



St Helen's Church

Ashby-de-la-Zouch

Loving God, Loving Others, Loving the World



Parish Magazine

January 2024

WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR



Hello, happy new year and welcome to January's parish magazine.

I'm writing this brief hello on epiphany, thinking about the wise men as they discovered the Christ child and offered their gifts to Him. This feels like a pertinent way to begin the new year, rather than the usual resolutions, giving our own gifts and selves to God. How exciting to see what he might do with them in 2024.

There is a lot of giving in this edition, I feel. Before Christmas members of the Flagstaff Family donated generously to help children seeking asylum; Pat Stafford presents a round up of the last year at Loughborough Town of Sanctuary. We say a big thank you to our Director of Music who, I'm sure you'll agree, has given so much to the life of our church, and hear from many other contributors besides.



Happy reading,
Emily

Donations can be left in the boxes at the back of St Helen's Church, in the porch of Holy Trinity or the Congregational Church, or at any of Ashby's Co-ops. Thank you to everyone for the continued support.

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FROM THE MINISTRY TEAM

A Happy New Year to you!

It's a privilege to write on behalf of all the Ministry Team at St. Helen's and wish you, and those you love, a peace-filled and Happy New Year!

How did you celebrate the New Year? Were you one of billions, gathered with friends – or among large crowds – counting down the seconds until midnight? Raising a glass to the New Year, linking hands and singing “Auld Lang Syne” (or the bits we know ...)?



We were certainly doing that, I've done it for literally as long as I can remember, and I very much hope to be doing it for many years to come. But it strikes me that fun though it is – and it is fun – this tradition and the modern addition of the digital countdown and amazing firework displays mean that perhaps the passage of one second in time, gets more attention than is merited. (Did you know that at the height of the New York display 1,600 shells a minute are launched?)

It becomes very binary. Suddenly, the thirty-one and a half million seconds that preceded it are consigned to the archives – that's the “*Old*” year. *While the “New”* year is seen excitedly as a fresh sheet of paper. A blank canvas. An opportunity to do all manner of things that we didn't or couldn't do before (or to stop doing things that we have been doing). And of course, 2024 comes with the added excitement of an extra 86,400 seconds to do (or not do) all of that...

But in the single sweep of the second hand very little has changed. Nor will it quickly.

There will be the inevitable New Year's resolutions, and I confidently predict that most will be forgotten well before Lent! (Research shows that less than 1 in 10 resolutions succeed, while nearly half don't last until the end of January).

Perhaps as we enter the New Year, we might be better off allowing our thinking to be shaped by thinking about God's time, and how God's creation moves through time.

I'm writing this a few days after the Winter Solstice. A pivotal moment in the natural world, and a potent reminder of the cyclical nature of God's creation. Solstice comes from the Latin – *sol (sun) and sister (to stand still)*. *It is the day that the sun reaches its lowest point in the year (in Winter) and so to ancient observers appeared to stand still.*

As I'm sure you're all aware, from this moment on, the hours of light begin to extend, and darkness to lessen. But that happens gradually – no fireworks here! Today there have been two minutes and twenty seconds more daylight than on Solstice Day – a week ago! By January 1st, there will be six minutes and thirteen seconds more daylight than on Solstice Day. Even more confusingly, sunrise will continue to be later than Solstice Day until the 8th January!

But we know that brighter, lighter days are coming. That all seasons in God's creation have their purpose, and so we can be hopeful as we begin to stir our stumps and to think about what we'll do with the New Year, as the days lengthen, and darkness recedes.

I'd encourage us all to take our cue from the sun as we move into the New Year. To commit ourselves to finding regular moments of stillness. Time to meet with God, and to simply "be" in his presence. To put aside (briefly) the "to-do apps", the checklists, the "plan-o-grams", and to ask God what it is this year, that we can do, here in NW Leicestershire, to manifest more light and love than last year.

I look forward to walking alongside you, and worshipping with you in 2024, as we seek "to know God, and to make him known."

Happy New Year!

Andy Smith



A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers

ANDREW BARRY CHAPMAN– ONE OF A KIND



As you have probably heard by now, Andrew Chapman is stepping down as Director of Music at St Helen's from the beginning of 2024. Happily, he is not leaving us and will continue as our organist, with Caroline Essex and Anna Haines sharing the role of Director of Music. We are blessed indeed, not only to have such capable successors, but also to have them coming from within the choir, so hopefully the transition should be smooth.

The congregation will have an opportunity to thank Andrew, but the choir took the opportunity to do so at this year's choir tea, after the final practice for the Carol Service, and here is a flavour of what was said...

Andrew started formally as Director of Music in 2007 (although he actually began in 2006 and had sung as a tenor and acted as assistant organist to Howard Marriott even before then).

This news came as something of a shock to some of our current trebles who weren't even born then!

Andrew's time as Director of Music has been long, successful and fruitful (despite occasional mutterings from a certain area of the choir stalls..). In particular, three qualities stood out from Andrew's "reign".

His apparently unending drive, energy and commitment. Whatever

challenges have come his way, week in-week out, on Thursdays and Sundays, Andrew has not just been there, but led and motivated the choir. Andrew has faced many challenges, but none so big as the impact that lockdown had. Unperturbed, Andrew devoted his energy and skills to ensuring not only that regular fresh music appeared for our worship, but also that the choir continued to “meet” and practise weekly. It was on Zoom, and musically was an “interesting” experience, but it kept us in touch with one another, provided companionship during some difficult times, and without a doubt meant that when we did finally emerge from lockdown, our choir was in a good position to pick up and quite quickly get back to leading worship at pre-Covid standards.

Andrew has also been extraordinarily encouraging to all members of the choir, both collectively and individually throughout his time with us. One’s thoughts are drawn initially to the Trebles, a significant number of whom Andrew has supported, encouraged, and nurtured. This is reflected in how many former choristers call in to see us on a Thursday or Sunday when they’re visiting Ashby, and of course those who swell the ranks at Christmas and Easter.

But it’s not just the youngsters, during his time, a number of us who are slightly “less youthful” have joined the choir either as extras or as permanent members, and once again Andrew has been extremely supportive (albeit in his own, inimitable style...).

And not just the choir, but junior choir, music groups, instrumentalists, ladies groups, Dads ‘n’ Lads to name but a few.

And talk of Dads ‘n’ Lads, leads us to possibly the best bit of Andrew’s leadership – the fun! The choir works hard to provide the music you enjoy, but practices, rehearsals, concerts and even services (only occasionally – and hopefully not obviously!) are marked by great fun. We’ve also had choir trips, and of course the wonderful collaboration with Great Wood School, once again, occasions marked by lots of fun!

Andrew, we hope that perhaps with a little less time chasing, organising (and moaning at the tenors) you may have a little more time to compose, and to give us some more lovely settings to sing. Farewell and as Mozart said, “*soave sia il vento.*”

A chorister

As this was going to press, something was found in a dusty corner of a small drawer in the Vestry which gives a sense of just how challenging life as Director of Music was on occasions for Andrew.

It's a poem, the writer is unknown, but from the content I think we can all guess ...

MR. CHAPMAN'S LAMENT

(with a nod to Rodgers & Hammerstein)

Doh!

Those tenors, "composing" again,
and milking their dotted notes, causing me pain.
Not like the top lines, they're such **rays** of light,
and the basses (when present), they're also... alright.

Me! Me! If they just sang like me,
that's a **far** better path to true harmony.

So easily done, but hard to achieve,
more chance of everyone learning to breath.

Laugh? I don't think so, no laughter here,

Tea? You're joking, I need a large beer!

Doh!

THANK YOU FROM LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN OF SANCTUARY

This summary by Anne Nelson says it all and I think it gives us hope in that so many people and organisations are involved. THANK YOU FLAGSTAFF FAMILY for all your support!

THIS YEAR AT LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN OF SANCTUARY.

.Challenging

.Positivity

.Reward- K., "In 9 years here nobody has tried to help me like you today and I feel accepted". He left smiling , not crying.

.Friendship, then sadness when they get moved to a different town

.Celebrating success-12 year old Mehrsam from Iran ,the Under 12

Leicestershire Junior Chess Champion 2023

.Increasing awareness

.Tremendous support from volunteers and followers.

.Widening our audience- 375 Facebook supporters /followers

. Expanding from our longstanding 'meet and greet' duties to provision to support different needs

.Providing - arts/crafts, cycling, English classes, swimming, cooking, gym, football, gardening, laptops, friendship and more

.Networking with different groups - John Storer Charnwood, Fearon Hall, Equality Action, Healthwatch Leic, Grub Club, The Wardrobe-community, Loughborough Leisure Centre, URC church, The Salvation Army, Loughborough, Kegworth and Quorn Volunteers ,

Baca ,Care4Calais, Migrant Help , and the Cupboard on the Corner - Community Pantry and The Flagstaff Family of Churches in Ashby and surrounding villages.

.Joy when an asylum seeker gets 'leave to remain' and they start volunteering for our group

.Despair when a refugee becomes homeless

.Happiness when 4 Iranian Christian ladies decorate a Christmas tree for the annual 'Tree Festival' and celebrate openly

MANY THANKS TO EVERYONE INVOLVED WITH Loughborough Town of Sanctuary and here's to a happy, healthy 2024 to all.

If you want to volunteer or for more information please contact LTOS@loughborough.cityofsanctuary.org

Pat Stafford



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Ashby Times

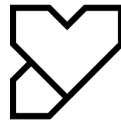
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ASHBY YOUTH FOR CHRIST

Sk8ers

Before Christmas we had 10 young people turn up for our sk8ers sleep-over - the most we have ever had and 4 more than expected! We talked about historical figures we would like



Ashby
**YOUTH
FOR CHRIST**

to talk to and how we knew they existed when we had never met them, also how we can believe in the birth of Jesus even though we weren't there. We talked about the journey Mary and Joseph went on and their faith and then had a mini nativity play on Saturday morning. It was amazing how much our young people knew, and much of this was thanks to their primary school - CofE in Ashby. They may not believe yet, but they know the story. Lord we pray that these young people allow this story to go from their heads to their hearts in Jesus name. Amen

Football

Football has returned after the Christmas break. For some, following their New Year return to work, this will be a welcome time of recreation. For others it will be a first resumption of regularity after a festive period off education or training. For yet others it may well be a return to the only regular fixed point in their normal weeks. Without the rhythms enforced by dependents, work, education, faith and social commitments that we are used to some young people eat, sleep, game, socialise and other habits in an irregular way. Breathing may well be the only habit they practice to a regular rhythm.

Please pray that these young people might be motivated and strengthened to develop other recreational rhythms, especially those that enable them to grow in their knowledge of their creator. Pray they would desire his recreation and be convicted that he is able and willing to renew their lives.

... but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' John 4:14

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JANUARY GARDENING TIPS

Welcome to 2024!

A New Year and New Plans to be Listed and Completed. We have added a few Jobs to our annual to-do list. For example, we plan to stain our new front garden fencing in the Spring. We had to replace some Laurels as their roots were stunting the growth in our raised veg borders, and the Laurels were also in a poor state of health. We are going to stain our fence (on both sides) a medium green and then grow a few climbers as this will soften the present harsh appearance. It also further protects the wood.

There is very little to do in the garden at this time so enjoy the peace and quiet of January. In the past, Winter was a, "Tidying up time", with perennials cut back, borders tidied and leaves swept away. But things have changed as the trend is towards our gardens to be more wild life friendly with dead leaves now identified as non-hazardous. However, it is still worthwhile removing them from a pond or a lawn.

If you are looking for shrubs and plants with Winter interest then here is a few to be considered. Many of them are, by necessity, tough flowering when the weather is often at its worst. Examples of these are Hellebores such as Niger and Christmas Carol, Winter flowering Honeysuckle, Snowdrops, Witch Hazel, Mahonia with bright yellow flowers, Winter Heathers and Viburnum tinus. Winter bedding plants need dead heading. Dead-head Viola, Pansies and Cyclamen and they will reward you with more flowers. The vegetable garden will be quiet but keep harvesting leeks and parsnips as well as removing yellowing leaves from Winter Brassicas. Also start thinking about preparing the soil for the coming year.

Now is the time to order seeds and plants. Ideally why not visit our local garden centres as they struggle for business at this time of the year. As January is cold and frosty for us, and our birds, now is a good time to look after our wildlife. Continue to re-fill your nuts, seeds and fat ball holders; we have certainly found that we go through a great deal more in the way of bird food throughout the Winter months. Please remember that bird baths can freeze during prolonged cold spells which deprives the birds of a

much-needed source of water.

Other January jobs can include:

- Removal of perennial weeds as there is less risk of standing on other plants or damaging fresh shoots.
- Many Roses have shed their leaves so, if you had black spot during the previous Summer, it's worth sweeping up any of the fallen leaves and disposing of them.
- Protect very tender plants such as Calla Lily, Cannas and Agapanthus by moving them into a greenhouse, or covering the containers with fleece etc. This is also true for Tree Ferns and any warm-country plants.
- A mild spell in January is a suitable time to cut back Rosa Rugosa in order to remove spindly stems.

Happy New Year to One and All!

Alison and Alan Cross

BIRDS AND BELLS

As I was walking to Church at Christmas there was no sound of bells ringing, sadly, but there was beautiful birdsong ringing in my ears all the way along the path! "Thank you Lord for bells, and thank you Lord for our feathered friends!"

On Christmas Eve there was the sound of bells *and* birds ringing in my ears! May it continue in 2024. Thank you Lord!

Pam Watson



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OUR WORSHIP IN JANUARY

	am	pm	Wednesday
1st Sunday 7th January		3.30pm All-Age Worship 6.00pm Choral Evensong	2nd Wednesday-12th Holy Communion 10.30am Prior Park Community Centre
2nd Sunday 14th January	10.30 am Holy Communion (with children's church pilot)		3rd Wednesday-19th Service of the word 10.30am In church
3rd Sunday 21st January	10.30 am Word & Worship		4th Wednesday-26th Holy Communion 10.30am In church
4th Sunday 28th January	10.30 am Holy Communion	3.30pm Messy Church St Helens Heritage centre	5th Wednesday- 31st Holy Communion 10.30am In church

Regular activities:

- Monday mornings - Little Fishes 9.30 - 11.30am during term time
- Mondays - Monday Group – 8pm
- 3rd Tuesday - MU meeting – 10.30am till 12 noon
- 3rd Tuesday - PCC meeting – 7 till 9pm
- 1st Wednesday - Knit and natter – 2 till 4pm
- Thursdays - Choir practice – 6.30 till 8.30pm
- Fridays - Heart- warming Space 1-4pm
- Saturdays - Parish Prayers – 9.30am in the Hastings chapel

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY // JANUARY

Tuesday 16th January– Ashby Churches Together Prayer Meeting. 7.30-9pm, Ashby Baptist Church. Holy Trinity Church invite members from all the Ashby Churches to join together to pray for our town, our country and internationally ahead of the week of Prayer for Christian Unity which starts on Thursday 18th January. All welcome.

Tuesday 23rd January– Heritage Talk ‘Burying the Dead’ by Peter Liddle. 7.30pm. Death comes to us all– but the way people deal with the dead has changed radically over the centuries. This illustrated talk is a survey of how that is reflected in local archaeological sites and finds.

Friday 26th January– Haggis Supper. 7pm in the heritage centre. Traditional Haggis piped in (vegetarian and gluten free available), Neaps and Tatties with a wee dram and Scottish trifle. Tickets £18 available from Liz Smith.

Sunday 28th January– Ashby Street Pastors Commissioning service. Ashby Street Pastors invite you to their commissioning service and AGM which will be held in The Crypt, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, Ashby at 2.30pm. Refreshments will be provided. We are excited to be commissioning two new street pastors this year as well as recommissioning 9 and 3 prayer pastors.



Carol singing in the White Hart, a busy afternoon at the Warm Hearted Space, our lovely Christmas tree from Brush Electrical, delivering gift donations to LTOS.





JP SPRINGTHORPE & C^o

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GOOD NEWS FROM TEARFUND



In October 2022 I spent a week in Rwanda with a group of Tearfund supporters and staff. We visited many Tearfund projects and I was impressed to hear about the difference they had made in the lives of often very poor people. We heard about children now being able to go to school as the family could afford to provide the uniform and books they needed. Also that they now had enough to eat and had some access to healthcare.

The projects we visited are called Church and Community Transformation Projects (CCT). Local Tearfund staff identify an area which they think could benefit from a CCT project and invite all of the churches in the area to join in. The CCT process is a Bible-based guided training approach that local churches can use with their communities to identify the resources they have and decide what outcomes and activities will best suit their situation. Examples are training in vocational skills, community projects or saving schemes.

Recently Tearfund commissioned an independent organisation to study the effectiveness of this approach in four African countries. A few weeks ago we hosted a dinner in our flat where our guests heard from the Tearfund CEO, Nigel Harris, that the study concluded that CCT in those countries has brought positive whole-life transformation which is sustained and long-lasting.

Tearfund recently hosted a conference on CCT in Kigali, Rwanda where 50 leaders from 23 different African countries came together over three days, including archbishops, bishops, heads of denominations, heads of theological institutions, Anglicans, Baptists, and Pentecostals. Collectively they represent 80 million believers across Africa. The outcome was pivotal, as the leaders committed themselves to establishing the **Africa Christian Transfor-**

mation Forum (the ACT forum) to integrate CCT across their denominations. The church in Africa wants to own CCT for themselves now and has asked Tearfund to accompany them on this journey.

Tearfund's aim is to increase the number of local churches they work with from 27,000 to 250,000 over the next seven years. They need substantial extra resources to achieve this. They are appealing to their supporters to make donations now or to pledge them for the future. I have more information if you are interested in becoming a supporter, or if you are already a supporter and would like to know more about Tearfund's CCT projects or work in Rwanda. I can also tell you more about what it's like to visit the projects.

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FIRE AT WILLESLEY HALL AND THE ASHBY LIFEBOAT

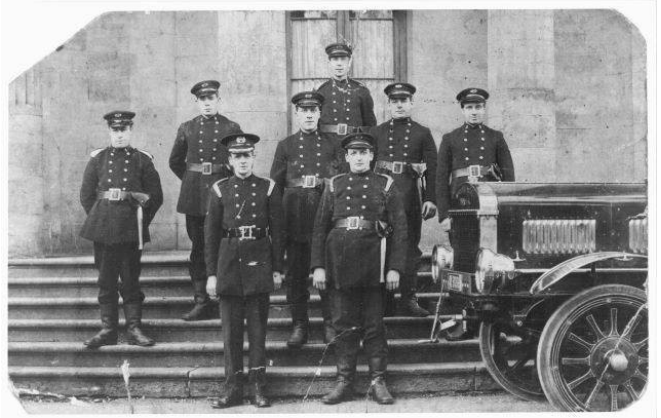
When looking through old 19th century newspapers, my eye is often caught by something quite unrelated to that for which I was searching. This was the case with the following two, quite unrelated, snippets. Too short to make articles in their own right, I have combined them here.

Most of us will have never actually seen Willesley Hall as it was demolished in 1953. It was situated near the lake between Willesley Lane and Measham Road on land which is now a scouts camping ground. The estate itself predates the Norman Conquest. From the early 1400s up to 1791 the Abney family owned it. They built a house there in 1656, although there would have been a previous manor house of some sort. The 17th century house was extended in the 18th century and in 1791 passed to the Hastings family who had once lived in Ashby Castle. Charles Hastings, who owned the house from 1791, also carried out extensive alterations. Eventually, in the 20th century, the house fell into decay and was demolished.



On the 15th November 1884, the Ashby-de-la-Zouch Gazette reported on a serious incident at the Hall. The Countess of Loudoun was at home at the time, but his Lordship was away on a shooting party. One of the footmen was trimming the oil lamps in the lamp-room and accidentally knocked one over. It immediately caught fire and blazed away for several minutes. The Ashby fire brigade was sent for and although “they were ready equipped under fifteen minutes after receiving notice of the fire”, their services were not needed. The prompt actions of the male servants and the supply of fire hoses throughout the house saw that the fire was extinguished before the brigade could get there.

Given that the Ashby fire engine would have been horse-drawn, and the horses were kept in a field quite a distance from the fire station, it is surprising that they managed to ready themselves so quickly. However, the incident reminded me of something that was general practice in many stately homes in the 19th century.



(Ashby Fire Brigade Outside Willesley Hall)

The use of oil lamps would have been a constant fire hazard, but by the 19th century, many stately houses were also using gas lamps. These would be lit by the footmen as evening darkness descended, using a lighted taper. A careless footman could also be a serious fire hazard.

Houses situated in rural districts might be far from the nearest fire brigade, so it was quite common to train the servants to become fire fighters. They would be provided with uniforms and could turn out for fires in the village as well as in the house.

On one occasion (I'm afraid I have forgotten which house this was) a footman did set fire to the curtains while lighting the gas lamps. The household fire brigade was summoned, but the first thing they did was to run up to their rooms to don their uniforms, which was what they had been trained to do – and some of them lived in the village! In the meantime, the fire was put out by the odd job man who was not a member of the brigade.

Talking of emergency services, who would have thought that Ashby, often claimed to be the furthest town in England from the sea, once used to raise more money per head for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution than any other town in the country. The annual lifeboat fund parade with its

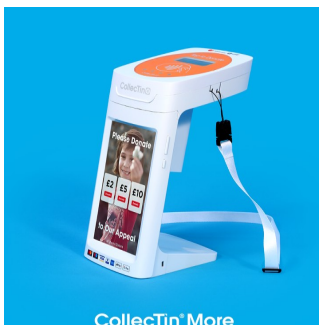
Lifeboat Queen was quite an event at one time, and was still going in the 1960s, so many of you will remember it. The Leicester Mercury of 31st May 1965 reported that the organisers hoped to beat their previous record total by at least £200.

The earliest reference to the event I can find was in 1958, but the Burton Observer and Chronicle of 13th May 1960 had a more detailed description. The event was to take place on Saturday 28th May and the National Coal Board had given permission for pit-head collections to be taken at nine local collieries on the previous day to the parade. Volunteer collectors would be kitted out in oilskins and sou'westers to emphasise the purpose of their presence.

A lifeboat queen, with two attendants, would be elected to ride in the parade, which in one year was preceded by a mini lifeboat. The parade, consisting of various decorated vehicles, would be accompanied by two bands, the 5th Battalion the Royal Leicestershire Regiment and the Burton Sea Cadet Corps.

It was reported that the Royal Navy, and to a lesser degree the merchant navy, drew most of its recruits from the Midlands. "It is a paradox," the paper reported "that the further a boy lives from the coast, the stronger the call of the sea." You too might be wondering why Ashby was so supportive of the Lifeboat Fund, but then the 1950s was the era when, thanks to that popular American song, our town became known as "Ashby de la Zouch by the Sea"!

Wendy Freer



GIVING IN CHURCH

St Helen's now has a ColecTin Card Reader like the one pictured opposite. Ours is located on the Welcome desk to the left as you come in the main door. It is on when the church is open. You can give in multiples of £5 or a donation of your choice. Just follow the instructions on the screen – happy donating!

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

The following is an introduction sourced from Churches Together in England

“The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the best known passages of Scripture, yet one that never seems to lose its power to challenge indifference to suffering and to inspire solidarity. It is a story about crossing boundaries that calls our attention to the bonds that unite the whole human family. In choosing this passage of Scripture for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the churches of Burkina Faso have invited us to join with them in a process of self-reflection as they consider what it means to love our neighbour in the midst of a security crisis. Communities in the British-Irish context may be less vulnerable to acts of mass violence than in Burkina Faso, but there are still many living with the memory and/or the threat of serious violence, centred on issues of identity and belonging. There are also groups within communities, including people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people seeking asylum, who feel particularly vulnerable to violence or being displaced by the threat of violence. Our neighbours in Burkina Faso call us to reconnect to God’s dream for us – a dream of a unity formed of ties of love and compassion. This challenges us not only to reflect on the learning from our ecumenical journey so far, but to widen our vision. What can we learn from people of other faiths, from those whose backgrounds are most different from our own, and what do we need from each other? The reflections encourage us to consider the perspective not only of the one who showed mercy, but also of those who passed by. Many of us will have been unaware of the threat faced by communities in Burkina Faso before reading this material. It is a powerful reminder of the many neglected conflicts that continue to destroy lives and devastate communities around the world, when only a limited number can capture, and fewer still can hold, the attention of the world’s media. The Church is called to be an advocate for those caught in these forgotten conflicts, and to amplify the voices of those who feel forsaken. In this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity the Church is being challenged to stop and tend to the wounded and, in so doing, to recognise our own wounds as churches and as communities. Facing the reality of our own brokenness helps to connect us to the suffering of others from a place of humility and deep empathy, creating a sacred space of encounter inspired by Christ’s healing love.”

Dr Nicola Brady, General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

POTTERING AROUND

No, nothing relating to Harry Potter, but my day out at a pottery workshop. The Great British Bake-Off, Sewing Bee, Handmade Best Woodworker - these television programmes are encouraging us to take up cookery, needlework and carpentry. For me, however, it is the Pottery Throwdown show which has always intrigued me. I was thrilled, therefore, when a friend gave me the gift for a one day class for individual tuition from John, a local potter.



My day started with an introduction to the equipment which we would be using, and then John gave me a demonstration of how to prepare the clay in readiness to be thrown on the centre of the wheel (accuracy essential).



Correct positioning over the wheel and elbows braced on the wheel edge give stability when throwing the clay, and this will ensure control when shaping the pot. With expert guidance, I was surprised to get the hang of the procedure and I was soon producing acceptable pots, ready for the next stage of the process. After the pots have been thrown, they have to be completely dried, and then trimmed before being slowly biscuit-fired to 1000 degrees centigrade. The firing changes the clay composition to a permanent but porous state. (Prior to firing, the clay remains recyclable.) They are now dipped into a glaze, which is suspended in water. When dry, these stoneware pots are fired for a second time, at an even higher temperature of 1255 degrees centigrade. Then the hope is that all items have survived without cracking and damage. Success! When I later returned to John's studio, all my efforts had remained intact.

I was thrilled to bring home my nine pieces of pottery - cream jugs, bowls and a mug. My day at the workshop had been a most rewarding experience. You're never too old to learn a new skill!

Rob Millward

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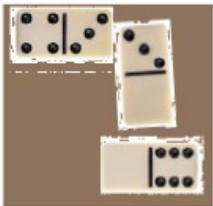




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