows? But perhaps when I'm writing next month for Easter, we might be able to see literal signs of resurrections. Here's hoping.

However, this is an important distinction. The spiritual discipline of voluntary giving something up is the opposite of having it forced upon us by circumstance. Giving up booze for Lent is the opposite of living in a society under prohibition; giving up driving a car for environmental reasons is the opposite of the government taking away my driving licence; going on a retreat for a week is the opposite of being sent to a prison.

The Greek orthodox writer Anthony Bloom describes this distinction with a gardening metaphor – Lenten discipline is pruning for growth. In other words, we cut back in order that we might grow as people. In the end we will be more whole because of it. That's different from pruning which is designed to restrict the size of an overgrown plant.

That doesn't mean however that there aren't opportunities which by God's grace can be turned into growth within this time of pandemic. I have to say that I don't agree with those who are constantly going on about these opportunities – these are silver linings to clouds, but they are still clouds not a sunny vista. Overall let's be clear COVID19 is a big negative for humanity and it would be better if it had never occurred. We should be honest with that as our starting point. But as we emerge there are things which can be used for growth. A deeper concern for the environment; an awareness of both the possibilities and limitations of technology; renewed respect and hopefully reward for those who work in vital but undervalued services; the importance of culture whether it be the piles of books we have read, or the box sets we have binged; an appreciation both of solitude, family and home, but also a renewed appreciation of social networks of friends. You may well have other things to add to this list.

Life with COVID19 should not be confused with a voluntary spiritual discipline, but how we emerge from it is partly at least dependent on what lessons we choose to take from it.

David

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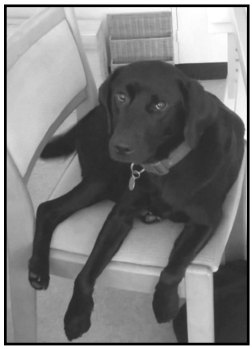
JESSIE - The Rectory Dog



This is the best Lent ever! Normally he's a bit grumpy and withdrawn from some of the stuff humans enjoy. And to be frank he's had the hump for the best part of a year now, but I've kind of got used to that. But apart from that stupid bicycle device, I'm one of the few reasons at the moment that he needs to leave the house. And not only that but once we're out he often decides that we perhaps could have a bit of a longer walk today. The rest of the time he's around, and very often if he's working, he's doing something called 'zooming' – which is very strange as it involves no 'zoom' at all, but sitting very still. He doesn't really like his 'zooming' (other platforms are available) but he – and fellow zoomers all seem to agree, that there is no zooming thing which is not improved by the presence of a pet on the computer screen. And then in an almost Labrador-like way he has become slightly obsessed by food. Which is great because we can spend long hours together in the kitchen cooking – strangely he seems to think that he does all the work, but we all know it's a very busy time for me. Of course, all this self-denial will make him a better person, or that's the idea. I have to say that it is a concept wholly alien to Labradors – we are really not that into delayed gratification. Our creed is fairly simple: What do we want? Food, walks, sofa (in that order). When do we want it? Just hurry up will you. I think you'll agree it's pithier and more to the point than anything which came out of Nicea or Constantinople (the great creed creating councils of the church from 325 and 381 respectively – you see I do listen to Master sometimes….)

Jess

Just for fun

Q: What kind of dog did Dracula have?

A: A bloodhound.

What do you get if you cross a Rottweiler and a hyena? I don't know but I recommend you join in if it laughs.

Q: Why do dogs make terrible dance partners?

A: They've got two left feet!

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1st Welwyn Scouts

1st Welwyn Scouts – Victims of our own success

It is a while since I have updated you how the Scout Group is doing,

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, our wonderful group of leaders has provided fun, educational, and different activities for Beavers, Cubs and Scouts throughout 2020, what we term 'Skills for Life'. This, despite the various lock downs. Some meetings were face to face with social distancing, when permitted, and the rest have taken place virtually.

However, due to work pressures two of our Beaver leaders are currently having to prioritise their work commitments, meaning that our remaining leader cannot run meetings safely unless we can get new regular helpers.

Could you help?

We have a waiting list of youngsters registered to join, keeping us at full capacity till 2022. Our Beaver section is so popular, and it would be tragic if the Colony, which welcomes both girls and boys, had to close or could only run occasional meetings due to lack of leaders.

The Scout Group has provided opportunities for youngsters to have alternatives to home schooling and video games, and the feedback from their parents and the youngsters has been fantastic. Just what they needed as a change of scene and a fresh way to stimulate their minds and, in many cases, get them active.

It has also been a fun challenge for the parents getting things ready for virtual meetings, like cooking supplies or crafting materials so that the youngsters can simultaneously bake cakes, build dens, or whatever was on the programme for that week.

Bear Grylls—Chief Scout

You do not need to have been a Scout or Guide to be able to help, just willing to support the children, and help them explore and create.

Ideally, we would prefer that you can help on a regular basis for the meetings which are from 17:30-18:30 each Tuesday, during term times. But if you can only offer a few weeks per term that would still be a great help.

The leaders and other helpers get training on the job which is all quite common sense and fun for the adults too. To see 24 youngsters responding to the challenges set them is an extremely rewarding experience for you as an adult.

So please contact me on a.trotter@btinternet.com, or on 07580 942319, either to ask any questions, or so that I can put you in touch with Emma Pearce, our Beaver Leader. Our Cubs and Scouts sections are equally popular and full of adventurous youngsters.

Continued on p. 9

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1st Welwyn Scouts

This gives our Scout Group around 80 young people across the sections all gaining 'Skills of Life' which get steadily more challenging and exciting as they get older and build their confidence. They may even, like many 1st Welwyn Scouts before them, get the opportunity to go to a World Jamboree, once we're able to get them out camping and exploring again.

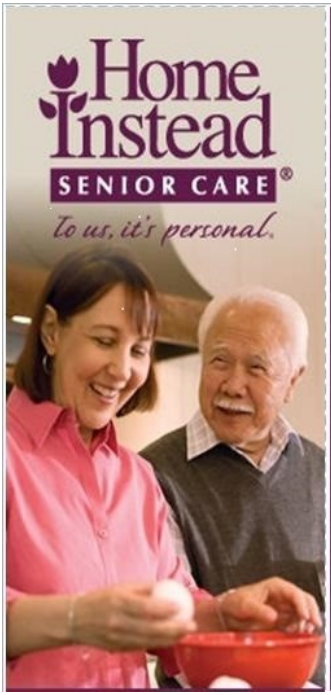
Andy Trotter - Group Chairman – 1st Welwyn Scout Group

Snippets

Apologies to everyone who spotted the "deliberate" mistake in last month's magazine. The entrance to the Danesbury Fernery is, of course, in Danesbury Park Road ....

St Mary's Church has been sending out a twice-weekly email to keep people connected not only with what's happening in the church but also some local issues. If you would like to receive this please email hello@welwyn.org.uk to join the distribution list.

This is your magazine. We would love to receive articles from you. Please submit anything you think would be of interest to the Parish as a whole. Details of how to submit are on the front page.



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Strong passwords can be an effective way to prevent unauthorised users accessing your online information but the security of your money and data might be in danger if your password is discovered. If your email is hacked, it could be used to impersonate you or to defraud your contacts. Also, criminals could reset or change your other passwords, via the “forgotten password” option on many sites.

Some fraudsters attempt to access the secure data of individuals using techniques such as sending malware links in emails or fraudulently gaining access to a victim’s computer.

However, there have also been well-publicised cases of massive data breaches at shops and financial services companies, and social networks.

Sometimes passwords are stolen when an attacker cracks the password on a low-security website, so take care to use strong and unique passwords for each site, especially your email, your bank, shops and anywhere that holds confidential or financial information.

Choose a password that is at least eight characters in length (longer passwords are stronger) and use a combination of upper- and lowercase letters, numbers and keyboard symbols. Don’t use your name, username, address, birth date, pet’s name, the name of your favourite sports team, keyboard or numerical sequences, or any word as it appears in the dictionary.

One suggestion from the police is to use three random words from your own theme. For example, you could choose a month, a flower and a colour, so one of your passwords might be Marchdaisyblue7$. Remember to make the passwords long and to add at least one capital letter, number and symbol.

To help remember your passwords you could use password manager software. These tools store all of your passwords so you only have to remember the master password. Obviously, it is most important to use a reliable and secure password manager, so choose carefully using reviews from reputable magazines or websites.

If a website offers "two-step verification," use it. This will require you to enter a code sent as a text message, as well as your password, meaning that only someone with your phone can sign in, even if they know your password.

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WOOLMER GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

Village Hall – The hall remains closed for most activities but there are some that are allowed to take place. Please make enquiries for bookings to bookings@woolmergreenpc.org.uk.

While the Hall has been closed works have been carried out to replace the boiler and resolve issues with the heating. The Parish Council is grateful to County Councillor Richard Smith for funding from his Locality budget to support these much-needed works and to fund repairs to the bark area in the Garden Road playground. The work to the playground will be done when the weather improves.

Local Plan - Two documents referring to windfall calculations and the treatment of enhanced Green Belt boundaries are subject to consultation. The Parish Council's planning consultant has been asked to respond. The Main Modifications document is published - no new sites are proposed in Woolmer Green and the Local Plan's overall 16,000 housing target remains unchanged.

Woolmer Green Farmers' Market

Woolmer Green Market 2021
28 March
25 April
23 May
27 June
18 July
26 September
24 October
28 November
12 December

The January market was cancelled because of concerns about spreading the virus.

If you want to order from any of the stall holders please use the Facebook message option form the Woolmer Green Farmers Market page to get in touch. Many of them are delivering at this time. The plan is to run the February and future markets but please keep an eye on the Market Facebook page for updates about future months.

Sarah Hall
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January 27th PCC Meeting

Once again the PCC was convened entirely over Zoom on Wednesday 27th January. This is a summary of the matters considered by your Parochial Church Council once again ably chaired by the Rev'd Dr David Munchin.

The minutes of November's meeting were unanimously approved without question. There were no matters arising therefrom.

Under Financial Reports – almost before it began a question was raised noting that there was no mention of a contingency fund for St Michael's Church, Woolmer Green to cover unforeseen expenses although it was understood that one exists. The Treasurer advised that while it is not specifically mentioned in the accounts there is indeed a reserve for emergencies at St Michael's included within the general unrestricted fund.

You may recall that in the summary of last November's PCC meeting (in the Dec 2020 / Jan 2021 edition of the Welwyn Magazine) reference was made to Mr Don Bell investigating suppliers of 'green' energy. We can now report that a contract has been entered into with E.ON Clean Energy for both gas and electricity for St Mary's, Church House and for gas only at St Michael's.

Peter McKay of Nicholsons Accountants, who has been examining (auditing) the church's accounts for about 15 years on a pro bono basis for which the PCC is very grateful, has merged with another firm of accountants and will not be able to provide his services free of charge in future. Therefore our new Treasurer and the PCC will need to find someone to act as an independent examiner of the accounts this year. If you or anyone you know with suitable qualifications would be willing to undertake this role on a voluntary basis please contact the Team Rector or the Treasurer – contact details on the inside front cover of this magazine.

At the meeting the Treasurer reported that there are no significant changes to the church accounts since the last meeting in November.

With respect to the ongoing saga of updating the heating system at St Mary's (installing a new boiler, renovating the ground source heat pumps and all the associated work that goes along with those jobs) three tender responses were received by Stuart Jenkin (Church fabric officer) on the day of the meeting. Unfortunately these have come in at about double the original estimate and will be carefully scrutinised by a specialist consultant with the aim of reducing costs where possible, to ensure that nothing is being proposed over and above that which is essentially needed and that the most cost effective methods of work will be employed.

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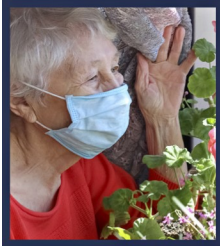

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January 27th PCC Meeting

St. Michael's House – A contractor has been engaged to give the house a much needed makeover including a new kitchen and external doors. It is hoped that this will be completed by the end of March to allow for a clear twelve months let prior to the house being required for a new tenant* at the beginning of June 2022.
Back at St Mary's, their neighbours the Rose & Crown PH, have requested the agreement of the church to erect scaffolding in the churchyard to facilitate the conversion of their barn to a wedding venue. Whether that is for wedding ceremonies or wedding receptions wasn't made clear at the meeting! The PCC gave their agreement.
St Mary's Giving Action Group – The group raises funds throughout the year through various activities which they then distribute to several charities. Raising funds through group activities is thought to be a better way of involving members of the congregation than simply asking for donations and then disbursing cash. The church would like the congregation to feel involved. However, last year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic , many of the usual fund raising activities could not take place. As a result the total funds collected by the end of the year fell well short of target. The PCC agreed to top up the group's 2020 shortfall and agreed that they should allocate the funds to the charities they were already supporting so that they were not disadvantaged by the inability of the GAG to raise their usual level of charitable donations.
The Rector informed the meeting that, following the departure of Dominic Holroyd-Thomas, the Diocese has offered a curate to the Welwyn team from June 2022. *Accordingly St Michael's House must be vacant and available by then.
With regard to improvements to St Mary's livestreaming it is pleasing to report that some excellent pledges of financial support have been received enabling the project to go ahead. A company has been identified to supply equipment, set it up and integrate it with and improve the existing audio system. It is envisaged that the new system will be able to be used for live-streaming weddings, funerals, baptisms and other events in church. This should provide some income.
Lent groups – By the time you read this the **Connect!** courses will be taking place across the Welwyn Team on-line at www.welwyn.org.uk/lent
Alternatively hard copies of the pack are available for £2 in St Mary's and St Michael's churches. If you would like one to be sent to you please contact Rev'd Dr David Munchin.

Sheila Edmondson, a long-time supporter of St Mary's, has generously left a

Continued on p.19

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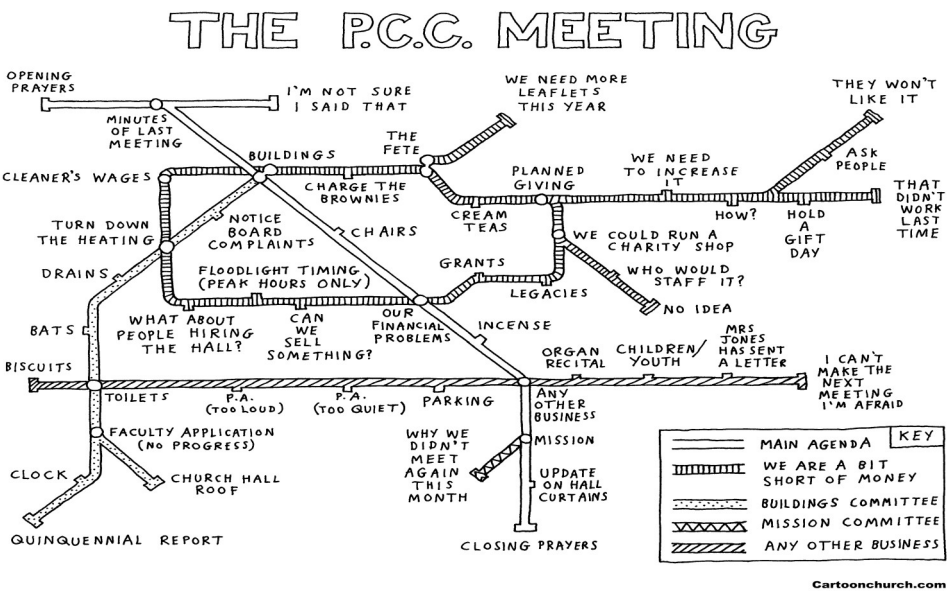
27th January PCC Meeting

bequest to the church and, in addition, her family have offered a bench to go in the churchyard in memory of Sheila.
Under the heading of any other business a question was raised as to what activities are in place to counter the stresses being experienced by children resulting from schools being closed. The reply was that after a day spent being home schooled over Zoom the last thing children are interested in are further screen based activities and so there is almost no merit in making any such activities available during term time. Something will, however, be provided during half term week.
Joan Shelley informed the meeting of her achievement in walking 1,200 laps, a distance of 114 miles, of St Giles' churchyard, Codicote to raise money to buy PPE, masks and hand sanitisers for St Mary's. Joan completed her target of 1,200 laps during December and raised a total of £522.25 – an excellent achievement. Well done Joan.
If you haven't donated but would like to do so please either put a donation in a yellow envelope and leave it in the treasurer's pigeon hole at St Mary's or, preferably, online to 'Welwyn St Mary's Parochial Church Council' at Barclays a/c 60940194 sort code 20-92-54. In the latter case you are kindly requested to email treasurer@welwyn.org.uk enabling the Treasurer to look out for your payment and ensure that it is received. Thank you.

David Hughes



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Patient Participation Group for

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men in the UK. One in eight men in the UK will get prostate cancer. It usually develops slowly, so there may be no signs for many years.

Symptoms of prostate cancer

Symptoms of prostate cancer do not usually appear until the prostate is large enough to affect the tube that carries urine from the bladder out of the penis (urethra).

If you do notice changes in the way you urinate, this is more likely to be a sign of a very common non-cancerous problem called an enlarged prostate, or another health problem. But it's still a good idea to get it checked out. Possible changes include:

- difficulty starting to urinate or emptying your bladder
- a weak flow when you urinate
- a feeling that your bladder hasn't emptied properly
- dribbling urine after you finish urinating
- needing to urinate more often than usual, especially at night
- a sudden need to urinate – you may sometimes leak urine before you get to the toilet.

It is also worth being aware of prostate cancer risk factors. These are:

- Being aged 50 or over. If you fit into this category please do the IPSS questionnaire and if you score highly then contact your GP.
- Having a father or brother that has had prostate cancer.
- Ethnic origin - prostate cancer is more common among men of African- Caribbean and African descent.

COVID-19 Bridge Cottage Surgery is still open. Please note that we have closed the shutters to encourage social distancing. You can access help via: eConsults (online on our website) calling reception on 01438 715044 or leaving a letter through our letter box (in the black door). Current information on the vaccination schedule can also be found on www.bridgecottagesurgery.nhs.uk.

Information taken from - www.nhs.uk and www.prostatecanceruk.com

If you would like further information about the Bridge Cottage Surgery Patient Participation Group please email ppgbridgecottage@gmail.com

Musings from the STAR chamber
(Notes from the Virtual Choir)

Earplugs, chiming clocks and prayer

Singers, some of them members of St Mary's Choir and some of them willing extras, have now been recording hymns and anthems for several months. From some tentative beginnings yielding rough and ready results, the group has grown in confidence and skill, and acquired a few extra contributors along the way! As we approach the six month mark (and indeed the 50 recordings milestone), it seems a good moment to allow the singers to tell you what the experience of recording has meant to them. My thoughts, as Director of Music, are for another occasion but I – and we as a church here in Welwyn – are grateful to each and every one of them, and also to our wonderful editors, Nikki and Stephen, for the contribution they make to the worship at St Mary's.

Linden Innes-Hopkins

We are always amazed at how good the finished article produced by Stephen and Nikki turns out, following Linden's careful instruction and recorded tracks. Listening to the playback of our voices on their own is always a bit disconcerting. Chris has struggled with his voice though it seems to be settling down a bit now. It's good that he can cope with all the necessary technical details. We seem to have got it down to a fine art and the dining room makes a good recording studio (except if the phone rings at a critical moment!). Early on we invested in a pair of Bluetooth headphones to avoid trailing cables. It's also just as well that we have a laptop and iPhone to use. There have been some very stressful moments, for example pronouncing some words without Rita or Vickie's guidance and the odd wrong notes! But there's been great fun too. Nevertheless, we look forward to when we can eventually gather and sing together as a real, rather than a virtual choir.

Joyce and Chris Lund

I can't tell you what a beautifully calming experience it has been for me singing and recording this carol. *(O little one sweet - Ed)* I had been watching CNN live for about an hour with my husband, witnessing the utterly shocking scenes on Capitol Hill, and I just couldn't watch any more.

Musings from the STAR chamber

The full verse accompaniment of this beautiful carol had immediate effect, so soothing, so restorative. What a gem!

From the first days of recording myself solo, it has been a significant journey. It began as a very humbling experience: I wasn't accustomed to having to listen critically to my own voice, apart from in recorded singing lessons, but that was just between me and the teacher, not for other ears! So, the first hurdles were to accept the sound of my own voice, with all its limitations, and to feel comfortable with sending it off to the wizards of sound mixing.

What often surprises me still is which hymns need numerous attempts and which can be successfully recorded after only a couple of trial runs. Phrasing and stress demand care; words require attention too. Different versions of hymns contain the odd unexpected pitfall, whether of word, of notation, or of underlay. And even when I think I'm ready, there's that elephant trap of an error that just catches me unawares, usually in a place where I have never erred before!

All this changes the dynamic of my relationship with the hymns: each becomes a sort of prayer. The more familiar I become with the hymn, the more prayerful the singing can feel. And since the whole point is still collective worship, albeit virtual, it makes me happy to think my small individual contribution can in any way enhance the virtual experience of worship for others.

Claire Robinson

Cathy and Graham have enjoyed enormously the STARS singing, the latter as technical helper.
Picture the scene, Cathy coming to the end of a good recording, and the landline telephone starts ringing, similarly the clock in our lounge announces 11.00am. Both times to start again. There is more than meets the eye to this recording effort.

Cathy and Graham England

Continued on p 24

Musings from the STAR chamber

When launched into the first lockdown last March I thought it would be great to join in with recording to help enable folk to access worship from home. What a steep learning curve with the required technology! Note to self - do not send in the recording where you have said several very naughty words, having messed things up for the 6th time. Stephen and Nikki may be amused but it's not very "Worshipful". It's been fantastic to improve my musicality. Music or words that I thought where familiar, but had been singing wrong for years. Spotting all one's faults and imperfections, but these mixed to form beautiful harmony. Now there's a lesson!

Jo Fozzard

After the initial feelings of trepidation at having a go at something completely new and a few teething problems such as finding ear plugs that fitted properly, I really look forward to doing the weekly recordings. It is so good to be able to keep singing, albeit virtually for the moment. I counted up the pile of hymns and anthems we have done over the months, amazingly over fifty!
Thank you to everyone who makes these recordings possible.

Jane Smith

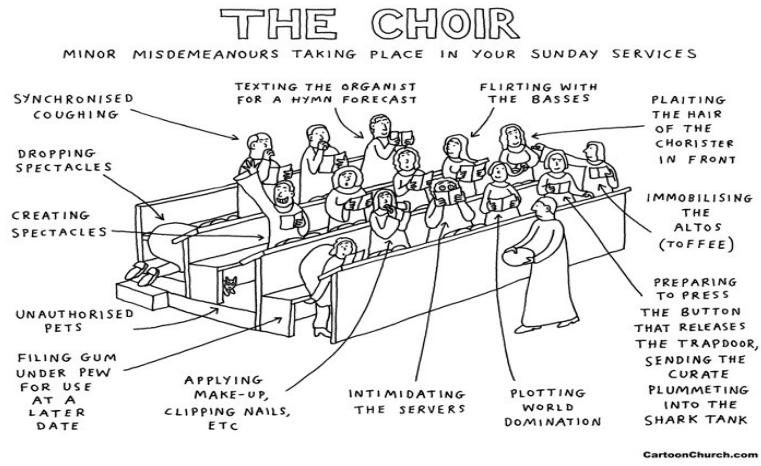
One of the sad facts of life for a chorister is that only very rarely does one get the chance to hear oneself sing. How many times have I taken part in an event, either in Church or the Concert Hall and realised that, whilst a real privilege to have been a participant, the very act of participating - making sure that I didn't breathe in the wrong place, that I was keeping tempo with everyone else and that I used vowels & consonants as instructed - meant that I had missed out completely on the experience the audience had just enjoyed? That, perhaps, whilst I was concentrating on more practical matters, either their worship had been moved to another plane whilst folded into the sound or that the performance had carried them on their imaginations out of the building? It can be very frustrating. And, even in more modern times, when enthusiasts have tried to record events, either the equipment has failed or, because the mix was by no means professional, the resulting 'sound' was more excruciating than voice -affirming!

It is now exactly six months since, as a previous member of the Welwyn St Mary's Church Choir, I was persuaded to join the virtual choir (STARS) - from my new home in faraway Dundee; to submit a recording that would be spliced with

others into a track to be played in place of the now-banned Choir in these scary Covid times. Consequently, to say that I was "wary" would be an understatement. But, according to the EasyVoiceRecording App on my phone, I have just submitted my fiftieth (50th) soundtrack!

Of course, my initial scepticism was discounting entirely the skill – not to say 'magic' – which Linden Innes-Hopkins, Nikki Lewis and Stephen Jupp have woven over the 'sounds' submitted to them on a weekly basis. From diverse and disparate tracks, week by week they have created a finished product which has not only filled the void created by the now physically-missing Choir, but have created a unique and worship-enhancing sound. To whit, try as I might – and I am ashamed to say that I did try very hard – in vain could I hear my 'voice' on last Sunday evening (Candlemas) as the anthem, 'In the Bleak Midwinter', was played. Instead, for the first time in my life, I both heard a truly corporate sound that I was proud to have been part of creating and one which transported me back to a very special time and place in my life of faith. And when I returned to my own space and time, I found that I was looking wistfully upon 'my' seat in the choir stalls as seen via the live-stream and realised how much my fellow missing choristers were on my mind. Except that, thanks to STARS, over the last six months, I have been and will continue to be connected to Welwyn St Mary's in a way the wretched virus quite clearly didn't take into consideration when first it sought to lay waste to our precious lives. An unlooked-for silver lining indeed!

Debbie Coupland



Things we miss about having a "live" choir.

Cartoon by Dave Walker

THANK YOU

We would like to say a big thank-you to Lemon Plaice, XO Wine Merchants, Oaklands Post Office and Welwyn North Stores for continuing to support the Welwyn Magazine by selling copies for us. The magazine is produced by volunteers ten times a year and all the profits go towards maintaining St Mary's and St Michael's Churches.

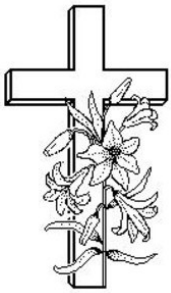
Livestreaming Church

For almost a year services have been livestreamed from St Mary's at no financial cost using clergy phones. However, it has become apparent that a professional set-up would provide a better experience for those participating virtually. Livestreaming is likely to be here to stay when life returns to normal, giving those unable to get to church an opportunity join gathered worship. It will continue to be important for life events such as weddings and funerals when family and friends live abroad or cannot make the journey to Welwyn. This is clearly something that has resonated with people and as mentioned in the PCC report sufficient funding pledges have been received to make this happen, although not until the end of May as suppliers are all very busy at the moment. The church has been glad to livestream funerals over the last few months, when requested, while there are significant restrictions in place preventing many people from attending in person.

Holy week and Easter 2021

Normally, in this magazine, you would expect to see a detailed list of all of the Holy Week and Easter services in each of the churches in our parish. Unfortunately, there is still little in 2021 which is happening as it normally would. Whilst there is hope that at least some services with a congregation might be possible during Holy Week and Easter, this cannot be confirmed at the time of publication. However, services will be livestreamed, but the details will be confirmed at a later date. So the message right now is "Save the date and watch this space!"

Mothering Sunday—14th March
Palm Sunday—28th March
Maundy Thursday— 1st April
Good Friday—2nd April
Easter Day—4th April



Monetary donations on Mothering Sunday will be given to the Codicote Food Bank.

On-Line Men's Breakfast 30th January 2021
"The History of Pantomime" - Alan Browne

Alan Browne, offered us a couple of talks and we chose the "History of Pantomime" because it was seasonable and it offered an opportunity to enjoy the subject in the absence of any live performances this year!
The history of pantomime dates back to Athens in the 7th Century BC when singing choruses originated. In the 6th Century BC. Thespis of Icaria introduced the concept of drama to the chorus. He would play all the parts in telling a story, changing masks for each character. In the 2nd Century a group called the Mimus arrived in Rome. The leading character was the Pantomimus (meaning imitator of everything). Using masks, he would illustrate a story being sung by the chorus. Over the years tales of gods and goddesses morphed into bawdy plays about vice and adultery – much more exciting! However, the good times came to an end when the emperor Constantine came to the throne in AD 324 and adopted Christianity. Christians were not allowed to go to the theatre so it went into decline for many hundreds of years. However ironically it was Christian monks in Switzerland who revived drama to illustrate the bible stories and so passion plays were born.
In England the plays took the form of Mystery Plays. These were street performances with tableaux mounted on carts which moved along with each scene telling a story. Pantomime characters began to evolve such as a man dressed as a large bosomed woman and a joker carrying a slapstick.
In 16th Century Elizabethan London, when all the female parts were played by men, Shakespeare's plays were performed in newly built theatres. Drama became so popular that there were estimated to be 10,000 theatre seats for a population of 200,000 people.

On the Continent, Italian opera was born in the 16th Century followed by "Commedia dell'arte", also known as "Italian comedy." It was a humorous theatrical presentation performed by professional actors who travelled in troupes throughout Italy. Performances took place on temporary stages, mostly on city streets. The actors of the Commedia represented fixed social characters including *tipi fisci*, foolish old men, devious servants, or military officers full of false bravado. Characters such as *Pantalone, a* miserly Venetian merchant, *Dottore Gratiano, a pedantic legal scholar and Arlecchino*, a mischievous servant

Continued on p.30

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Online men's breakfast *(Continued from p28)*

became popular. Pulcinella evolved into Mr Punch when the character came to England and Punch and Judy resulted. The theatre thrived in England until Oliver Cromwell arrived and shut everything down until Charles II, who loved theatre from his days in France, opened theatres again. However, he did a curious thing. He granted only two patents to friends, one to Thomas Killigrew and one to Sir William Davenant. They performed mainly Shakespeare plays at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane and Lincolns Inn Fields. In 1688 John Rich purchased the Theatre Royal and at the end of some performances put on "Harlequinade" as light hearted entertainment. It included the well-known characters from "Commedia dell'arte", Harlequin, Pantolone, Columbine and Pierrot. They marked the beginning of English pantomime. The shows had the same plot and this continued for over 150 years.

In 1687 a Frenchman published *Perrault's* Fairy Tales which included "Sleeping Beauty," "Blue Beard," "The Master Cat or Puss in Boots," "The Fairies," "Cinderella and tales of "Mother Goose". These and other English folk tales became so popular that Rich became very wealthy and built the Covent Garden Royal Opera House in 1732 from the proceeds. At Drury Lane, Joseph Grimaldi encouraged by his father achieved fame as the first clown. From then onwards pantomime productions with names that we still know today became the main source of theatre entertainment. Ladies started to take over the role of the principal boy the most famous being Madame Vestries, popular with the men for showing her legs in the days when such things were not normally seen. Shortened versions of the panto, particularly at Christmas, attracted children. In the Edwardian era, pantomime became the last bastion of audience participation where it was positively encouraged.

Traditional pantomime continued until the 1950s when Norman Wisdom was given the role of Principal Boy. This opened the doors to well known actors and comedians taking the roles of the Dame and Principal Boy. This took pantomime into the show business era which we enjoy today.

Alan was a brilliant speaker and generated many questions and comments from past and present thespians in the audience which numbered 28.

Our next on-line speaker is retired scientist Ian Cunningham on 10th April. His talk is titled "Climate Change – The Need for Debate"

If you are not on the Men's Breakfast list and would like be notified of future speakers, please email Jim Read - Jim Read - jimread55@gmail.com ". Jim will also provide a private YouTube link to anyone who would like to hear our past speakers.

Peter Lee

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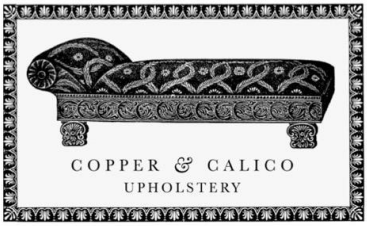

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WELWYN PARISH COUNCIL

I hope you are all keeping safe and well. The Parish Council is still holding all our meetings on Zoom. They are working well but we look forward to being able to meet together again in the not too distant future.

The Parish Council Offices remain closed but we still welcome your questions, comments and feedback as they help us provide and improve the support we provide to residents. Below are ways you can communicate with us: -

e.mail – office@welwynpc.org.uk
telephone – 01438716667
Facebook – search Welwyn Parish Council or Welwyn Clerk
Instagram @welwynparishcouncil

Our staff are working mainly from home but will be able to pick up any communication.

Neighbourhood Plan

As I write this article in January you will have received your survey relating to the Neighbourhood Plan. A very big thank you to all who have responded. Your responses have been loaded onto an online system and, when this has been completed, we will start to do the interesting, although time consuming, part of analysing and report writing. We will not be able to change the Local Plan but the Neighbourhood Plan will:

Develop a long term shared vision for our local community.
Help define the mix of housing types for new developments.
Help our community to influence planning locally.
Identify and protect important local green spaces.
Potentially provide access to funds we can spend locally within the Parish.

Thank you again to residents who, by responding, show that you share our interest in the future of our community.

Whitehill Wildlife Meadow

In my last article I mentioned the field owned by the Parish Council and known as the "dog walking field" had been accorded the status of a Local Wildlife Site. This was very good news. We are keen to develop the site for the use of all residents including an education experience for pupils of the schools in the Parish. We will have to spend time planning and working on the site which will include making a disabled access, picnic tables and benches, planting and more. I will keep you updated.

I hope by the time you read this article in March more people will have received their Covid vaccinations and we will see a light at the end of the tunnel. Take care of yourselves and each other.

Our thanks go to Bill Morris and Leo Boon for their work on this project.

In my next article I hope to be able to tell you more about these and the other projects with which your Parish Council is keen to get involved.

Please look after yourselves and others.

Marj Otty

Chair Welwyn Parish Council

Chairman, Welwyn Parish Council

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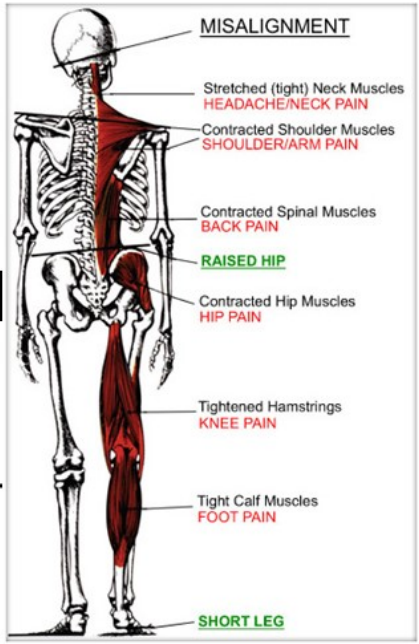

CABI vs the Invaders

And we are live on Zoom again on Wednesday 24th March at 8pm for what promises to be a truly interesting talk. Of course, with Covid19, we are all familiar with invasive species now, but this is about invasive plant species and if, or how, we can control them so that they don't take over our countryside. Maybe we are again too late?? But we have an expert speaker, **Kate Pollard,** who is a research scientist at the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International, affectionately known as "**CABI**". This organisation, based in Egham, states its mission as "improving people's lives worldwide by solving problems in agriculture and the environment". These problems include loss caused by pests and diseases, invasive weeds and pests that damage farm crops.

Kate Pollard

Balsam

One of the invasive species that is dominant in and around Welwyn is balsam which, although it looks pretty, clogs up our streams and waterways. You may remember the talk we had from Affinity Water which mentioned the same problem. Of course it can be pulled up by hand, but is there another way? And not to forget the problems we have with Japanese Knotweed and New Zealand Pygmy Weed. Kate will no doubt give us the lowdown.

Knotweed

I have a problem in that I can't yet give you the log in details for this Zoom talk… but… I will put them on our webpage (Welwynnaturalhistorysociety) and also on our Facebook page a few days beforehand. If you have any difficulty please email me or ring me.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crop_loss

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Spring is almost upon us and we can start to look forward to a new season with new hope!
So many of us will by now have had the Covid 19 vaccine which hopefully will enable many of us to feel that we can lead a more normal life again.

The gardens at both Danesbury & QVM will be springing into life as the crocuses and daffodils begin to flower. The gardens are well planted and well tended, something that your donations over the past years have enabled the Friends to maintain. They are used by the patients frequently, as being outside in a beautiful space is so beneficial to the patients' recovery and rehabilitation. The Occupational Therapists even help interested patients to plant seeds and tend the raised vegetable beds. The Friends pay for the maintenance of the gardens, any seeds or plants needed by the therapists along with bird food for the several bird feeders dotted around the gardens.

Our charity shop in Welwyn, was closed again just before Christmas owing to the restrictions imposed. We needed to think of new ways to sell goods to recoup a little of the income lost owing to the shop closure.
Very enthusiastically we decided to trial a Click & Collect Service!!

The trial commenced on 26th January and will initially run for 8 weeks. Any goods displayed in the shop's window can be pre-ordered either by emailing danesburyshop@outlook.com, through the shop's Facebook page (Danesbury Shop Welwyn), or by posting your

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requests through our letter box. We cannot display all our stock in the shop window, so please do email or post a request for any items needed. We may just have the very thing you are looking for. So far, we have had very positive feedback.

Another way The Friends have been trying to increase shop sales is through our **Charity's eBay shop** by including even more exciting goods to purchase – all donated of course. Please do check it out. One of the easiest ways to access the eBay shop is from The Friends website at *www.danesburyqvm.co.uk* and click on eBay, or by pressing the 'shop now' button on the shop's Facebook page or by doing a search on Google for **eBay charity shop Danesbury.**

Thank you to all our supporters

Danesbury Neurological Centre
School Lane, Welwyn, Herts AL6 9SB
Tel: 01438 840514
E mail: danesburyqvm@btconnect.com

Parish Registers

Ayot St Peter's

Funerals
5th October 2020 – Alan Frank Moss
6th January 2021 – Elizabeth Ruth Shirley
30th January 2021 – William Albert Tillson

St Mary's Welwyn

Funerals
12th November 2020 - Audrey Taylor
5th January - Dennis Dinsdale
11th January - Martin James Sheppard
13th January - Nathan Edwards
14th January - Mavis Kingham
25th January - Bridget Harpur

Harwood Park

7th January - Eunice Taylor
15th January - Carol Margaret Roper
29th January - David Price

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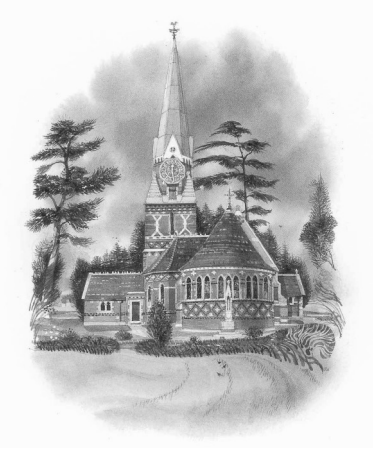
NEWS FROM AYOT ST PETER



The Old Churchyard at Ayot St Peter

Most locals are familiar with the current churchyard at Ayot St Peter, but not everyone knows that there is another graveyard, a few hundred yards along the lane to the north. This is the Old Churchyard, where at least three former churches once stood. The site is owned and maintained by Ayot St Peter PCC, with considerable help from charitable donations and volunteer workers.

The first known church on this site was built in 1282 and demolished in 1750, apparently because it had become too expensive to maintain. The second church was octagonal with a separate bell tower to the south. It was unpopular with the villagers, who likened it to a lock-up, and it was demolished in 1862.

The second church at Ayot St Peter

The remains of the third church

The third and last church was struck by lightning and burnt down in 1874. A small section of the building was salvaged and converted into a mortuary chapel, which remained until 1954.

There are many gravestones still visible in the Old Churchyard. The oldest records the death of Mary Neal, who died in 1747. Her headstone is remarkably clear and also remembers her husband William who died in 1751. An even older stone had

Continued on p 42

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come loose and was removed for safe-keeping in the 1970s. This marked the burial site of Elizabeth Horne in 1688 and can be seen inside the west wall of the current church.

Burials continued on this site long after the current church was built along the lane. The first burial in the new churchyard did not take place until 1919, the year the war memorial was unveiled. Even after that there were many more burials in the Old Churchyard. According to the register, the last burial was William John Wells who died in 1945.

A gravestone in the Old Churchyard

We do not know why the current churchyard was not used for the first 44 years. Although some burials in the Old Churchyard were in existing family plots; others were completely new graves.

There are several notable people buried in the Old Churchyard, including William Henry Wills, who was the editor for Charles Dickens, and his wife Janet (née Chambers, of publishing fame). They are buried together near the back wall.

When you read this article in March, the Old Churchyard will be covered with a stunning yellow carpet of small Welsh daffodils. They make a beautiful picture and are well worth a visit on a fine day. After the bulbs have flowered, we allow the churchyard to go wild for the summer, to create an attractive habitat for birds, mammals and insects. In November everything is cut down again ready for the Spring bulbs. We are extremely lucky that the Sherrardspark Wood Wardens do much of this work, and we also benefit from their expert advice on woodland management. In the last few years, the civil parish has donated some new oak gates for the Old Churchyard, and paid to have the stone entrance steps re-laid. These have weathered in nicely and give the churchyard a smart and welcoming frontage.

Valerie Richards

Continued from p 40

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Church Notice Board

Worship may now have resumed in our churches.
If so, please continue to follow the social distancing guidelines,
use of hand sanitiser and the wearing of face coverings is mandatory, unless you are exempt.
Details about Virtual Church, which continues at 9.30 am each Sunday, can be found at:
www.welwyn.org.uk

Sunday Services

ST MARY'S - Welwyn

8.00 am	Holy Communion
9.30 am	Parish Communion / Junior Church
6.30 pm	Evensong (2nd , 4th & 5th Sundays)

ST MICHAEL'S - Woolmer Green

11.15 am	Parish Eucharist (1st & 4th Sunday)
	Family Service (2nd Sunday)
	All Age Eucharist (3rd Sunday)
	Morning Prayer (5th Sunday)

Weekday Services

ST MARY'S - Welwyn

Current week's services are on the notice sheet in church and on the website *www.welwyn.org.uk*

Tuesday	8.00 am	Morning Prayer (St Mary's)
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer (St Mary's)
Wednesday	9.30 am	Holy Communion (St Mary's)
Saturday	9.00 am	Parish Prayers (St Mary's)

ST GILES - Codicote

Tuesday	8.30 am	Morning Prayer (St Giles)

Common Worship used at all Communion Services except where stated

Children

ST MARY'S - Welwyn

3.30pm Craftea (see Diary on back cover for dates)

Confessions

By arrangement with the Clergy.
The Ministry of Counsel and Absolution is available to anyone who seeks it at any time.

Clergy Surgery Hour

Saturday 10.00 am to 11.00 am

A member of the team will be available in church for any enquiries. Mainly intended for Baptisms or Weddings but is not exclusively restricted to those matters.

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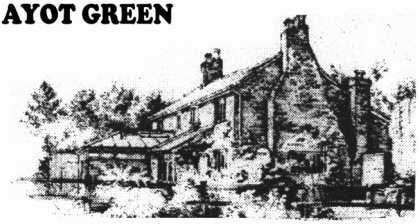

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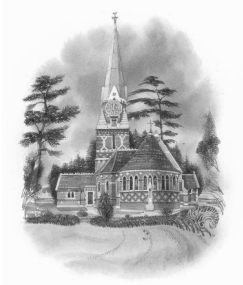
Church Notice Board *continued from p44*

ALL SAINTS' DATCHWORTH

09.30	Sundays	Holy Communion
18.30	1st Sunday	Sacred Space
11.15	4th Sunday	Family Service
17.00	Thursday	Evening Prayer

ST PETER'S TEWIN

09.30	Sundays	Holy Communion
11.15	3rd Sunday	Family Service
18.30	3rd Sunday	Holy communion
17.00	Monday	Evening Prayer



AYOT ST PETER

11.15 Sundays

1st: Matins:
(Book of Common Prayer, King James' Bible)
2nd: Holy Communion
(Book of Common Prayer, King James' Bible)
3rd: Family Service
(Common Worship, NRSV Bible)
4th: Parish Communion
(Common Worship, NRSV Bible)
5th: Holy Communion *(BCP, King James' Bible)*

ST GILES' CODICOTE

08.45	Sundays	Holy Communion
09.30	1st Sunday	Worship 4U at Peace Memorial Hall
10.30	2nd,4th Sun	Informal Worship
	3rd Sunday	Informal Worship with Communion

EVANGELICAL CHURCH WELWYN T: 01438 715372

09.45	Sunday	Bible Classes *(All ages 7+)*
11.00	Sunday	*(facilities for young children)*
18.30	Sunday	*ditto*
20.00	Wednesday	Bible Study *(except 3rd Wednesday)*

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MEDITATION

In praise of praise

Did you know that St Francis of Assisi once preached to the birds? He loved the created world. Through the creatures of the earth, he saw the wisdom, the power, the beauty and the goodness of our God. To him, even the humblest form of life shared a oneness with the vastness and awe-inspiring glory of the Universe. All creation was a harmonious whole, united in a hymn of praise. The world around ever spoke to him of the wonder of God.

When he wrote that great hymn of praise to God, the 'Canticle of the Sun', he dictated it, because by that time he was physically blind. But he saw very clearly with inner vision. The canticle sums up that all things in creation are our brothers and sisters. By being what they were created to be, all things give glory to God.

St Francis knew we were created to know God and to love him and we do that through praise. He understood that praise lies not just words, but is shown through the way we live. Praise draws us out of ourselves. It is a recognition of the love and nature of our Creator. It opens our eyes to the bigger picture, the glory and joy of worlds beyond our own, the majesty and unfathomable hymn of a Universe beyond our grasping, but to which we belong and of which we are the fabric. Praise sets us free.

For in praise is freedom. Freedom that acknowledges that our Creator is indeed in charge of the world. To many of us, this winter in lockdown has seemed interminable. Many of us have felt isolated, lonely and afraid. But in looking at the bigger picture we believe that better days will come.

St Francis preached to the birds, but what did he say? His message was simple. 'Praise God by what you are,' he said.

Usha Hull