

You're invited to the global call to prayer

Mike Down, Schools Project Manager for Church of England – Birmingham, and Louisa Harrop, Head of Learning at Birmingham Cathedral, have teamed up to offer a creative space to pray in Birmingham Cathedral during the global call to prayer, Thy Kingdom Come.

For 10 days, 10th – 20th May 2018, creative prayer stations and activities will be available for individual and group use in St Phillip's Cathedral, Birmingham. As well as a dedicated, Thy Kingdom Come prayer station, you are invited to explore reflective prayer space designed around the theme of 'love'. This is an invitation to come and pray, to spend some time in quiet reflection in a beautiful space amidst the bustle of Birmingham city centre, joining a global wave of prayer.

There is no need to book ahead as the Prayer Space will be available during the Birmingham Cathedral's usual opening pattern, although it won't be available for use on Thursday 17th May due to a pre-booked event.

If you are interested in the work of Prayer Spaces in School, Mike Down, also regional networker for PSiS, will be available for an informal chat on Monday 14th (1.30-3.30pm) and Tuesday 15th (9.30-11.30am) and Saturday 19th (9.30-11.30am). Please email MikeD@cofebirmingham.com if you would like to make a note of interest.

AND FINALLY...

with Pentecost (20th May) and speaking in tongues in mind

Researchers at Cambridge University have discovered that -
O Iny srmat poelpe can raed this.

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porbelm.

Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef,
but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig huh? Yaeh and I awlyas
tghuhot slpeling was ipmorantt! If you cna raed this psas it on !!



Dear Friends,

It is very easy to get very consumed by the things that are immediately around us and to forget to look up and out.

We have had, and will doubtless continue to have much to preoccupy us with the Hall Roof and repairs to the Tower. These things take time and energy to deal with and they are important. However, they are not the whole of what it means to be the church here in this community. We must continue to remember to look up and out.

Jesus reminds us of the two great commandments. To love God with all our, heart, mind soul and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves, a classic statement of what it might mean to look up and out. So in this month of May some ways and opportunities to do those things

We can hear voices from outside our community and concerns. Over the next few weeks there will be a few opportunities to hear about ministry in different ways and places. We have already had Colin and Audrey Gibson, our Link Missionaries, to visit and on May 6th we will have a chance to hear about the work of Birmingham City Mission. Derek Cotterill who works with them will preach at the morning service and then give a short presentation over coffee. There will be other people coming as rota are finalised, all who will offer a different way of looking and learning and thinking.

We can give generously of time and money to causes which touch the world's poorest people. This month sees Christian Aid week and enables us to learn more of the needs of the world's poorest people, and hearing, to respond with generous grace.

We can pray for the greater awareness and understanding of God in our world. The initiative "Thy Kingdom Come" of which you can see more in the later pages of the magazine, encourages us, specifically and with integrity, to pray for people who do not yet participate in the community of faith.

So this month please take as many opportunities as possible to look up and out and to reflect on the ways that God works, not only in our small corner, but throughout the earth.

Priscilla

Aspects of life at St Faith and St Laurence

Morning prayer – is normally said Monday to Thursday and Saturday at 8.15 am in the Lady Chapel. We use Common Worship Daily Prayer, all are welcome to come and join in.

Reflections A chance to meet together over a cuppa and reflect on the Gospel reading for the previous Sunday. A group meets on Mondays from 1.45-3pm Venues are listed in the Programme of the month.

Task Groups – The church has a number of task groups enabling areas of church life. These are listed in the magazine with the contact details of the chairs. If you would like to be a part of a groups please contact the relevant chair or Priscilla. All are welcome to join.

Stay and Play meets on Thursday between 9.30 and 11am in the Hall to give a chance for people with young children to meet and the children to play. All are welcome. Cost £1.50 per family.

Sunday Club meets on the first, third and fourth Sundays of each month except during the holidays. We hold an extra Sunday Club on days when there is a baptism. All are welcome to join in hearing and experiencing a Bible Story and learning together about what it means for our daily lives.

Messy Church takes place on the first Saturday of each month, most months. A chance for children and parents/ carers to have an informal time of worship, and discovering about a Bible story through song, craft, listening, cooking and so much more. Dates are published in advance and all are welcome to come along.

Planned Giving helps people make giving regular. You decide how much you can afford to give. You can join the envelope scheme weekly or monthly or pay by Standing Order or annually by cheque. Income tax payers are asked to Gift Aid their giving, so the Church can reclaim the tax on their donations at no extra cost to the donors. For details, contact Jackie Taylor or Brenda Stott

Call in for Coffee time together over a cuppa on a Wednesday morning from 10.30 -12.00. if needed we can arrange for someone to collect you and then take you home. Please ring Pauline Sitford (427 7005). If you are passing, do call in, or bring a friend, all are welcome.

We support **Recycling**. We have a special collection on the first Sunday of every month when we collect ALUMINIUM cans and foil which can be sold and the money raised is donated to our Mission Partners in Chile (through USPG) We also have envelopes for recycling mobile phones again supporting USPG. Pauline Sitford (427 7005).

A beautiful sonnet for Ascension Day

We saw his light break through the cloud of glory
Whilst we were rooted still in time and place
As earth became a part of Heaven's story
And heaven opened to his human face.
We saw him go and yet we were not parted
He took us with him to the heart of things
The heart that broke for all the broken-hearted
Is whole and Heaven-centred now, and sings,
Sings in the strength that rises out of weakness,
Sings through the clouds that veil him from our sight,
Whilst we our selves become his clouds of witness
And sing the waning darkness into light,
His light in us, and ours in him concealed,
Which all creation waits to see revealed .

Malcolm Guite

Talking of Brexit.....

The Lord's Prayer contains 69 words; the Ten Commandments contain 297 words; the American Declaration of Independence contains 310 words; and the European Union Directive on Exporting of Duck Eggs contains 28,911 words.

The Spark that ignites-a poem for Pentecost

We light a candle and enjoy the flickering light

the fragrance and warmth it creates.

But without the spark that ignites there will be no flame

Without the wax the source of power the wick will not burn

Without the flame there will be no fragrance no warmth, no light.

And so with us, Lord

You are the catalyst that ignites us and the fuel that sustains us

You fill us with your fragrance as you enter our lives

You empower us to carry your flame in our hearts

To be the fragrance,

Warmth light of your love

in this dark world.

Nancy Wallace

GREAT TRUTHS ABOUT GROWING OLD

1. Growing old is mandatory; growing up is optional.
2. Forget the health food. I need all the preservatives I can get.
3. When you fall down, you wonder what else you can do while you're down there.
4. You're getting old when you get the same sensation from a rocking chair that you once got from a roller coaster.
5. It's frustrating when you know all the answers but nobody bothers to ask you the questions.
6. Time may be a great healer, but it's a lousy beautician.
7. Wisdom comes with age, but sometimes age comes alone.

Home Communion We have a team of lay people trained and able to bring Home Communion usually on a monthly basis. This is for those who are unable to come to church long term. If the situation is more temporary for example after an operation you can also receive communion, usually from Priscilla. In either case please contact Priscilla.

Traidcraft

Traidcraft sells a range of fairly traded food, cards, clothes and accessories. We use Traidcraft tea and coffee and everything we buy helps fight poverty and supports our church. You can order seasonal gifts through the church at Christmas time when catalogues will be available. Any questions, please ask Ruth Jeavons or Bronwen Jones.

'easyfundraising'

Next time you shop online, think of St Faith and St Laurence and raise free donations with 3,000+ retailers:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stfaithandstlaurence>

Women's Fellowship meets on the first Monday of the month from March to December. Meetings are held in the Committee Room 7.30 for 8pm. We have talks on a variety of subjects. See Programme of the Month for details.

Prayer Ministry Team

Prayer ministry is offered during the 10am Communion on Sundays. People can receive prayer for themselves or for any situation that is important to them. It takes place in the Lady Chapel during the distribution of communion.

Service with no name

This takes place on the first Thursday in the month in church at 7.30pm.

Foodbank

We collect food for the Quinton and Oldbury Foodbank. There is a box in church and food can be placed there at any time. The list of things that are needed is in church and in the hall. Food is distributed from St Boniface Church on Wednesdays and Paul and Barney's place on Fridays. Vouchers are required to receive food.

Choir and Music.

Choir Practice takes place weekly, normally on Thursdays 6-7pm. Anyone interested in singing in the choir should contact Simon Palmer, Organist & Choirmaster. (Contact details on page cover) We also like to encourage instrumentalists to perform in church, either in services or in concerts.



Last month I wrote.

In a moment of madness I have signed up to run/jog/walk the “Race for Life” run by Cancer Research UK in Solihull on 17th June. Donations are welcome and can be given either direct to me in cash or cheque payable to me and I will put in a block donation or via this link

<https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/priscillas-race-for-life-5>

So many people from our church community have travelled with Cancer over the last 12 years that I have been here and too many have died. Standing up to cancer is a life-affirming step so let’s go for it.

At the time of writing I am well on my way to the £1,000 target I set for myself; further donations are of course very welcome. It would be great to exceed the target by a goodly sum.

Priscilla

APCM

At the APCM and preceding vestry meeting for the election of churchwardens Bronwen Jones and Malcolm Adey were elected as Churchwardens and Ruth Jeavons onto the PCC.

There are a number of vacancies on the PCC which can be filled by co-option. If anyone is interested in serving for a year to see what it is like, please see Priscilla.

Ascension Day

This year’s Ascension day service for our cluster (Ourselves, St Peter’s, St George’s and the Old Church Edgbaston) will take place on Thursday 10th May at 7.30pm at St Peter’s. This is one of the opportunities we have to worship with our other cluster churches and it will be very good if people from this church can attend.

Pentecost

The Family Communion at Pentecost will be a Parade service; we will be welcoming members of the uniformed organisations as we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the Birthing of the church.

Christian Aid Week (13th-19th May)

Just a reminder that Christian Aid week is fast approaching! If anyone else would like to volunteer to help with the house-to-house collections it would be greatly appreciated – please do get in touch with me at gla.reeves@gmail.com or call me on 07766403184. Unless I hear otherwise, I will assume that those who volunteered last year will be doing so again this year. Christian Aid Week runs from 13th – 19th May, with all collection rounds to be returned by 28th May.

The theme for this year’s Christian Aid Week is **‘Together We’re Stronger Than The Storms,’** with a focus on the nation of Haiti, which was devastated when Hurricane Matthew hit in 2016. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world, and this makes it harder for them to cope with the relentless earthquakes, storms, and hurricanes. By supporting Christian Aid Week this year, we can raise money to help those people in Haiti who are in desperate need. To find out more and to read some of the stories from Haiti, do check out the Christian Aid website at <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/christian-aid-week>

George Reeves

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

Give us, Lord God, a vision of your Kingdom as your love desires,
a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry,
a world where life is shared, and enjoyed by all,
a world where all races, nations and cultures live
in tolerance and respect,
a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is
guided by love.

Give us the inspiration and courage to build your Kingdom
here and now.

Amen

New way of giving

Anglican churches in the UK have been given the green light to use contactless card payments for their collections, signalling an end to the rush to get loose change out of pockets. More than 16,000 churches, cathedrals, and religious sites will be allowed to use contactless payment terminals, the Church of England has announced. Forty congregations were equipped with handheld terminals to process contactless card payments up to the value of £30, last June, for a test trial of the scheme, which will now be extended across all dioceses.

They are designed to be handed round with the collection plate during services and made available for retiring collections so that people can donate more easily. The machines can take payments from contactless and chip and pin bank cards, and Apple Pay and Google Pay on smartphones. A volunteer will be required to be the "merchant", processing the payments and printing receipts, and a small transaction fee will be charged whenever the terminal is used, which will range from 1.1 to 1.25 per cent of the donation. The only drawback is that the church will need WiFi for the machines to operate. The C of E's National Stewardship and Resources Officer, John Preston, said "The move is needed in a world where many of the congregation no longer carry change. How we pay for things is changing fast, especially for younger churchgoers, who no longer carry cash, and we want all generations to be able to make the most of their place of worship."

Too close for comfort?

Two New York City churches that survived the destruction of World Trade Centre have become the latest tourist sites to embrace post-9/11 security measures. Metal detectors were installed for the first time this month at Trinity Church and St Paul's Chapel. The Rev Phillip Jackson said they will be there "until this world becomes a safer place".

Trinity and St Paul's are both part of the same Episcopal parish where George Washington and Alexander Hamilton worshipped after the American Revolution. Church officials said the decision to install the metal detectors was not a response to any specific threat, but the Rev Jackson said a terrorist attack on a nearby bike path in the autumn was "kind of a wake-up call".

Confirmation

This year's cluster confirmation will take place at St George's on 24th June at 10.30am. Confirmation preparation sessions for adults will take place on Thursday evenings beginning on 3rd May. For young people there will be sessions times to be confirmed. Anyone interested in confirmation please see Priscilla as soon as possible.

Placement Student

We are welcoming a student from the Queen's Theological Foundation from about May 23rd to June 17th. His name is Clive Hamilton and he will be getting involved in all aspects of church life over that period. There will be many chances to get to know him so please do welcome him when he appears.

Thy Kingdom Come

As in the past couple of years the Archbishops have called for 10 days of Prayer from Ascension Day (10th May) to Pentecost (20th May).

from the national website

During the 11 days of Thy Kingdom Come, it is hoped that everyone who participates will deepen their friendship with Jesus, bring others to know Jesus or know him better, and come to know that every aspect of their life is the stuff of prayer.

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus. What started in 2016 as an invitation from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Church of England has grown into an international and ecumenical call to prayer.

There will be a selection of resources available for people to take away and use at home. There will also be a Northumbrian Community evening prayer on the evening of the 17th May at 7.30pm. This will include words and music from the Community based on Lindesfarne. All are welcome to come along. The service will take up to about 40 minutes.



FROM THE REGISTERS

Funeral at the Crematorium

20th April Millicent Pritchatt

Funeral in Church

17th April Sasha Lyttle

Holy Matrimony

21st April Daniel Evans and Anna Binns

Canon Dr Paula Gooder: The Lanfranc Award for Education and Scholarship



Paula is one of Britain's most respected Bible scholars and communicators, as well as being our Director of Mission Learning and Development. Previous to working with us she was the Theologian in Residence at the Bible Society and a freelance theologian, author and speaker. She has published widely in the fields of biblical scholarship and spirituality.

Within the national church she has served on General Synod, the Women Bishops Legislative drafting group and steering committee, the Faith and Order Advisory Group and was Chair of the National Reader Educational Panel. She is also a member of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Committee and was a member of the Council for Christian Unity from 2011-2015.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Week Beginning	Communicants	Loose Plate £	Planned Giving £	Gift Aid £
March 18	64	103.15	15.00	10.00
March 25	80	89.65	260.28	25.00
April 1	147	159.02	213.28	20.00
April 8	35	77.55	202.31	2.00
April 15	83	147.12	85.00	25.00
Standing Orders			1845.00	21.42
Parish Giving			1310.00	322.00

Archbishop's Award Hat Trick for Team Birmingham

Like the No.11 Outer Circle bus, it seems that Archbishop's Awards also turn up three at once! We always knew they were winners, but recently the Archbishop of Canterbury officially recognised Andrew Smith, Janet Knox and Paula Gooder for their lifelong dedication to mission with individual awards.

Canon Dr Andrew Smith: The Hubert Walter Award for Reconciliation and Interfaith Co-operation.



Andrew is our Director of Interfaith Relations. He founded The Feast; a charity which brings together Muslim and Christian teenagers to form friendships and explore faith together. The Feast won a Christian Youthwork award for innovative youth work in 2012 and a Queen's Award for voluntary service in 2015. The Feast is now being developed both nationally and internationally. Other interfaith work in Birmingham has included the establishment of the Birmingham Conversations; which bring people of different faiths together to discuss challenging topics, and Faithful Friends on Tour, which saw a group of faith leaders from different backgrounds make a pilgrimage together to various sites considered spiritually significant to each individual in turn. Andrew also organised an interfaith breakfast for several hundred people to welcome the Olympic Torch to Sparkhill Park, Birmingham in 2012.

Revd Janet Knox: The Alphege Award for Evangelism and Witness



Revd Janet Knox is currently one of our Growing Younger Facilitators and also an assistant priest at St. Boniface, Quinton. She has tirelessly developed St Boniface's work with children and families, and has seen significant growth in the number of children involved in the life of the church. She is very well known and loved in her parish by a vast number of people whom she has helped and with whom she has shared the Gospel. In her role as Growing Younger Facilitator she has also supported other local churches in developing their ministry amongst children and young people.

Her award is named after St Alphege, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1006 until 1012 when he was killed by Viking raiders after refusing to allow himself to be ransomed. He was known for his witness, wise counsel and care for the poor. We are delighted that Janet is following in his footsteps - although we are hoping that she won't be killed by Viking raiders!

Saint of the month– May 25th

The Venerable Bede (673 AD - 735 AD)



St Bede - also known as the Venerable Bede - is widely regarded as the greatest of all the Anglo-Saxon scholars. He wrote around 40 books mainly dealing with theology and history.

Bede was probably born in Monkton, Durham. Nothing is known of his family background. At the age of seven he was entrusted to the care of Benedict Biscop, who in 674 AD had founded the monastery of St Peter at Wearmouth. In 682 AD, Bede moved the monastery at Jarrow, where he spent the rest of his life. By the age of 19 he had become a deacon and was promoted to priest at 30.

His scholarship covered a huge range of subjects, including commentaries on the bible, observations of nature, music and poetry. His most famous work, which is a key source for the understanding of early British history and the arrival of Christianity, is 'Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum' or 'The Ecclesiastical History of the English People' which was completed in 731 AD. It is the first work of history in which the AD system of dating is used.

Bede died in his cell at the monastery in May 735 AD.

A Song for Peace

During April, I went on a choral pilgrimage to the Holy Land. As well as visiting some of the holy sites, the primary focus of the week was to meet with, and share music with, local musicians in concerts and worship. As we made our pilgrimage, we prayed for peace, joining with Palestinian Christians, our brothers and sisters in Christ, the 'living stones' who live and worship often under great hardship. We met and sang with people in Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jerusalem and Nazareth.

During our pilgrimage, we had the immense privilege of worshipping at or near some of the places where the events which lie at the heart of our faith took place. 'Come and see' are among the first recorded words of Jesus to his earliest disciples in John's Gospel. However, we went not simply as tourists to look at things, but as pilgrims prepared to allow ourselves to be changed by a deeper engagement with the places and people we met.

The Holy Land is often described as the 'Fifth Gospel' - a vivid reminder that our faith is firmly rooted in both geography and history. God chose to reveal himself to a people living in that place at a particular point in history. He chose to become incarnate there, to suffer and to die for us. It was there that Jesus rose again. We had a unique opportunity to allow God's Holy Spirit to make connections between our own experience and the founding events of our faith.

Some of the places we visited, about which we have read in the scriptures on countless occasions, were very different from how we had imagined them to be. The landscape of Galilee where we begin had not altered much since the time of Jesus, but Bethlehem and Jerusalem have changed out of all recognition. The Holy Land has always been a melting pot of cultures, races and religions and has always been a place of pain as well as glory. Whatever our preconceptions about the political situation might have been, we found some things on our journey profoundly shocking. In his own time Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and we needed to allow ourselves to feel something of the pain the peoples of this land still experience.

When Children and RE mix...

When children meet the Bible, the result can be unpredictable. As in these answers to a school chaplain's efforts to teach RE....

The main purpose of the prophets was to set up the lights for when Jesus came on the stage.

The Kingdom of God is no ordinary place like the bathroom at home.

Jesus said: If you want to divorce your wife leave a note for her on the table.

Jesus healed a man with a weathered hand.

Some of the seed from the sower was curried off by Satan.

The last verses of Mark's gospel were written later by a unanimous person.

Jesus first proclaimed the gospel to the Jews: He told them to make love to each other.

An altar is a stall for candles. An example of Holy Orders are the Ten Commandments. An epistle is the wife of an apostle.

Time for a smile

One day a teacher said to a class of 5-year-olds, "I'll give £2 to the child who can tell me who was the most famous man that ever lived."

An Irish boy put his hand up and said, "It was St Patrick."

The teacher said, "Sorry Sean, that's not correct."

Then a Scottish boy put his hand up and said, "It was St Andrew."

The teacher replied, "I'm sorry, Hamish, that's not right either."

Finally, a Jewish boy raised his hand and said, "It was Jesus Christ." The

teacher said, "That's absolutely right, Marvin, come up here and I'll give you the £2."

As the teacher was giving Marvin his money, she said, "You know Marvin, since

you're Jewish, I was very surprised you said Jesus Christ".

Marvin replied: "Yeah. In my heart I know it's Moses, but business is business".

Strapline

A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well.

'Please pass the salt!'

I have just been listening to the radio and there was yet another government statement about healthy eating - this time with reference to salt. I suspect that I am not alone in sometimes thinking 'Oh, not again!' My rather childish mental response is 'My father put loads of salt on his meals and he lived till he was 85' - but in truth, I suppose we should be grateful for any advice and guidance. Salt has been used both to preserve food and to flavour it since time immemorial. Canning and refrigeration only began in the 1880s and so before that, meat was dried or cured with salt. It was so important that throughout history it has been a trading commodity, indeed at various times it was as precious as gold and wars have been fought over it.

The word salt appears 55 times in the Bible and all but six references are in the Old Testament; from these references it is clear that it played an important part in both the religious and cultural life of the Hebrew people. In Hebrew Law, salt was added to burnt offerings - for example *You shall present the rams before the Lord and the priests shall throw salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering to the Lord.* (Ezekiel 43:24).

But there are also several references to salt being a symbol of enduring agreements. The term used is 'a covenant of salt' and it could refer to a covenant between people and God; between two individuals or between groups of people. In 2 Chronicles we read that David received his kingdom by a *covenant of salt*.

Because salt was an important part of a meal, when people ate together they shared salt. In turn, the eating together fostered friendship. Even today there are Arabic expressions *There is salt between us and He has eaten of my salt*. But we can go a step further in our analysis -because salt is a preservative and because it is a very stable chemical, the implication is that the covenant is stable and long lasting.

In the gospels, there is a passage which appears in Matthew, Mark and Luke - slightly differently in each - Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? *Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another* (Mark 9:50). This makes a bit more sense in the light of the 'covenant of salt'. At this point Jesus was teaching his disciples and he is reminding them of their sense of togetherness; the covenant between them based upon their being together and sharing salt together. They will only be successful if they build upon that. So next time you are having a meal with friends and you want to add salt, don't worry about your blood pressure, just think that you are cementing 'a covenant of salt.

Geoffrey Lowson

On our journey down from Nazareth to Jerusalem, we celebrated eucharist in the desert. As it was being set up, we were surrounded by Bedouin families who were selling scarves and bracelets. Some of the young boys sat with us during the service — not out of devotion to Jesus in the eucharist, but because they did not want to lose customers. One of our group offered one of the boys a piece of pitta bread. He took it, putting it in his mouth with glee — all except for one last mouthful. “This is for you,” he said to us, and we shared the bread together. All he had to offer us was that which we had already given him.

We stayed the next four days in Bethlehem, and for many of us the most painful experience was being close to the Separation Barrier known as ‘The Wall’. It has been erected on grounds of security, ostensibly to prevent Palestinian suicide bombers crossing into Israel proper. It consists in places of concrete slabs 30 feet tall; elsewhere it is an electrified fence reinforced with sophisticated surveillance equipment and razor wire. It has been called an apartheid barrier, but it not only separates Arab from Jew, but often also slices Arab neighbourhoods in half, preventing farmers from reaching their fields or grandmothers seeing their grandchildren.

The Wall has had the effect of cutting off the West Bank territories from Jerusalem, and it bitterly restricts the travel options of Palestinian West Bankers. Workers have to queue for hours each morning at the checkpoints manned by the Israeli Defence Forces, and special permissions are required to visit the holy places at time of festivals. Only with immense difficulty, can men over 50 years of age worship in Jerusalem, whether at the Muslim Al Aqsa Mosque or the Christian Church of the Resurrection: men under 50 are regularly prohibited altogether. It is difficult to overestimate the humanitarian impact of the Wall. It has developed a stranglehold on the people of the West Bank, and is experienced as oppressively dominating ordinary lives. It is a physical barrier that pilgrims can see with their own eyes. In addition, there are invisible but no less palpable walls within and across communities - walls of suspicion and misunderstanding, walls of fear and prejudice. Walls can denote a narrowing of vision. During our stay in Bethlehem, we visited the Dheisha Refugee Camp which was built to house 3,000 in 1949, but now holds over 15,000.

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We also met Mary, a wonderfully articulate Palestinian Christian, who spoke to us at the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation. The notorious security wall, placed without warning seven yards from the hospital, means that Mary cannot expand the vital work that she and her team are doing. This is a huge frustration; for in that desperately poor city, sick and needy people in ever larger numbers are seeking medical care. It was Mary who brought alive for us the real Bethlehem, where God's grace meets human need.

On the Sunday, we led the worship at St George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem, and afterwards met with the Dean, the Very Revd Hosam Naoum, who spoke to us honestly about the profound challenges confronting the ever-shrinking Christian presence in the Middle East. The Diocese of Jerusalem, which extends over five countries: Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, now has just 7000 worshippers and 36 clergy. The Dean revealed the real Jerusalem, where it is only the resurrection that brings hope.

These encounters made for hard listening: and that is the point. It is this tough, sinful, broken world that the incarnate Christ touches and changes, not one conjured up in our complacent Western imaginations. Jesus was born in an occupied nation, and among an oppressed people; so it is no surprise that this is where we find him. Some might object, saying that a pilgrimage like that was political, and that pilgrimage is about prayer, not politics. But in the Holy Land, everything is political. The only question is: whose politics will we subconsciously accept? So, instead of trying to escape the politics, we must look for Jesus there. That is what pilgrimage is about. The purpose of a visit to the Holy Land is to deepen one's understanding of the incarnation. Many pilgrims stick to the safe places: to the timeless beauty of the Sea of Galilee, or to purpose-built sites such as the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem, or Nazareth Village.

But the birth of Christ is more than just a historical event: in the life of the Church it is a contemporary reality. So, it is good to remember that Jesus walked this street and taught on that beach, but only if it reminds us that Jesus still walks, still teaches, and still locates himself among the poorest and the most oppressed. The dead stones are dumb without the living stones — which are the hard-pressed Christian communities of the Middle East.

Peter Stokes

Wed	16	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion	Lady Chapel
			<i>Acts 20.28-end; John 17.11-19</i>	
		7.00 pm	Quiinborne Choir Rehearsal	Church
Thu	17	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church
		7.30 pm	Northumbrian Evening Prayer for Thy Kingdom Come	
Sat	19	10.00 am	Quiinborne Choir Rehearsal	Church
		7.00 pm	Quiinborne Choir Concert	Church

SUN 20 PENTECOST

		8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Ezekiel 37.1-14; Acts 2.1-21; John 15.26-27, 16.4b-15</i>	
		10.00 am	Family Communion	
			<i>Acts 2.1-21; (Dramatized) John 15.26-27, 16.4b-15</i>	
		6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 139.1-11</i>	
			<i>Ezekiel 36.22-28; Acts 2.22-38</i>	
Mon	21	1.45 pm	Reflections	143 Balden Road
Tue	22	2.30 pm	William Lench Court Service	
Wed	23	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion	Lady Chapel
			<i>James 4.13-end; Mark 9.38-40</i>	
Thu	24	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church

SUN 27 TRINITY SUNDAY

		8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Isaiah 6.1-8; Romans 8.12-17; John 3.1-17</i>	
		10.00 am	Family Communion	
			<i>Readings as at 8am</i>	
		6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 104.1-10</i>	
			<i>Ezekiel 1.4-10, 22-28a; Revelation 4</i>	
Mon	28	1.45 pm	Reflections	143 Balden Road
Wed	30	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion	Lady Chapel
			<i>1 Peter 1.18-end; Mark 10.32-45</i>	
Thu	31	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church

PROGRAMME FOR MAY

Wed	2	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion	Lady Chapel
			<i>Acts 15.1-6; John 15.1-8</i>	
		7.00 pm	CYP Task Group Meeting	
Thu	3	7.00 am	Local Elections	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church
		6.30 pm	Archdeacon's Visitation	Edgbaston Old Church
Sat	5	9.30 am	Working Party	
		10.30 am	Messy Church	Hall
SUN	6	SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER		
		8.00 am	Holy Communion	<i>Acts 10.44-end;</i> <i>1 John 5.1-6; John 15.9-17</i>
		10.00 am	Family Communion	<i>Readings as at 8am</i> Visit of Derek Cotterll of Birmingham City Mission
		6.30 pm	Evensong	<i>Psalms 45</i> <i>Song of Solomon 4.16-5.2,8.6-7; Revelation 3.14-end</i>
Tue	8	7.15 pm	PCC Meeting	Committee Room
Wed	9	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion	Lady Chapel
			<i>Acts 17.15,22-18.1; John 16.12-15</i>	
		8.00 pm	Quiinborne Choir Rehearsal	Church
Thu	10	ASCENSION DAY		
		9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.00 pm	Choir Practice	Church
		7.30 am	Edgborne Cluster Ascension Day Service	St Peter's
SUN	13	SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER		
		8.00 am	Holy Communion	<i>Ezekiel 36.24-28;</i> <i>Acts 1,15-17, 21-end; John 17.6-19</i>
		10.00 am	Morning Praise	
		6.30 pm	Sung Eucharist	<i>Readings as at 8am</i>
Mon	14	1.45 pm	Reflections	143 Balden Road
		7.15 pm	Deanery Synod	
Tue	15	10.30 am	Queen Mother Gardens Service	

Prayer of the month

(Mary's Prayer)

The Catholic practice of assigning a special devotion to each month goes back to the early 16th century. The best known of those devotions is probably the dedication of May as the month of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her life in the Gospel years was one of service and great devotion to Jesus, from the stable in Bethlehem where she gave birth to Him, to Calvary in Jerusalem where she stood by his cross in his Crucifixion ~ from birth to death.

Her words still resonate with us today and challenge us to follow her example of humility, obedience, and service to God. The Magnificat is Mary's hymn of praise to the Lord and is sung during our Evensong services.

My soul magnifies the Lord
 And my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;
 Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid;
 For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;
 Because He who is mighty has done great things for me,
 and holy is His name;
 And His mercy is from generation to generation
 on those who fear Him.
 He has shown might with His arm,
 He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.
 He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
 and has exalted the lowly.
 He has filled the hungry with good things,
 and the rich He has sent away empty.
 He has given help to Israel, his servant, mindful of His mercy
 Even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.

Sally Griffiths