

ST. ANDREWS UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Upper Hanover Street, Sheffield, S3 7RQ

MESSENGER

Price £1.25

April and May 2024



CALENDAR for April and May 2024

APRIL

Sun	7	10.45 am	Worship Group (Sheffield Half Marathon)
Tues	9		NO Community Choir
Sun	14	10.45 am	Rev Inderjit Bhogal
Tues	16		NO Community Choir
Thurs	18	10 am	Management Team meeting
Sun	21	10.45 am	Mr Chris Limb
Tues	23	10 am	Community Choir
Sun	28	10.45 am	Mrs Jenny Carpenter
Tues	30	10 am	Community Choir

MAY

Sun	5	10.45 am	Mr Ian Wileman (Salvation Army)
Tues	7	10 am	Community Choir
Sun	12	10.45 am	Rev Canon Adrian Alker
Tues	14	10 am	Community Choir
Thurs	16	10 am	Management Team meeting
Sun	19	10.45 am	Worship Group and Mrs Marjorie Skidmore (Parish Nurse) followed by Annual Church Meeting
Tues	21	10 am	Community Choir
Sun	26	10.45 am	Prof Clyde Binfield

JUNE

Sun	3	10.45 am	Mrs Jenny Carpenter
Mon	4	2 pm	Elders meeting

FLOWERS

We now have a beautiful arrangement of artificial flowers in place for Sunday services but if anyone wishes to provide fresh flowers to commemorate some special date or memorial, please do so, and then write your name on the list on the back of the vestry door.

There is also the opportunity to bring a small fresh bunch to give to the visiting preacher; again, if you do this, please sign in the relevant column on the list.

SERVICE SHEET

If you have any notices to go in the service sheet, please send them to the person who is preparing them for that week.

June 2nd and 16th: Douglas Jones

June 9th and 23rd: Judith Adam

June 30th and all through July: Sheila Cooke

COFFEE

Sheila Cooke is keeping the rota for coffee after service on Sundays. Please tell Sheila if you would like to help.

CHRISTIANITY, POVERTY AND POLITICS

Revd Dr Michael Bailey March 17th 2024

Psalm 51 is a passionate cry from an individual overwhelmed by a sense of sin and with a desperate need to be forgiven. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love; according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!" (vv 1–2). This is a troubled soul longing for forgiveness. (v.7) It is a powerful and heartfelt plea but it does at times seem to go over the top. "I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me... Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (vv 3,5)

Part of me thinks – I know I am far from perfect but I'm not sure that I can identify with sinning to this extent *as an individual*. Clearly it is important to acknowledge and seek forgiveness for things we have done wrong individually. Psalm 51:17 expresses very well the relief that this can bring. "A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." But we also need to acknowledge that we are part of the *corporate* sin of the world. We are implicated in so many ways with the horror with which the world confronts us. I want to look at this in relation to the extent and depth of poverty, often extreme poverty, in this country.

I recently went to the exhibition 'Life on the Breadline: Christianity, Poverty and Politics in the 21st-century City' and was shocked. I knew a certain amount about the extent of poverty and indeed destitution of so many people in this country but this really hit me.

In the exhibition the first thing that struck me was the astonishing figure, that in 2008/9 the Trussell Trust provided nearly 27,000 food parcels. By 2022/3 that figure had risen over a hundred-fold to nearly 3 million. How has this come about? It is essentially the result of the economic policy of austerity which was introduced by the government after the financial crash of 2008. From 2009 the government began making large-scale cuts in public funding. These have included cuts to housing benefit (made worse by the bedroom tax), child benefit was frozen for three years from 2011, legal aid has been cut, many Sure Start centres had been closed, in April 2016 benefits were frozen for four years instead of rising with inflation, job centres are being closed, new claimants for universal credit have to wait at least five weeks before their first payment. Children have been affected disproportionately. And then came Covid and the cost-of-living crisis. It has been remorseless. As a result a recent report of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that in 2021/22 more than one in five people in the UK were in poverty.

That is nearly 14 ½ million people. Of these, 6 million people were in 'Very deep' poverty'. It's not just money. It affects the whole of people's lives. Stuart, a food bank client in Birmingham, said: "Just the poverty, it affects people's moods, everyone seems miserable, depressed, anxious, worried, a lot of debt, struggling for food and you know just the basics of life, struggling to pay bills."

Clearly we are part of the political, social, economic system which has resulted in this very worrying and for many people desperate situation. Surely it is a situation which demands a response from Christians. One of the readings for Ash Wednesday from Isaiah 58 is particularly telling:

Is not this the fast that I choose;
to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and to bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (Verses 6-7)

The report tells us some of the ways in which Christians and the churches have responded. One obvious indicator of church involvement is that 80% of food banks in the UK are run by faith groups, but Christian responses to poverty go much wider than food banks.

[Michael then gave several examples of church responses to the plight of their communities. Some focus on the gifts and assets, what is 'strong' before going on to address what is 'wrong'. Some go door to door to foster conversations with residents, listen and to build community. Many run cafes, which play an important role in tackling social isolation. .Or monthly free advice and support sessions with a solicitor; laptops and phones and volunteers on hand to help with understanding and writing letters, CVs and similar queries. The vision is of people from different backgrounds coming together in order to live more whole lives.]

Church Action on Poverty is a national anti-poverty charity which combines social action, advocacy and enabling others to take action. One of the most imaginative things they have done is working with people experiencing poverty because they are the "real experts in poverty". On several occasions they have brought together church leaders and activists from across the UK to share good practice. I do commend their work.

Notting Hill Methodist Church in London is close to Grenfell Tower. In the weeks following the fire on 14 June 2017, the Church's building became an informal space of welcome for those whose lives had been shattered by the Grenfell blaze. Whilst the size of the congregation of Notting Hill Methodist Church is smaller than in the past, its significance in the community surrounding Grenfell Tower has not declined. As in many diverse inner-city communities, faith groups remain trusted key players in civil society politics because of their networks and relationships across the local neighbourhood. Since 2017 Notting Hill Methodist Church has become a focal point for vigils and services of remembrance, as well as a venue for community meetings demanding housing justice in the months that followed the fire.

I have tried to give you a flavour of this challenging report. The situation is depressing but by the time I had finished reading it I was surprised by how encouraged I was. Churches can do some remarkably useful things. That does not mean that all churches are engaged but many are. What is vital is local presence, being there, being part of the local community, often working with other faith groups and local organisations. Being represented at regional and national level also helps, but effectiveness at these levels depends on being well grounded locally.

It is all too easy to slip into accepting that this is just how things are and maybe we can help a bit on the edges. How do we avoid being overwhelmed and despairing? How do we keep being practically compassionate? There are no easy answers to these questions. I am sure that all of you in some way are doing something already but it is abundantly obvious that what is being done at the national political level is grossly inadequate, and I am also sure that we in the churches could do more.

It is hard to know how to finish the sermon. This is not a political meeting where we have to have a political agenda worked out ready to be implemented. I suggest we have to live with the discomfort and use that discomfort creatively. Just feeling guilty about having enough to eat and enough money is futile but the discomfort needs to make us ask hard questions of ourselves, of our churches, of our society, and of our politicians. Let me give two simple examples.

1. Local churches, especially in poor areas, are vitally important. How do we, especially in the richer areas, support them better?

2. We will have a general election this year. Jesus had a special concern for the poor, so must we. We need to ask the politicians some awkward questions, for example 'We are prepared to support food banks because they give essential help when it is needed desperately. But we want a society where food banks are not needed. What are you going to do to make that possible?'

I suggest that our personal piety, prayers and hopes need to become better integrated with the brutal structural realities of the world we live in. We need the new covenant of which Jeremiah spoke: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (v.33)

To finish, here is a prayer which may help us to be faithful to Jesus in a world which needs his active, compassionate grace so desperately:

Lord, what is the point of your presence if our lives do not alter?

Change our lives: shatter our complacency. Make your word flesh of our flesh, blood of our blood and our life's purpose. Take away that self-regard which makes our consciences feel clear. Press us uncomfortably, for it is only thus that another peace is made – *your* peace. Amen

FAMILY NEWS

We hope you are enjoying the longer days and blooming gardens, although the changeable weather can spoil plans. We send good luck wishes to all those young people who are finishing their courses at school and college and facing important exams. We remember how trying it was to sit revising when the weather was warm and sunny.

We think of those members and friends with persistent health issues which make life difficult, and are glad to hear when treatment or test results are encouraging. It is good to see **Kathleen Smyth** back in church after her sudden health scare. She is still in considerable pain but feels it is gradually improving with analgesics. **Monica Hanna** is pleased to be able to drive again after surgery on her hand. **Wilma Love**, now living near Kidderminster, sends her best wishes; she tries to keep up her exercise with a walking frame and is enjoying the company and activities in her apartment complex.

Good wishes from **Jo Hunt**, who used to run a monthly Fairtrade stall in the hall after service.

Unexpected health issues sometimes hit us, as happened to **Jean Dickson**. She went into the Northern General for a straightforward heart procedure, which went well, but contracted a chest infection which has really set her back. Her stay in hospital has been longer than expected but she is home now, thankfully, although it will take a while to get her strength back.

We are sorry to record the death of the **Rev Drummond Gillespie**, a good friend of St Andrew's, on 20 April. Drummond and Yvonne used to come to our service several times a year and we enjoyed seeing them. Sadly, Alzheimer's began to take its toll but they were coping well until Drummond developed pneumonia. The funeral took place at St James URC on 7 May. We send our sincere sympathy to Yvonne and all the family.

We also keep in our prayers our administrator **Father Tesfa Teferi**. His housing by Sheffield Council has always been unsuitable (a one-bedroom flat for himself, his wife and two girls) but has now become uninhabitable and a risk to health because of mould. His wife and daughters are now having to live elsewhere while Tesfa lodges with friends. We have approached the Council but have received little response and no help. We know that many people are in a similar unsatisfactory situation, sadly, but meanwhile, Tesfa's family is split up.

We have also been informed recently of the death of former member Lady Mary Carlisle on 20 September last year. Sir Michael and Lady Carlisle were active members when they lived in Sheffield, and some people will remember them.

Happier news!

Birthday wishes and congratulations to Bill Smyllie (99 on 21 April), Fraser McVittie (96 on 13 May) and John Price (90 on 16 May).

We do not see them in church now but they are in our minds and prayers with fond memories.

Thank you from Roundabout which was our Christmas charity

Dear Everyone at St Andrew's

Thank you for supporting young people to move forward independently. It's the wraparound approach that makes Roundabout's support so special – not only providing a safe place to call home, but giving young people the skills and the confidence to be the best version of themselves

Thank you so much for your kind donation of £124, and making such a positive impact on young lives through Roundabout, supporting 380 local young people every single day to turn their lives around.

And a Wedding!

On 10th February 2024, Anna Warbrick, daughter of David and Jenny (née Cooke), married her sixth-form sweetheart, Matthew Frost, at their home church of St Martin-in-the-Fields. The couple live in London, where Anna teaches English at a large girls' comprehensive and Matt works as an audiologist, and is passionate about helping musicians with hearing loss. The service was conducted by Rev. Sam Wells, who used the words of Isaiah 43:1-7 to illustrate the three contexts of marriage and God's promise to us:

'I know who you are; I am with you whatever happens; I will rearrange everything.' He also highlighted the importance of touch, especially when words fail, and recommended three gestures to communicate: open hands say, 'You are precious,' raised hands say, 'You are honoured,' and clasped hands say, 'You are loved.'

David Warbrick led the prayers and the wonderfully eclectic music was enriched by St Martin's Voices. It was a moving service and we joyfully spilled out into Trafalgar Square, where curious tourists milled about and filmed the occasion. The weather was remarkably kind and any shivers were displaced by mulled cider and the warmth of affection flowing at the reception, in a favourite pub, *The Jolly Gardeners*, in Vauxhall. The newlyweds honeymooned in Cornwall and are saving up to visit Japan next year.

Jenny Warbrick



LOOKING BACK

Recent services have been varied and inspiring and have produced some surprises. Jenny Carpenter took the lectionary reading on 28 April about the Ethiopian official whom Philip met and baptised (Acts 8: 26-40) and read us the rap she wrote years ago about that incident. We were enthralled as she accompanied her words with a drum beat. See page 13.

That reading was particularly apposite on that date as it was Palm Sunday in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and the congregation of St Michael's, who meet in St Andrew's, gathered in force, the women dressed in beautiful printed skirts. Holy Week is observed with great devotion in the Ethiopian Christian Church. See page 12.

On 12 May, Rev Canon Adrian Alker led a happy and uplifting service in celebration of Family. Benjamin and Anna Moore created some lovely artwork in response to the hymn 'Colours of day dawn into the mind' (R&S 572). Adrian reflected on the different meanings of the word: the family of the human race, the family of the church, as well as our own immediate family. Jesus was a member of a large family and fitted into the culture of his time but also enlarged our notion of family to understand the inclusivity of the love of God seen in Jesus.

Benjamin and
Anna Moore
and Christine
Alker



LOOKING AHEAD

Sunday 19 May: The main speaker will be Marjorie Skidmore who is a Practice Nurse and will tell us about her work as “the hands of Jesus”. Parish Nurses are Registered Nurses who undertake a certificate in Parish Nursing and are employed or appointed as a volunteer by a church or Christian organisation to lead a health ministry. Parish Nurses analyse local health needs and then focus on improving, maintaining and regaining health through education, advice, advocacy and referral. Parish nurses work with people of all ages and backgrounds, those of any faith, or none.

Our **Annual General Meeting** will be held after this service to consider the work of the past year as recorded in the Book of Reports and to approve the annual accounts.

Sunday 9 June: We have another speaker, Chris Hardy from the S6 Food Bank, who will enlighten us from his own experience about the needs he sees regularly.

EVENTS

Friday 21 June: I AM MARK

You will see the posters and flyers for this presentation all over the church! We are thrilled to be hosting this performance by Stefan Smart. **7 pm.**

Tickets £8, £5 for students. Refreshments.

James Montgomery: We sing his hymns regularly but how much do we know about the composer? He was Scots-born, a poet, composer, prisoner, editor, campaigner against the slave trade and great worker in the Sheffield churches and Sunday Schools - one of the great men of Sheffield. Margaret Fall will give a presentation to the Caledonian Society and friends to enlighten us about his life and work on **Friday 17 May at 2.30 pm** in Holy Trinity Church Hall.

Fiesta Concert: Sheffield Symphony Orchestra play at

All Saints Church, Ecclesall **on 5th June 2024, 7.30pm**

Programme: Mozart - Marriage of Figaro Overture;

Saint-Saens - Bacchanale from Samson and Delilah;

Chaikin - Bayan Concerto for accordion; Offenbach - Can Can;

Price - Juba Dance from Symphony no. 1;

Marquez - Conga del Fuego Nuevo;

Shostakovich - Waltz no. 2 from Suite for Variety Orchestra;

Piazzola – Libertango; Gershwin - Cuban Overture

Tickets £12.50 / unwaged £10.50 / students and children £6.50

Carnival of the Animals: Sterndale Singers present an eclectic programme of choral music about animals, in celebration of our animal and bird friends. Holy Trinity Church Hall, **Saturday 6 July at 7/30pm.** Tickets £10, students £5, under-16 free.

A daring new staging of the Gospel of Mark



I am Mark

Performed
by
Stefan Smart

Friday June
21st 2024

At 7pm

St Andrew's URC , Upper Hanover Street Sheffield S3 7RQ

Tickets: Adult £8 Students £5

Obtainable from above address (include S A E & cheque to
St Andrew's URC), or a member of Congregation or on door.

Interval and refreshments : optional discussion at end of performance.

'I am Mark' is also being performed at Christ Church Stocksbridge Manchester
Road on June 22nd at 7pm Tickets £8 Box Office 07592 944810

ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX EASTER

Ethiopian Christians fast all through Lent (for 55 days) and observe Holy Week from Palm Sunday to Easter Day with many rituals. Their Hosanna (Palm Sunday) is marked with palm fronds and joy but Good Friday is a day for solemn quiet meditative worship. St Michael's members came in at intervals all through the day to pray. There was continuous reading of the crucifixion chapters from all four Gospels along with extracts from the psalms and prophets which foreshadow it. The chairs were moved to allow space for people to prostrate themselves, as a token of Christ's physical suffering. Then on Easter Eve they held an overnight eucharist to welcome in Easter Day, and a festive meal, to which everybody came - the church was full.

The festive season of Easter will continue for the next 50 days from the day of resurrection of Christ until Pentecost. Then on the following Monday they will start a fasting period called *Tsome Hawariat* = The fasting of the Apostles. That finishes on the day of the commemoration and celebration of the martyrdom of St Peter and St Paul in Rome during the persecution under Nero in 64 A.D. (By the way, St Paul was given options to choose the manner of his death because of his Roman citizenship right.)

Back in Ethiopia, observance of Holy Week was even more extensive; the life of the whole nation would feel sombre and slow in contrast to usual activities. Special services every day would focus on a different theme: Wednesday, the judgement by the high priests; Thursday, betrayal and trial before Pilate; Friday, the crucifixion. Good Friday is sometimes called Prostration Day. On Holy Saturday, the custom was for priests and deacons to go from house to house round the village and say, 'Peace is restored', carrying reeds like Noah's dove which brought the first green growth back to the ark as a sign of peace.

Easter is one of the main holidays in Ethiopia, enjoyed by everyone, even those of other faiths, although sadly the present government is pro-Muslim, and Christianity has become less popular partly because of its association with British imperialism.

THE GAZA ROAD RAP

The Spirit is urging you just like a goad:

“Go, Philip, go down to the long desert road
For if you like Abraham show his blind trust
You're sure to discover God's purpose, that must
Continue the spread of the strong Gospel word
To someone God's calling, who never has heard
Of God's love in Jesus. Go now, no delay!”
So Philip immediately starts on his way.

Start slow quiet drum beat 2 per line

But after six hours he's feeling the heat

He's all too aware of his tired, aching feet.

But then, in the glare of the sun at mid-day,

He's aware of a vehicle coming that way.

Who's this, overtaking, coming up from behind? *Increase speed*

Is it someone of consequence, someone refined?

And strangely the carriage is slowing its pace - *Decrease speed*

Black hands raised in greeting; a smiling black face!

Stop drumming at end of line

“My greetings, dear stranger, in this barren spot;

You must feel quite tired, you look very hot!

Please do me the honour of joining me. How

far are you going? Come, do tell me now.

Please get in my carriage; come and sit alongside,

So then we can talk and continue the ride!”

So Philip climbs up and they start to converse

Start drumming at end of line

The African opens, and starts to rehearse

and keep up quietly 2 beats per line

his personal story and all he has seen.

“I serve the Kandake, the Ethiop Queen.

A very responsible job, you might say.

It's because I'm a eunuch – that won't go away!

I've come from Jerusalem where I have bought

This scroll of the prophet Isaiah – I ought

To be able to understand clearly the text,

But it's all quite beyond me. It makes me quite vexed!

Who's the suffering servant? O please tell me who?
For I know his rejection and pain. Yes, I do.
"For he was cut off..." that's a physical act
But emotional, spiritual, too, it's a fact!"

Then Philip begins to explain and to share
The story of Jesus, and make him aware
That the life and the death of our Saviour and Lord
Was foretold by Isaiah in this very word.

"This Jesus of Nazareth lived out God's love
But challenged the priests and the leaders to move
From their over-reliance on keeping the law
And he even declared that God loves even more
The ones who're repenting from sin and from shame
And who now find forgiveness and power in His Name.

Betrayed by his friend, he was cynically tried,
Was spat upon, scourged and at last crucified.
But "Father, forgive them" he prayed at the last;
His flesh, like his colours, still nailed to the mast.
His death undertaken in all of our stead
God raised him to new life, our true Living Head.

But when he ascended to heaven above.
God poured out his Spirit, his Spirit of love,
On all the disciples, empowering us now
To tell this great story, and tell people how
By trusting in Jesus their life can be changed,
No matter how limited, sick or deranged.

And so I commend my Saviour to you.
His death gives new life. I know this is true.
His love is for all, be they Gentile or Jew.
His love lives in me and it can live in you."

The eunuch, enthralled with the gospel he hears,
Cries out, "I believe! Christ has ended my fears!

Look, here's an oasis – can I be baptised,
Slow to a stop
And be a disciple of Lord Jesus Christ?"

They alight from the carriage and Philip prepares
to baptise this new convert. The eunuch declares
his trust in Christ Jesus, his place in the Church;
No longer he feels like he's left in the lurch.
He knows he's been chosen and loved by the Lord
And his life will be different because of His Word.

They say their farewells, and they go separate ways
But forever are bonded in love and in praise.

Start fast drumming End

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

What do you think you know about this very significant figure in our history? 1066 and all that. My recent trip to Normandy was illuminating . .

William (born 1027) was originally known as 'the Bastard'. His father was Duke Robert of Normandy, his mother was the beautiful daughter of a tanner; their liaison was officially recognised but not a marriage. William was only seven years old when his father died and he inherited the dukedom, and the next few years were turbulent as various nobles including his kinsmen tried to take over his power. He was knighted at the age of 15 and had his first victory in battle at age 20. Years of conflict continued until, with the support of King Henry of France, he gradually regained control over Normandy and then all of Northern France.

His mother had later been married off to a nobleman and had two sons, William's half-brothers. William installed Odo as Bishop of Bayeux (at age 16) and Odo remained a powerful figure in church and state. He probably commissioned the Tapestry which vividly tells the story of William's conquest of England.

William's marriage was controversial. He wished to ally himself to Matilda of Flanders whose father was a powerful figure and in conflict with the Emperor, but this union was not approved by the Pope, who happened to be a cousin of the Emperor, on supposed grounds of consanguinity. The couple went ahead anyway and later were reconciled with the Pope when they each built a wonderful abbey in Caen as penance – the Abbe des Femmes and the Abbe des Hommes. They had four sons, two of whom were successive kings of England – William II (Rufus) and Henry I - and one of their daughters became the mother of Stephen, another king. Every king and queen of England since has descended from William 1.

William was also related to King Edward the Confessor of England (they shared a grandmother) which is why he had a claim on the English throne when Edward died without heirs. It appears that Edward had more or less promised him and named William as his successor.

The Bayeux Tapestry explains why this did not proceed smoothly. There were two other claimants to the throne of England - Harold Godwinstowe and Harald of Norway. The English Harold was sent by Edward to Normandy, probably to confirm the promised succession. En route Harold was captured and eventually sent, for a ransom, to William, who made him swear on holy relics to reinforce his claim to the English throne.

When Edward died (an old man in January 1066), Harold broke his oath and was crowned king himself. Hence William's great preparations of ships, men, supplies and arms that the Tapestry shows so vividly, in order to invade and claim his right. He made sure he had the support of the Pope and the Emperor, delegated authority in Normandy to Matilda, and gathered a large and diverse army (4000? 7,000?). The Battle that ensued at Hastings on 14 October did not all go his way but his soldiers were on horseback while Harold's were on foot; the English soldiers were also tired after trekking back from Yorkshire where they had had to confront (and defeat) another invasion by Harald of Norway.

The story of Harold being killed by an arrow in the eye is just a legend, and not entirely clear in the Tapestry, but as arrows fly through the air, it was publicised as a sign of God's judgement from heaven on his treachery.

William hastily had himself crowned in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day 1066 but his coronation turned into a fiasco. The English barons shunned the occasion so only his Norman knights were present along with a few clergy, plus a crowd of sightseers outside in the street. But when a fire broke out nearby, the crowd outside and most of the spectators inside all decamped to watch the conflagration or to rescue their property, and only a handful were left to perform the ceremony.

William's rule was violently resisted by the English nobles, whom he crushed and then distributed their lands among his Norman followers. He built castles for defence all over the country especially on the Welsh and Scottish borders, and introduced the feudal system of land ownership. He established a very firm reign here and was a capable administrator, as well as a strategic military commander and a ruthless opportunist. He left us with the comprehensive and invaluable record of landholding that is known as the Domesday Book.

He introduced Norman French courtly customs, and changed and enriched the language with Norman-French. He also introduced the continental style of Church, which he strongly supported,

He continued to spend as much time in France as in England; his rule there was constantly threatened and needed aggressive defending. In 1087 he was again in battle in Northern France and was wounded and fell against the pommel of his saddle, badly damaging his rather large stomach and intestines. He took five weeks to die, a fact which may have contributed to the farce that was his funeral, as recorded by the chroniclers.

A sarcophagus had been prepared at the Abbey he had built in Caen but his swollen corpse would not fit into it and, when forced, the bloated intestines burst and a vile stench filled the chapel, causing a rapid and undignified conclusion to the rites.

Even in death, he was not allowed to lie in peace. Wars and changes of religious thinking in later centuries led to his body being dug out and the bones scattered. The first time this happened, they were collected and put back somehow but when repeated in another dispute, the bones were almost all lost. Save one thigh bone, which some passerby saved, and it is this bone which is the sole remains of William in his great tomb in the Abbey des Hommes in Caen.

Elizabeth Draper

LECTIONARY READINGS for May / June 2024

April 7	Acts 4: 32-35; Psalm 133; 1 John 1:1 – 2:2 John 20: 19-31
April 14	Acts 3: 12-19; Psalm 4; 1 John 3: 1-7; Luke 24: 36b-48
April 21	Acts 4: 5-12; Psalm 23; 1 John 3: 16-24; John 10: 11-18
April 28	Acts 8: 26-40; Psalm 22: 25-31; 1 John 4: 7-21; John 15: 1-8
May 5	Acts 10: 44-48; Psalm 98; 1 John 5: 1-6; John 15: 9-17
May 12	Acts 1: 15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1John 5: 9-13; John 17: 6-19
May 19	Acts 2: 1-21; or Ezekiel 37: 1-14; Psalm 104: 24-34, 35b;
Pentecost	Romans 8:22-27; John 15: 26-27; 16: 4b-15
May 26	Isaiah 6: 1-8 and Psalm 29; Romans 8: 12-17;
Trinity	John 3: 1-17
June 2	1 Samuel 3: 1-10, (11-20) and Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18; Deuteronomy 5: 12-15 and Psalm 81: 1-10; 2 Corinthians 4: 5-12; Mark 2: 23 – 3:6

From Rupert Brooke's 'The Great Lover'

These I have loved:

White plates and cups, clean-gleaming,
Ringed with blue lines; and feathery, faery dust;
Wet roofs, beneath the lamp-light; the strong crust
Of friendly bread; and many-tasting food;
Rainbows; and the blue bitter smoke of wood;
And radiant raindrops couching in cool flowers;
And flowers themselves, that sway through sunny hours,
Dreaming of moths that drink them under the moon;
Then, the cool kindliness of sheets, that soon
Smooth away trouble; and the rough male kiss
Of blankets; grainy wood; live hair that is
Shining and free; blue-massing clouds; the keen
Unpassioned beauty of a great machine;
The benison of hot water; furs to touch;
The good smell of old clothes; and other such—
The comfortable smell of friendly fingers,
Hair's fragrance, and the musty reek that lingers
About dead leaves and last year's ferns. . . .

Dear names,
And thousand other throng to me! Royal flames;
Sweet water's dimpling laugh from tap or spring;
Holes in the ground; and voices that do sing;
Voices in laughter, too; and body's pain,
Soon turned to peace; and the deep-panting train;
Firm sands; the little dulling edge of foam
That browns and dwindles as the wave goes home;
And washen stones, gay for an hour; the cold
Graveness of iron; moist black earthen mould;
Sleep; and high places; footprints in the dew;
And oaks; and brown horse-chestnuts, glossy-new;
And new-peeled sticks; and shining pools on grass;—
All these have been my loves.

[What would your priorities be – from this list, or others ? Ed.]

TOOLKIT

Are you spring cleaning, clearing out cupboards, down-sizing even? If you have any unwanted household tools, would you please think about donating them to the church. We are trying to build up a supply of handy usable tools for the use of Tesfa and other volunteers who may be doing small jobs (eg repairs or installation) in the building. If you no longer need such items, we'd love to take them off your hands.

PAY IT FORWARD

In 1784, Benjamin Franklin wrote the following letter to Benjamin Webb:

Dear Sir

Your situation grieves me and I send you herewith a banknote for ten louis d'or. I do not pretend to give such a sum; I only lend it to you. When you shall return to your country, you cannot fail of getting into some business that will in time enable you to pay all your debts. In that case, when you meet with another honest man in similar distress, you must pay me by lending this sum to him, enjoining him to discharge the debt by a like operation when he shall be able and shall meet with such another opportunity. I hope it may thus go through many hands before it meets with a knave that will stop its progress. This is a trick of mine for doing a deal of good with a little money. I am not rich enough to afford much in good works, and so am obliged to be cunning and make the most of a little.

With nest wishes for your future prosperity, I am, dear sir,

Your most obedient servant, B. Franklin

(from The Wisdom, of Franklin, edited by John J Murray)

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers: Your contributions are welcomed - and needed! This is your magazine. Please share your ideas, pictures, reviews (of books, films, tv, exhibitions), holidays, history, jokes, puzzles

I had six stalwart serving men
Who taught me all I knew.
Their names were What and Why and When
And Where and How and Who.

COME, LET US REASON TOGETHER

Congratulations to the Revd Fleur Houston on the publication of her biography of John Wood Oman.

Oman (1860-1939) was a theologian philosopher, born in Orkney, educated at Edinburgh University, ordained in the Presbyterian Church, ministered in Alnwick and then was called to Westminster College, Cambridge, where he eventually became Principal. His broad thinking and writing on theological and moral questions, and his love of people and understanding of social and human issues, and friendly human touch, made a lasting impression on all who met him. The book is thoroughly researched, very well organised and written, full of telling quotations which really give the essence of the man and his views. One can see why his portrait and character fascinated Fleur.

There is a copy of the book in the church which you can borrow.

