

CORNERSTONE

The Magazine of
WITNEY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



Christ Jesus is the chief cornerstone.
In Him the whole fabric is bound together, as it grows into a temple,
dedicated to the Lord (Ephesians 2:21)

April & May 2026

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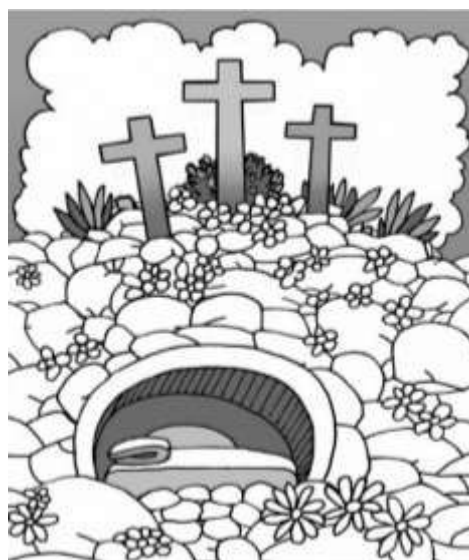
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The next 3-monthly **Summer** edition, covering June, July & August is due on **Sunday 7th June**

Your Editor

We have now reached the greatest of all Christian feasts in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ. So, let us not forget the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice made for us all on the cross



Contents

1. Editorial
2. Diary
5. Prayer Letter No 222
6. Wake up Sheeple & Spring into Action
7. Dietrich Bonhoeffer
9. Choosing the better part
10. The beauty of Good Friday
11. Why Easter will never go away
12. Pentecost
13. The V& A & 1926 General Strike
14. National Biscuit Day
15. All in the month of April
16. All in the month of May

Let us now look to those who have contributed to this edition; alongside the standard pages, Tony Houghton writes about words from the Cross; an article written by Thandar Tun, has been extracted with permission, from the CF 2026 series 'A secluded place' and is about Choosing the Better Part; Elaine Kinchin writes about Wake up Sheeple; Lesley Barter writes about Spring into Action, and articles have also been extracted from Parish Pump to name but a few

Many thanks for those who have contributed for this edition, but would encourage anyone to consider submitting article(s) for the next edition via E-mail:

terrypowlesland@uwclub.net

or just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up.



April & May 2026

Services: 10.30am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month

April

2 nd	6.00pm	Maundy Thursday	
3 rd	am	Tony Houghton	Good Friday
4 th	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
5 th	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Easter Sunday with Communion
	pm	No Service	
12 th	am	Usha Reifsnider	
19 th	am	Nanna Blackman	Communion
26 th	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	

May

2 nd	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
3 rd	am	Irum Anjum	Preach with a view
	pm	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Communion
10 th	am	Lesley Barter	
17 th	am	Tony Houghton	Communion
24 th	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	
31 st	am	Sue Townsend	Christian Development Uganda supporting Word and Deed Uganda (WADU)
	3.00pm	Madely Park Residential Home	

June

6 th	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
7 th	am	Summer Harvest	Rev Elaine Kinchin
	pm	tbc	

The following events are given for your particular attention:

April

14 th	Chair-based Exercise Group & repeated on 21 st	10.45 – 11.45
	Explore the Bible & Prayer Time & repeated on 21 st	12.30 – 1.30
25 th	Witney Book Circle	10.30 – 11.15

May

5 th	Chair-based Exercise Group & repeated on 12 th & 19 th	10.45 – 11.45
	Explore the Bible & Prayer Time & repeated on 12 th & 19 th	12.30 – 1.30
	Hi 5's Beetle Drive	6.00 – 8.00pm
8 th	Food Bank Quiz	6.00pm
10 th	Special Church meeting	12.00 noon
23 rd	Witney Book Circle	10.30 – 11.15
24 th	Church meeting	12.00 noon

Rotas

WELCOMING TEAM

Apr	12	Jean Hodgson
	19	Janet Hayes
	26	Pat Smith
May	03	Lesley Barter
	10	Jacqui Powlesland
	17	Jean Hodgson
	24	Pat Smith
	31	Janet Hayes
June	07	Lesley Barter



FLOWERS

April	05	Easter flowers
	12	Rita Hayes
	19	Janet Hayes
May	26	Jacqui Powlesland
	03	Judi Holloway
	10	Rita Hayes
	17	Janet Hayes
	24	Jacqui Powlesland
June	31	Judi Holloway
	07	Rita Hayes



SUNDAY COFFEE

April	05	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	12	Pat Smith & Janet Hayes
	19	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	26	Claire Woodward & Jacqui Powlesland
May	03	Elaine Kinchin
	10	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	17	Pat Smith & Janet Hayes
	24	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
June	31	Claire Woodward & Jacqui Powlesland
	07	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland



THURSDAY COFFEE (10 – 12)

April	09	Pat Smith
	16	Judi Holloway
	23	Ann Clack
May	30	David Kinchin
	07	Jean Hodgson
	14	Pat Smith
	21	Ann Clack
June	28	Judi Holloway
	04	Elaine Kinchin
	11	Jean Hodgson



SOUND SYSTEM

April	05	Terry Powlesland
	12	Nanna Blackman
	19	Tony Houghton
May	26	Terry Powlesland
	03	Terry Powlesland
	10	Tony Houghton
	17	Nanna Blackman
	24	Terry Powlesland
June	31	Tony Houghton
	07	Terry Powlesland



For ALL the Rotas, every effort has been made to meet individual circumstances.

However, if the dates are not convenient for you, please change with someone else

April

07 Hazel Woodward
12 Andrew MacLarty
21 Tracey Allan
23 Jo Rudd
28 Tony Houghton



May

04 Graham Beechey
11 David Climie
Pearl Christian
21 Terry Powlesland
23 Usha Reifsnider
24 Pip Cartwright
30 Pat Smith

Overcoming obstacles and opposition

Explore the Bible and Pray

5 lessons we can learn from the Old and New Testament of the Bible

Programme - April – May 2026 12:30pm – 1.30pm in the Garden Room
Witney Congregational Church, 4 Welch Way, Witney OX28 6JF

- *In the first part we will explore the Bible*
- *Towards the end you can bring things for prayer*
- *All ages welcome!!*
- *Come for as many weeks you like. Drop in and out when you can*
- *Led by Tony & Heather Houghton*

members of the Congregational Church, Witney tony.m.houghton@gmail.com 01993 359584

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you;” Isaiah 41:10





PRAYER LETTER No 222

I have a feeling that death takes us by surprise, despite phrases like: in the midst of life we are in death; death and taxes; and, as Christians, pondering on the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ at least once a month when we have our service celebrating the Lord's Supper.

Let's look at those ideas.

"In the midst of life we are in death" (Latin: *Media vita in morte sumus*) was first written down in the 14th century. It echoes the Bible verse: *Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.* (1 Peter 5:8 NRSV).

The famous quote "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes" was apparently written by Benjamin Franklin in 1789. The letter was to explain that the United States Constitution seemed ironclad, but in this life the only guaranteed events were human mortality and the need for taxation.

I also mentioned the Lord's Supper. Many established churches recite at every Communion service: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. In many ways I miss those ten words.

Why am I focussing on death? Because in our prayer chain we recently were asked to pray for a baby called David, who subsequently died. We also prayed for the family and friends of Joyce Kearsey who died a few months short of her 100th birthday, as well as relatives of Leah and Claire who had died.

Yet our prayer chain is full of life! We saw photos of Eliyanah – Tony and Heather's granddaughter celebrating her second birthday just days after she had a major operation. We prayed for Chinese New Year!

I asked people to share my joy that my blood test results showed that my bone marrow cancer is still in remission. God bless the NHS!

I shared that my latest blood tests showed my period of remission from bone marrow cancer is over and that I will need to begin treatment again. Why is this good news? Because advances in research means that it is highly likely that the next course of chemotherapy will work well and push me into remission again. Just a few years ago in the UK and today around the world, bone marrow cancer is a death sentence. God bless the NHS!

When David and I visited Malawi, twenty-one years ago, we met a man who was grieving two deaths. First his grandmother who was in her nineties and also his grandchild who was only eighteen months. We have NO idea how long our time on this earth will last but we all look forward to eternal life, because of Jesus's sacrifice.

Early in the life of this issue of our Cornerstone magazine, we will celebrate that sacrifice on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter Sunday. Let us take those services to heart and offer ourselves sacrificially (time, money, talents) and also enjoy all the benefits of knowing our ultimate destination.

Every Blessing, Elaine

Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Elaine 07534 879449)

The following article, written & submitted by Elaine Kinchin, and is entitled:

Wake up Sheeple

The modern phrase “wake up sheeple” is not such a new idea: combining the words *sheep* and *people* dates back to the first half of the last century and means do not follow others without first examining the truth of what they say. I want to claim the word *sheeple* for followers of Jesus - we are the sheep of his pasture, and he is our shepherd. Psalm 100 reminds us that: *It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

Psalm 23 is the most famous one and begins, of course, with *The Lord is my shepherd*. To continue that imagery, we must be sheep, but human sheep – sheeple!

In John 10 we can read that Jesus said: *I am the gate for the sheep and I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

As a gate Jesus allows us to enter safe spaces, where we will be looked after.

A dictionary definition tells us: a sanctuary is a consecrated holy place OR a safe haven providing refuge and protection for people or animals. It signifies a secure, quiet, or sacred area where danger or stress is absent. So our worship room, which we call the sanctuary is a place of protection, safety and calm where danger and stress can be dealt with through worship and prayer. In psalm 23 we read (or sing) that the Lord is our Shepherd, but Jesus emphasises that he is the Good Shepherd.

You may remember from Christmas sermons that shepherds were rather low in the ranks – they were often seen as scoundrels or wastrels. Part of this suspicion about shepherds is that they rarely came to synagogue or temple – it was a long way from wandering over the hills looking after the

sheep. They were smelly and ill-mannered. But worse than any of these things was that they were just hired men. They did not own the sheep, they were poorly paid and so if a wolf pack came to eat the sheep, the shepherds realised they were not being paid danger money and so they would flee.

Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd because he cared, he invested time into ‘the job’. And he was prepared not to flee but to lay down his own life so that the sheep might have life in all its fullness.

I apologise if the sheep metaphor is carried too far, but then, as I wrote at the beginning, I think sheeple is a good and valuable word for Christian disciples. What do you think?

The following article has been written & submitted by Lesley Barter, and is entitled:

Spring into Action

It is always difficult to leave Australia after a visit to my extended family and now, of course there is the unspoken question: how many more times will I be able to do it? Not only is there the enormous cost of the flights and the increasing cost of travel insurance, now that I have crossed the line into proper old age, I am becoming less intrepid as I get older.

Suddenly the risks of everything I do have become disproportionate to the lure of the unknown. I snuggle down into my cosy bed and wonder what it would be like to just stay there all day in a state of semi-hibernation. Animals have a lot to teach us, lying dormant until spring stretches its golden limbs, warmth touches the cold earth and life begins again. God has played His part in regeneration and the rest is up to us.

With the arrival of a new Minister, whoever that turns out to be, we have an opportunity to be born again as a Church Family. This means stopping being so risk averse that we

reject change. We must stop worrying about making the wrong choice and start thinking about how we can *make* our next choice a positive and enriching one. However uncomfortable, we do need a breath of fresh air to move on.

Simply to keep on keeping on can be a challenge in itself. I think we are feeling that as a Church and I certainly feel it personally. Not so long ago I would start each day in eager anticipation of what lay in store. Challenges were fun, difficulties were there to be overcome, life was a great game. It was a test of my God-given gifts. It seems to me that we owe it to God to nurture that attitude. Life is a privilege – especially in the western world. We were all born with unique talents and the least we can do is to keep them alive by using them. So, this Spring, let us celebrate the joyous news of Jesus' resurrection. Let us henceforth look for the positives. Let our glasses be half-full and our worries be about other people rather than ourselves. Let us use our gifts to make life better for others and - guess what - it will turn out to be better for us too.

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump and is entitled:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lutheran pastor and martyr

Standing up to tyrants, no matter what the cost. That kind of courage has been in the headlines since the war in Ukraine began, as many brave people have defied Putin's oppression.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer did not have Putin to contend with, but Hitler. Bonhoeffer did not back down either, when the time came.

Bonhoeffer grew up with no thought of ever defying the leader of Germany. Nothing could have been further from his mind or background. Born at

Breslau in Silesia (now the Polish city of Wroclaw) in 1906, Bonhoeffer was the son of an academic. In 1912, his father was appointed to be Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology at Berlin university, and so the family moved to Berlin.

Bonhoeffer never even considered going into politics. Instead, he studied theology in Tübingen, Berlin and New York, before returning to Berlin as a lecturer in theology in 1931.

But though Bonhoeffer did not chase political trouble, it soon came to him. For on 30th January 1933 Adolf Hitler, leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, had come to power. His totalitarian approach left no room for anyone in public life to disagree with him. Including anyone in the two major churches - Lutheran and Catholic.

But Bonhoeffer refused to be compliant, and joined the Confessing Church, which had formed in opposition to the takeover of the Lutheran Church. The Confessing Church also opposed Hitler's attempts to force antisemitism on the church and society.

Bonhoeffer was in America when war broke out in 1939, but he returned to Germany. He said: "I shall have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war, if I do not share the trials of this time with my people."

Back in Germany, he joined the underground anti-Nazi opposition and worked hard to oppose Hitler. In 1943 he was arrested and imprisoned at Tegel prison in Berlin. The involvement of many of his contacts in the July 1944 plot to kill Hitler may well have sealed his fate. He was finally moved on to Flossenbürg concentration camp.

In April 1945, as American troops were approaching the camp, Bonhoeffer was hanged. The last words of this brilliant and courageous 39-year-old opponent of Nazism were: "This is the end - for me, the beginning of life."

Bonhoeffer left a great legacy behind him. His writings, and especially his *Letters and Papers from Prison*, have inspired many trying to make sense of persecution and needless suffering. His 1937 book *The Cost of Discipleship* is described as a modern classic.

The following article has been written and submitted by Tony Houghton, and is entitled:

Words from the Cross: lessons for Christian living

The crucifixion of Jesus is not only the central event of the Christian faith, but also a profound source of teaching for how we are to live. From the cross, in the midst of unimaginable suffering, Jesus speaks words that continue to shape the hearts and lives of believers today. Here are five of those sayings, each offering a powerful lesson for Christian living:

1. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34)

Even while being crucified, Jesus extends forgiveness to those responsible for His suffering. This is forgiveness without condition or delay.

Application: As Christians, we are called to forgive not only when it feels deserved, but even when it is difficult or painful. In a world marked by offence and resentment, forgiveness becomes a powerful witness to God’s grace. We reflect Christ most clearly when we release bitterness and choose mercy.

2. “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43)

Spoken to the repentant thief beside Him, this statement reveals Jesus’ readiness to save, even at the final moment.

Application: This reminds us that it is never too late to turn to God. It also challenges us to avoid judging others’ spiritual journeys. As followers of Christ, we should carry hope for all people and remain open to sharing the message of grace, trusting that God is always at work in hearts.

3. “Woman, here is your son... Here is your mother.” (John 19:26–27)

Jesus entrusts His mother to the care of the disciple John, demonstrating concern for others even in His suffering.

Application: Christian faith is not lived in isolation. We are called into a community of care and responsibility. Looking after one another—especially in times of need—is a practical expression of love. Our faith becomes visible through how we support and value those around us.

4. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46)

In this cry, Jesus expresses deep anguish and a sense of abandonment, echoing the words of Psalm 22.

Application: This reminds us that feelings of distance from God are not foreign to the life of faith. In times of doubt, grief, or silence, we can still cry out honestly to God. Faith does not mean pretending everything is fine—it means bringing our real struggles to Him, trusting He hears us.

5. “It is finished.” (John 19:30)

With these words, Jesus declares the completion of His mission—the work of redemption is accomplished.

Application: As Christians, we live not striving to earn salvation, but resting in what Christ has already done. This frees us from the burden of trying to prove ourselves to God. Instead, we are invited to live in gratitude, obedience, and confidence, knowing that our hope is secure in Him.

Conclusion

The words of Jesus from the cross are not only expressions of suffering, but declarations of love, grace, and truth. They call us to forgive, to hope, to care, to trust, and to rest in God’s finished work. As we reflect on these sayings, may they shape not only what we believe, but how we live each day.



The following article written by Thandar Tun, has been extracted with permission, from the CF 2026 series 'A secluded place' and is entitled:

Choosing the Better Part



In the busyness of daily life, we often rush from task to task, carrying responsibilities, worries, and expectations. During Lent, we are trying to slow down, reflect, and return our hearts to God. The story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38–42 offers a gentle but powerful invitation during this sacred season: to pause, to listen, and to rediscover what truly matters.

In the story, Jesus enters the home of two sisters. Martha welcomes Him warmly and immediately begins preparing everything needed for her guest. Her actions show dedication, hospitality, and love. These are beautiful qualities and important aspects of Christian life. Serving others, caring for our families, and contributing to our communities are meaningful expressions of faith.

Yet as the story unfolds, Martha becomes overwhelmed. The many preparations distract her heart. She feels burdened and frustrated, even asking Jesus why her sister is not helping. In that moment, her focus shifts from the joy of Jesus' presence to the pressure of completing tasks.

Many of us can relate to Martha. Our lives are often filled with responsibilities — work, family, ministry, and countless commitments. Even in our desire to serve God, we can become anxious and distracted. Lent gently reminds us that

while service is important, it should never replace our relationship with Christ.

Mary, on the other hand, chooses a different posture. She sits at Jesus' feet and listens to His teaching. She gives her full attention to His presence and His words. In a house full of activity, Mary chooses stillness.

Jesus responds tenderly to Martha, saying she is worried about many things, but only one thing is truly needed. Mary, he says, has chosen the better part.

This moment does not mean that service is wrong. Rather, it reminds us that service should flow from our relationship with Jesus. When our hearts are grounded in him, our actions become joyful expressions of love rather than burdens carried alone.

Lent invites us to practice this kind of mindful faith. It calls us to examine our priorities and ask ourselves an honest question: where is our attention directed? As Jesus teaches in Matthew 6:21, **“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** Our hearts often follow the things that occupy our time, thoughts, and energy.

The contrast between Mary and Martha also echoes the message found in the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13. Seeds that fall among thorns are choked by worries and distractions. In the same way, when our lives become crowded with concerns and busyness, it becomes harder for God's word to grow deeply within us.

Mindfulness during Lent means intentionally creating space for God. It may be a quiet moment in prayer, reading scripture, or simply sitting in silence and remembering that Christ is present with us. These small pauses help us realign our hearts and rediscover peace.

At the same time, the story reminds us that people serve God in different ways. Martha's practical energy and Mary's

contemplative listening both have a place in the body of Christ. What matters most is that whatever we do — whether serving actively or reflecting quietly — is rooted in love for Jesus.

As we journey through this Lenten season, we are invited to choose the better part. Let us slow our pace, release unnecessary worries, and spend time at the feet of Christ. From that place of presence and peace, our service will become lighter, our hearts more joyful, and our faith more deeply rooted

May this season help us rediscover the beauty of simply being with Jesus.

The following article, written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith, and is entitled:

God in the Sciences: The Beauty of Good Friday

Some of the most beautiful things in the world have an ugly side. What about the emperor penguin chick, nestling in a feathery pouch above its parent's feet? There's a lovely moment when mum and dad greet each other over the gaping beak of their fuzz-ball offspring. Heads bent together, making a heart shape in the air, we can't help seeing a reflection of our own ideals of love in the pair.

But the reality of what those birds are going through is even more gruelling than human parenthood. Father penguin has spent all winter sheltering the egg from freezing hurricane-force winds, while mother penguin was feeding at sea. When

the chick hatched its parents started an exhausting game of tag, taking it in turns to walk across the ice and risk being eaten by leopard seals or killer whales, in order to catch fish for their new offspring.

The living world is truly wonderful in so many ways, but the darker side of the picture is never far away. Creation is groaning (Romans 8:22), and just waiting to be rescued. Enter Jesus, through whom all of Creation was made. The king of the universe came to live with us, bringing His great love and wisdom to the human population of first-century Israel. The Creator was relating to His creation in a very personal way, and this could have been a totally beautiful picture.

But there is a horrifically ugly side of Jesus' story that threatens to obscure the beauty of what He did on Good Friday. It was a brutal and terrifying day when human sinfulness resulted in the Son of God being executed by His enemies, but thankfully there was much more to it than that. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ set off a seismic wave of spiritual events whose effects are still rippling out across the world.

So that ugly day over 2,000 years ago is called 'good' because of what it achieved. Those who follow Jesus find their lives are changed for the better, even if their day-to-day existence may still be incredibly tough. When people come to understand what Creation is for and who it belongs to, they can begin to serve and preserve the earth as they should. These things are only whispers of what is to come, but they give me hope for the future redemption of all Creation. I can choose to dwell on the beauty of Jesus' death because it was not the end of the story — the future beckons.

This article is extracted (with permission) from [New Life: Reflections for Lent](#), edited by Amy Robinson and Wendy H Jones (£7.99).

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

Why Easter will never go away

How do you make sense of the Resurrection? Dead men don't rise, so why believe that this particular dead man *did* rise?

At the end of St Luke's gospel we read that: "they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement" (Luke 24:4). This is highly significant. The Gospels do not show us a group of disciples who were in a receptive frame of mind. After the crucifixion, they were in hiding, frightened and scattered. Then suddenly, they came out of hiding and were totally different; excited, joyful. By Pentecost they were confident, with one firm message: 'You crucified Jesus, but God raised Him up!'

How did they know this? Because of direct personal experience. Some of them had visited the tomb of Jesus: it was empty. Others claimed to have seen and touched the risen Lord. Were they hallucinating? People can hallucinate in groups – when taking drugs, for example. But of course, each one will see a different hallucination. But the disciples all saw the same thing. Or rather, the same person. Jesus.

Were they lying? Jesus had died a humiliating death as a criminal. Perhaps they wanted to rescue His good name. So, did they pretend they had seen Him?

This theory has a big problem. Their preaching led them into trouble with the authorities. They were beaten and imprisoned and some of them killed. People will die for ideas and causes which they believe in passionately. But not for things they have made up. We might suffer for our convictions, but we will not suffer for our inventions.

What about the 'swoon' theory? That Jesus didn't die on the cross, despite terrible wounds? That He recovered in the tomb,

and then escaped? That the disciples nursed Him back to health? But Roman soldiers knew when a man was dead; and there was the guard on the tomb. Also, the events which followed simply don't fit. If the disciples had been hiding Jesus all along, they would have kept very low-key, and out of the way, so that the authorities did not come after Him again.

Besides, to preach that God had raised Jesus from the dead – which is exactly what they did preach – would have been a lie. Beatings and threat of death would soon have loosened their tongues. Inventions crumble under pressure; convictions hold fast.

Another reason for believing in the Resurrection is this: Jesus' continuing impact. Thousands and soon millions of people in every generation since have shared an inescapable sense of being 'accompanied' through life. Though unseen, they identify this presence as the Risen Lord.

Sometimes this experience of meeting Jesus is gentle and fitful. Sometimes it is dramatic and life changing. This reminds us that the resurrection of Jesus is not just an interesting historical puzzle. It is a vital, present day reality. It brings wonderful comfort, assuring us of the central Christian truths: death is dead; Jesus is alive; God is love.

This central notion was captured, most movingly, by the great Albert Schweitzer: 'He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou me," and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the suffering which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is.'

Have a joyful – and a challenging – Easter.

The following article written by Canon Paul Hardingham has been extracted from Parish Pump, considers the day the 'church' began, and is entitled:

The power of Pentecost

The celebration of Pentecost this month could be described as a birthday party for the church, when we remember the gift of the Holy Spirit to the first disciples (Acts 2:1-13). What are we celebrating?

God's Promise:

The disciples obeyed Jesus' instructions as they gathered in the Upper Room: *'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised'* (1:4). They met expectantly in prayer for God's promised gift. Just as we look forward to birthday presents, how eager are we to receive more of the Spirit in our lives?

God's Power:

'All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit' (4). The disciples needed the power of the Spirit to be different: not fearfully gathered behind locked doors, but instead energised to make Christ known. The Spirit can transform our lives into the likeness of Jesus and give gifts to equip our witness. Although the disciples' experience of this power was overwhelming, it was essentially an encounter with God's love. For us, this can be equally emotional or quiet, but *all* of us are included, and nobody is excluded from this experience.

God's Purpose:

The disciples *'began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.'* (4). The Spirit empowered their witness, so that everyone heard them speaking in their own *'native language'* (lit: *dialect*, v8). We all have a story to tell of God's activity in our lives, and the Spirit will translate our words and actions into a language that those around can understand! At Pentecost, 3000 people

were added to the Church in one day! What do we expect of the Spirit in our day?

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

Peaceful mind in the month of Pentecost

Luke 11:11-13

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

John 14:15-18

If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

Titus 3:4-7

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

The following article written by Tim Lenton, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

The Great Exhibition that started the V & A

Some 175 years ago, from 1st May to 15th October 1851, the Great Exhibition was held in The Crystal Palace, Hyde Park. More than 10,000 exhibitors attended what is regarded as the first World's Fair.

Prince Albert was an enthusiastic promoter of the exhibition, which was described by some as a reaction to the successful French Industrial Exposition of 1844: he described it as a display of divine providence, though some religious writers took the opposite view, describing it as worldly and even ungodly with its emphasis on human achievement. Others welcomed it as an opportunity to evangelise.

Queen Victoria was an Exhibition enthusiast, visiting three times with her family and 34 times on her own. In fact, six million people – equivalent to a third of the population of Britain at the time – paid it a visit. The average daily attendance was 42,831, with a peak of 109,915 on 7th October. The Baptist preacher Thomas Cook, in a landmark achievement for his embryonic company, arranged travel there for more than 150,000.

The event made a surplus of £186,000 – worth about £30 million today. This was used to found the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum and the Natural History Museum.

The original Crystal Palace, constructed of cast iron and plate glass, was built specifically to house the Exhibition – consisting mainly of examples of technology developed in the Industrial Revolution. Designed by Joseph Paxton, it

was three times the size of St Paul's Cathedral and boasted the greatest area of glass ever seen in a building.

After the Exhibition, the Palace was rebuilt near the affluent South London suburb of Sydenham Hill and stood there until it was burnt down in November 1936. The nearby residential area was renamed Crystal Palace.

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

The General Strike of 1926

One hundred years ago, from 4th to 12th May 1926, there was a General Strike in the UK. It was called by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in support of 1.2 million coal miners. The strike lasted nine days, but had little effect in the long term. The aim was to force the Conservative government, led by Stanley Baldwin, to stop dramatic wage cuts for hard-hit miners and to improve their working conditions. The country came to a temporary standstill, but then the strike collapsed, though the miners stayed out for another seven months without achieving anything.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Scottish-born Rt Revd Randall Davidson, a conciliatory figure within the Church and Christianity generally, spoke out against the strike but called on the Government – unsuccessfully – to improve working conditions for miners, and to subsidise the mines so that wages could be increased.

He wanted to make his appeal known to the public on radio, but the BBC refused to broadcast it, though it was backed by an interdenominational group of church leaders, one of whom told Davidson: "For the first time in my life it has been possible to feel that the Christian forces in

this country were united and courageous.”

There was considerable sympathy for the strikers among the population generally – for instance, a football match was organised between police and strikers – but there were clashes too. There were also fears that fascists and communists were using the strike to fuel their own revolutionary ambitions. Labour Party leaders were especially worried that outright backing of the strikers might damage their new standing as a party of government.

Fears about the dubious legitimacy of the strike – with the threat of seizure of assets – also played a part in its early collapse.

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

National Biscuit Day – 29th May

Did you know that Britain is the country with the highest biscuit consumption in the world?

According to industry research, we each eat about 500 biscuits a year. And the great biscuit dunking debate - over which biscuit holds up best when dipped in tea – can spark surprisingly passionate discussion.

Biscuits have been part of our daily lives for centuries. Their dose of sweet, tasty comfort is loved by 2-year-olds and 90-year-olds, and every age in between.

And so National Biscuit Day is held each year to honour this beloved snack. Our national favourite seems to be the chocolate digestive, followed by shortbread and chocolate fingers. But don't underestimate the appeal of custard creams, hobnobs, chocolate chip and oatmeal cookies!

The McVitie's Digestive, first produced in 1892, is one of the most iconic biscuits in British history. Today, it remains a bestseller alongside other classics like the Rich Tea, the Bourbon, and the Jammie Dodger.

The word 'biscuit' comes from the Latin *panis biscotus*, meaning 'twice-cooked bread'. In Roman times, flour-based provisions were baked twice, to remove moisture, making them durable enough for long journeys. Ancient Egyptian sailors and Roman soldiers relied on these early biscuits as a portable, long-lasting food source.

The transformation from practical sustenance to sweet treat began around the seventh century, when Persian bakers added eggs, butter, cream, and eventually sugar and honey to their recipes, creating some of the earliest cookies in history. By the Middle Ages, biscuits had spread across Europe, with each region developing its own favourite.

The Industrial Revolution brought mass production to the biscuit world. British firms like McVitie's, Huntley and Palmers, and Carr's produced biscuits on an unprecedented scale. In 1831, Huntley and Palmers even invented the decorative biscuit tin, which not only kept biscuits fresh but also made them an attractive gift item.

What the Bible really means....

A father was approached by his small son who told him proudly, "I know what the Bible means, Daddy."

His father smiled "Okay. What does the Bible mean?" "It's easy, Daddy." the young boy replied excitedly, "It stands for 'Basic Information Before Leaving Earth.'"

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

All in the month of April

400 years ago, on 9th April 1626 that Francis Bacon, philosopher and politician, died. He served as Attorney General of England and Wales (1613-17) and then Lord High Chancellor of England (1617-21). Known as the 'Father of Empiricism', as his works influenced the scientific revolution in Europe.

125 years ago, on 15th April 1901 that Joe Davis, snooker and billiards player was born. He co-founded the World Snooker Championship in 1927 and won the first 15 championships.

100 years ago, on 6th April 1926 that the Revd Ian Paisley, Baron Bannside, Northern Irish politician and Protestant evangelical minister was born. Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) from 1971-2008, and then First Minister of Northern Ireland in 2007-08.

75 years ago, on 2nd April 1951 that General Dwight D Eisenhower (later US President) became NATO's first Supreme Allied Commander. He assumed command of all Allied forces in the Western Mediterranean and Europe.

75 years ago, on 17th April 1951 that the Peak District National Park was established. It was Britain's first National Park.

70 years ago, on 18th April 1956 that American film actress Grace Kelly married Prince Rainier III of Monaco and became Princess Grace of Monaco.

65 years ago, on 10th April 1961 that South African golfer Gary Player became the first non-American to win the Masters Tournament in Augusta, Georgia.

65 years ago, on 12th April 1961 that Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first person in space and the first person to orbit the Earth.

50 years ago, on 3rd April 1976 that the UK won the 1976 Eurovision Song Contest with *Save Your Kisses for Me* by Brotherhood of Man.

50 years ago, on 7th April 1976 that politician John Stonehouse, who infamously had tried to fake his own death in 1974, resigned from the Labour Party, leaving the government in a minority. After his death in 1988 it was revealed that he had been a Czech spy since 1962.

40 years ago, on 11th April 1986 that Halley's Comet made its closest approach to Earth during its most recent visit. It will return to Earth's vicinity in 2061 and 2134.

40 years ago, on 24th April 1986 that Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor and American wife of Prince Edward, formerly King Edward VIII, died.

40 years ago, on 26th April 1986 that the Chernobyl disaster took place in Ukraine, then within the Soviet Union. It was the world's worst nuclear power plant accident, killing 31 people outright, and leaking radiation across the western Soviet Union and Europe.

25 years ago, on 7th April 2001 that NASA launched its Mars Odyssey spacecraft to search for evidence of water and volcanic activity on Mars. It found water and ice below the surface.

15 years ago, on 29th April 2011 that Prince William and Catherine (Kate) Middleton were married at Westminster Abbey in London. They were given the titles Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Also 10 years ago, on 22nd April 2016 that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was signed. It came into effect on 4th November 2016.

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

All in the month of May

400 years ago, on 4th May 1626 that the Dutch explorer Peter Minuit arrived on the east coast of what is now the USA. He negotiated the purchase of Manhattan Island from the Lenape Native Americans for \$24 worth of cloth and buttons. (Equal to about \$1,150 today.)

250 years ago, on 4th May 1776 that Rhode Island became the first of the Thirteen Colonies to renounce allegiance to the British Crown and instead, to declare independence.

200 years ago, on 29th May 1826 that Ebenezer Butterick, American tailor was born. He and his wife invented tissue paper dress patterns in multiple sizes, and thereby revolutionised home dressmaking.

175 years ago, from 1st May to 15th October 1851 that the Great Exhibition was held in The Crystal Palace, Hyde Park. More than 10,000 exhibitors attended what is regarded as the first World's Fair.

100 years ago, on 4th to 12th May 1926 that the UK's General Strike was held. The Trade Union Congress (TUC) called a General Strike in support of 1.2 million coal miners. The strike lasted nine days, and had little effect.

90 years ago, on 7th May 1936 that British aviator Amy Johnson made the fastest-ever (at that time) solo flight from England to Cape Town.

80 years ago, on 11th May 1946 that the first CARE packages for Europe arrived in Le Havre, to help people who were starving after WWII.

75 years ago, on 3rd May 1951 that the Festival of Britain and the Royal Festival Hall in London were opened.

75 years ago, on 9th May 1951 that the Lake District National Park was established as Britain's second national park.

75 years ago, on 25th May 1951 that British spies Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean fled to Moscow. They were members of the infamous Cambridge spy ring.

70 years ago, on 24th May 1956 that the first Eurovision Song Contest was held in Lugano, Switzerland. It was won by Switzerland.

65 years ago, on 31st May 1961 that Michael Ramsay became Archbishop of Canterbury (until 1974).

60 years ago, on 6th May 1966 that the Moors Murderers Ian Brady and Myra Hindley were sentenced to life imprisonment for killing five girls, aged 10 to 17.

60 years ago, on 30th May 1966 that British racing driver Graham Hill won the 1966 Indianapolis 500. He was the only driver in history to win the 'triple crown of motor racing': the Formula One World Championship, the 24 Hours of Le Mans, and the Indianapolis 500.

40 years ago, on 9th May 1986 that Tenzing Norgay (Sherpa Tenzing), died. This Tibetan/Nepalese mountaineer had been with Sir Edmund Hillary of New Zealand when in 1953 they became the first people to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

15 years ago, on 2nd May 2011 that Osama bin Laden, Saudi Arabian-born terrorist, was shot dead by US forces in Pakistan. He was the founder of Al-Qaeda and is thought to have masterminded the 9/11 attacks on the USA.

