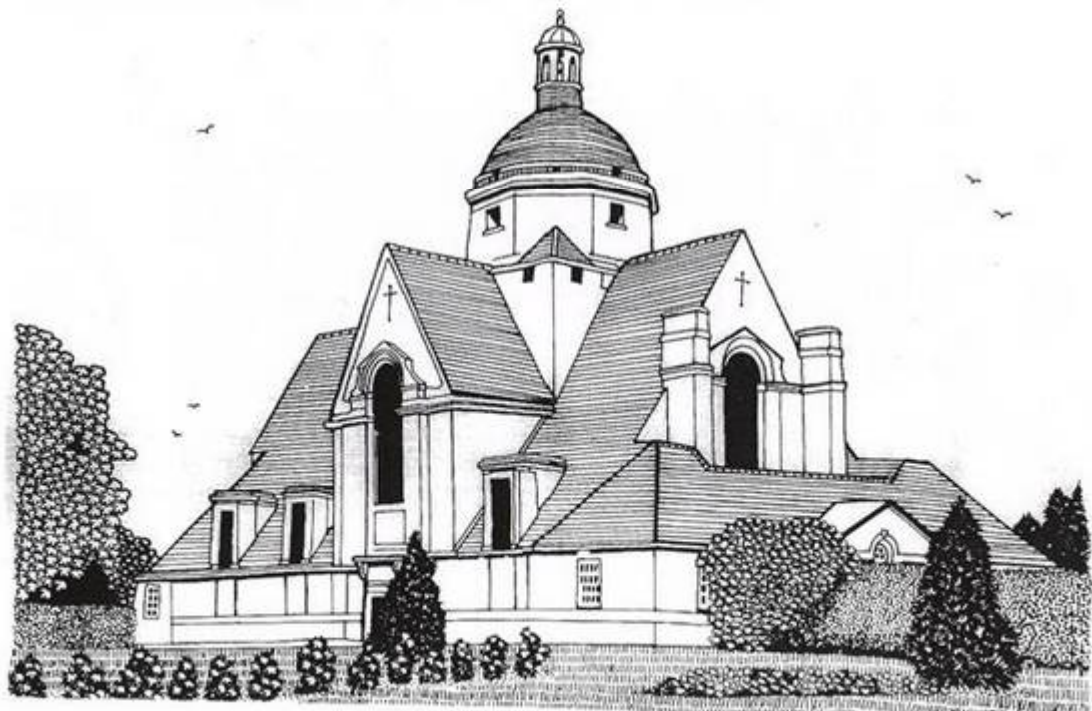


NEWS & VIEWS

The Free Church Hampstead Garden Suburb



FEBRUARY 2020

PLEASE TAKE ONE

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB FREE CHURCH

(United Reformed and Baptist)
Central Square, London, NW11 7AG
www.hgsfreechurch.org.uk

Sunday Services: *11 a.m. (and 6.30 p.m. when announced)*
Holy Communion is celebrated at Morning
Worship on the first Sunday of every month.
The Junior Church meets at 11am every
Sunday

Minister: **Revd Dr Ian Tutton**
The Manse, Central Square, NW11 7AG
020 8457 5898
itutton@aol.com

Correspondence
Secretary Penny Trafford
020 8959 3405
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Treasurer Derek Lindfield
07803 953483

Director of Music Peter Hopkins

Children's Advocates Lilian Coumbe
coumbe_lilian@yahoo.com

Stephan Praetorius
Stephan@acceleration.biz

Safeguarding Statement

Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church believes that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all those who are vulnerable (children, young people and vulnerable adults). We expect all of our leaders, volunteers and those who use our premises to share this commitment and value the support of those who worship here in achieving this.

The Elders (Trustees), Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church
January 2016

NEWS & VIEWS

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB
FREE CHURCH
Central Square,
London NW11 7AG



NO 757

FEBRUARY 2020

Dear Friends,

During 2020 there will be many opportunities to have called to mind the events of 1945 as we ‘celebrate’ the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. It is likely that the main focus of attention will be on what we refer to as VE Day – ‘Victory in Europe Day’ – but also on VJ Day – ‘Victory over Japan Day’. However, it is worth noting, albeit in passing, that the language of ‘victory’, whilst no doubt appropriate in the immediate aftermath of the cessation of hostilities, may not be the best way of describing our response some three quarters of a century later...

...For us in Europe, the beginning of the end of the war actually happened in 1944, with the allied forces landing on the Normandy beaches. But as 1945 unfolded, the true horror of what had been happening in mainland Europe, until then effectively hidden by its perpetrators, was there for all to see...

...And so it was, that on January 27th 1945, Soviet troops marched into Auschwitz concentration camp; a date that since 2005 has been designated as International Holocaust Memorial Day’. There is no need to spell out in detail what went on in Auschwitz and in the other concentration camps. We all know only too well. Suffice to say that it epitomised the nadir of Nazism itself, but also exposed the depths of depravity to which humankind can sink if left unfettered and unchecked. In the light of what was uncovered we are left in no doubt that evil is no mere philosophical abstraction, not just the absence of good; but that to do evil is a conscious choice, a choice which each one of us is capable of making...

...For whatever reason, this particular expression of evil was mainly directed against Jewish people. Ever since the Christian faith originated, Jewish people have been persecuted - anti-Semitism has been commonplace

within Christendom. This is not surprising, given that it could be assumed that Jesus' death on the Cross came about as a direct consequence of the actions of the Jewish leaders of His day; and that from then until now Jewish people have rejected the claim which is at the heart of the Christian message, the claim that in Jesus, God fulfilled the promise given to the Jews concerning the One who was to be Messiah...

...None of us is likely to know for sure what motivated Hitler and his cronies to embark on the policy they did. All we do know is that the suffering caused is beyond anything humankind has inflicted upon itself throughout its history...

...But history has an awful habit of repeating itself: Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia...Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing. Crimes against Humanity. It is as if we cannot stop ourselves. It is as if we are intent on imposing a death sentence upon ourselves and then are determined to carry it out. We become our own Judge, Jury, & Executioner...

...And so, 75 years on from Auschwitz, as we are made to confront the 'evil that men do', this is no cause for celebration, but rather a call to repentance. A realisation of what we are, and that because of what we are, an acknowledgement of what we have become...Jesus' words from the Cross echo down through the centuries and become our own .. 'Father, forgive us, we know what we have done'.

Ian Tutton



Bible Study: Joshua

The extensive preparations completed, now it was time for the Israelites to march on Jericho. Joshua chapter 5 ends with a description of a vision Joshua had, most likely when he was seeing for himself how difficult it would be to capture the city, either by all out attack, or by laying siege to it. '... *Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he*



looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." Joshua 5, verses 13 – 15a). Joshua is reminded that whilst humanly speaking, he is the 'commander in chief' of the Israelite army; actually it is the Lord's army and that the Lord Himself will lead them into battle; the ground upon which the battle will be fought is itself 'holy ground' and is to be respected as such. There is in effect, a spiritual dimension to the conflict that is about to unfold, not just a political one. And so, we come to the account of the 'fall of Jericho'. The narrative is at best described as repetitive. '*...Then the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in."* (Josh. 6, 2 – 5). This describes God's instruction to Joshua concerning what is to happen. Verses 6 – 11 record Joshua's relaying of the same instructions to the people. Verses 12 – 16 then describe the events themselves. From a literary perspective one has to be cautious regarding the use of 'days' – e.g. the creation narrative in Genesis 1. What we may have here is a description of a long drawn out siege – the Israelite army gradually exhausting the people inside the city by ensuring that no one was able to get in or out. Notwithstanding this, from an historical perspective, the story is problematic. Even allowing for the fact that 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence', to date there has been no independent archaeological confirmation of what is described...in 1930–36, excavations were carried out on

the site of the Biblical Jericho. The remains of a network of collapsed walls were identified which were originally dated to about 1400 BCE. Re-excavation of the site between 1952–1958 demonstrated that the destruction occurred c.1500 BCE during a well-attested Egyptian campaign of that period, and that Jericho had in fact been deserted throughout the mid-late 13th century BCE, the supposed time of Joshua's battle. In 1995, the revised dating was confirmed using radiocarbon testing which dated the destruction level to the late 17th or 16th centuries BCE. A small unwallled settlement was rebuilt in the 15th century BCE, but the site appears to have been unoccupied from the late 15th century until the 10th/9th centuries BCE... One has to decide for oneself in the light of the evidence – or lack of it – what historical value there is in the account given in Joshua chapter 6. But, regardless, the text is as it is, and whatever happened, it is a fact that subsequently the Israelites entered Canaan and established themselves, eventually, as the most powerful nation in the region. And so, as the story unfolds, Joshua instructs the people that the city, everything in it, '*... is to be devoted to the Lord...*' (Josh. 6, 17). But this is not quite as it seems. On the one hand it is a warning against looting for personal gain. ... '*...All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury.*' (Josh. 6, 19). Why? Because they are to '*...keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it...*' (Josh. 6, 17 – 18). Here, 'devoted things' refers to items that would have used as part of the religious rituals followed by the inhabitants of the city – devoted to their god. But on the other hand, there is the slaughter of all living beings. '*... They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it, men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys...*' (Josh. 6, 21). This is just the first example of what will happen on a regular basis when the Israelites fight and win battles on their way to subjugating the whole land and its people. The fact that such practices were commonplace across the Near East during this time, each war being a 'holy' war which demanded that the devotees of the god who had been defeated be subject to ritual slaughter as a way of reinforcing the power of the god whose army had proved victorious may be an explanation for such happenings, but is certainly not a satisfactory one. However, one family is to be spared, that of Rahab... '*...Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her."* So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel...' Josh. 6, 22 – 23). And so, the city

NEWS OF PEOPLE

Once again we extend our sympathy to Katharine Cheng following the sudden and untimely death of her son, Theodore. Happening so soon after the death of her husband, Bin Cheng, it is impossible even to imagine just how difficult a time this must be for her, and for her daughter Veronica. All we can do is keep them close and remember them as a family as they continue to mourn the passing of their loved ones...

...But then we are able to share in the joy of Nancy Gilks who has recently celebrated her 100th birthday surrounded by her family and friends, and we wish her well whatever the future might have in store for her...

...On January 5th we were pleased to welcome Julia Levis into the membership of the church. Julia had been christened and confirmed within the Church of England, but having come to live locally we are delighted that she finds herself at home in the Free Church, and most especially in the choir!

And on that same Sunday, as we shared together in an act of (re) dedication of Elders & Deacons, we are pleased to welcome three new Elders: Mary Stacy, Verity Smith, and Claudia Millhoff, as well as two new Deacons: Hossein Nejad and Christine Barrow. Together, with those who continue to serve, we are grateful for their willingness to serve the church in this way.

Ian Tutton

and everything in it is destroyed, and the way is clear for the Israelites to occupy the whole of the land of Canaan. But in order to complete the destruction of Jericho, ‘...*At that time Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: “Cursed before the LORD is the one who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: At the cost of his firstborn son he will lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest he will set up its gates.”*’ (Josh. 6, 26). The city would be rebuilt, the beginnings of which are described thus, ‘...*During Ahab’s reign, [c850BCE] Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho; laying its foundations cost him his eldest son Abiram, and the setting up of its gates cost him Segub his youngest son. Thus, was fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through Joshua, the son of Nun...*’ (1 Kings 16, 34). In time Jericho was to become a thriving city, and in New Testament times was effectively the gateway to Jerusalem through which Jesus passed on his final journey south from Galilee, passing through Jericho, an episode immortalised by his encounter with the tax collector Zacchaeus.

Ian Tutton

WORLD WAR I COMMEMORATIONS AT MONTROUGE

Philippe Faure writes in the current edition of "Allo-Montrouge", the magazine of our twinned Church in Paris:

On 11 November last the Mayor of Montrouge invited representatives of all religious faiths in the town to a ceremony to celebrate the anniversary of the end of World War I. Fifty people attended, including members of the different fighting forces, to hear contributions from representatives of several religions on the theme of Peace. I was particularly struck by the contributions made by those representing the three religions: Moslem, Jewish and Christian, the three religions of the Book. They all spoke about texts which were important to their own particular spiritual beliefs.

The Imam of the Montrouge Mosque, Abdallah Toure, quoted in Arabic, then translated several verses of the Koran which spoke of Peace. The Rabbi of the synagogue Otniel Melka, read some verses from the Torah which, he reminded us, was the beginning of the Old Testament. These texts, starting from the creation of the World, were very interesting, speaking of God who fixed place and time, in a universe which promised Peace. Because if everyone, each group, each nation, recognised their place and the limits of their powers given by God, it would influence the source of conflict and war. This is as true among couples, in families, in groups, as much as in the State.

Pastor Francois Forschle, from the Centre Evangelique Evidence said that, for him, the date 11 November was very significant because his grandfather had been killed in the early fighting, in August 1914. He spoke of Jesus' words of Love and Peace, believing that Peace on Earth would never come until there was Peace in our hearts.

Father Marc Vacher from the Montrouge Catholic community read Psalm 85 : "Mercy and Truth have met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other", and spoke of a loving God who called us to be workers for Peace.

Our Pastor Laurence Berlot ended this moving ceremony, praying for our united lives together, and also for those who, in the world today, make decisions for us. The different faiths represented in the world, their similarities and their differences making a rich tapestry of beliefs, call us to respect the differences between us, which is such a primary condition for Peace.

This reunion has been, I think, a true example of solidarity and fraternity. I

have one regret, a small one, that representatives of atheist or agnostic associations were not invited to the event. They also have their words to say. However the Mayor, in concluding the proceedings, stressed that the representatives showed the neutrality of the French Republic and its relationship to the various religions, which guarantees to all the right to think as they wish, to believe as they think right, and to worship freely.

Translated by Joan Holton

THIS YEAR KEEP YOUR JOY

(The joy of the lord is your strength - Nehemiah 8 v10)

The above title was the heading in my 'Word for Today' reading for New Year's Day and I was so impressed by the following that I felt it must be shared for when we feel down and need an example of great inspiration to lift us up again.

“When you listen to a great choir sing the Hallelujah Chorus, you realize Handel was inspired by God. He wrote the entire Messiah in three weeks. He said the music ‘came to him ‘in a flurry of notes and motifs’. He wrote feverishly, and as if driven by an unseen



composer to put pen to paper. Yet he wrote it when his eyesight was failing, and he was facing the threat of dying in a debtors' prison because of a mountain of outstanding bills. Many of us find it difficult to create under stress, especially when physical or financial problems are at the root of that stress. And yet Handel did. How? He credits the completion of his masterpiece to one thing : joy. He is quoted as saying that he felt as if he would “burst with joy” at what he was hearing in his mind and heart. Instead of dying, as he thought he would, he lived to see his oratorio become a cherished tradition and a popular work. And he also saw it succeed in raising vast sums of money for the poor and destitute.....Jesus said, “These thing I have spoken to you that my joy might remain in you and be full (John 15 v 11).”

At the beginning of another year full of uncertainties, worries and problems, it is good to remember that joy instilled and remaining in us.

Rosemary Birch

From the Archives

*February is Church Anniversary time when the Free Church celebrates its 1910 foundation. One hundred years ago in 1920, the country was still recovering from the effects of World War 1. The Rev Rushbrooke was the first minister with plans for the anniversary celebrations which were published in **Work and Worship**.*

*Twenty years later in 1940 Rev Frank Ballard was minister who undertook to write a **News Letter** all through the war to keep his very scattered flock in touch with each other with news (very censored for security purposes) of remaining Suburb residents and all the local bombing.*

During the winter months all the services were held in the Church Hall in order to save the precious fuel ration and also because the hall was far easier to 'black out'. The congregation was noticeably smaller due to the evacuation and with a large number of members serving in the Forces at home and overseas.

February 1920

Work and Worship

Church Anniversary. We are ten years old this month, the Church having been formed on February 18th, 1910. We come to the anniversary with a Church building cleared of debt - a condition that few of us anticipated even a year ago. The celebration ought to be a singularly happy one; it will take place on Sunday, February 15th, and on Tuesday, February 17th. On Sunday the Rev W Hughes of Westbourne Park Chapel will preach in the morning and Mr Rushbrooke in the evening. On the Tuesday there will be a social gathering from 7pm until 8.15, and at 8.30 the **Rev D J Hiley**, President elect of the Baptist Union will preach in the Church. It will be a great time: let all resolve to be present at every service

Notes from Work and Worship

The Rev D J Riley is a preacher after his own order. No one is exactly like him. Utterly unconventional, intensely human, robust in physique and in thought, he has attained a unique position. Few chaplains commended themselves during the war as he did to those to whom he ministered in France. The Canadians made a resolute effort to take him home with them - happily for Britain, without success. He is a great power in the country, and especially in his native Wales.

February 1940

News Letter. On February 25th we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Church. It makes me wish we could have the story told from the earliest days down to the present moment. It would, I imagine, fall naturally into three parts. **The first** would tell of hopes and plans in very optimistic days about the wise

and strong leadership of Dr Rushbrooke, the first minister, about gathering storms and the fury of the Great War and what the Suburb suffered during those testing years. The **second** would be about those brighter days after the war, when the neighbourhood was built up at a great pace, and men of goodwill were intent upon building a new and better world. Here the church was fortunate in having a cultured and eloquent preacher, The Rev W Major Scott, to guide men's thoughts and aspirations. I am afraid that the third part would seem pedestrian by comparison. Outside, the world was getting more threatening causing a decided change in the population. There were reactions within the Church also - and here I mean "Church" not a congregation merely but the whole Body of Christ. It would take me long to explain what I mean, but many of you will know without explanation. Yet I hope this **third** part would not be altogether unworthy of what preceded it. I hope the story-teller would be able to speak of faithful work and deepening convictions and growing fellowship. It can't be told here, anyway, but we shall gather with thankfulness, God willing, on February 25th to remember and rejoice. And we have decided that exceptional times call for exceptional celebrations, so we intend to hold a re-union tea in the afternoon and Communion Service at 6 o'clock. Some of you will not be able to attend, but let those of us who are here in the Suburb do our best to make this a unique and memorable anniversary.

Anne Lowe



Cricket on the Green , Willifield Way with Fellowship Club House in the background in 1940 , the same year in which it was destroyed by bombing (HGS Virtual Museum)

JOHN BIRCH'S DIARY

Tuesday 3rd December: What's in a tail?

History is always being added to. The discovery of a 3,500 year old fresco in Santorini (in modern-day Greece) has changed knowledge of long-distance travel. In this case thousands of miles to the Indus valley, which indicates that the 'silk road', used much later by Genghis Khan,



Marco Polo and many thousands of travellers and traders, was open much, much earlier. Monkeys from North Africa were known in Greece - but all with hang-down tails (vervet monkeys). Those from the Indian sub-continent had, and have, tails pointing upwards (langur monkeys). The initial discovery, by an academic from the New World, led to contact between archaeologists and biologists - and confirmation of this important addition to historical knowledge.

Thursday 12th December: Election day and the best of Britishness came out, not only in the turn-out, but also in the smooth running. Our polling station was a school but there were more exotic ones, nation-wide: a castle in Tonbridge; an inn in Rochester; a railway carriage in North Yorkshire; a fossil museum in Kimmerbridge, Dorset; a laundrette in Oxford; and in Dudley a converted shipping container "complete with a portable lavatory cubicle to meet Electoral Commission requirements" - allowing me to



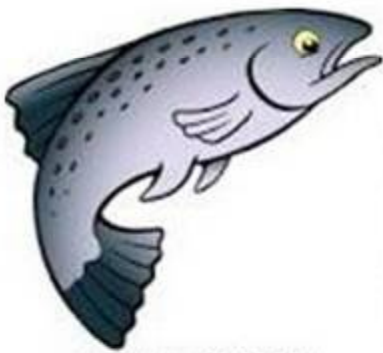
write "one man, one boat."

Sunday 15th December: Christmas Tree Gift service.

As always a joyful and meaningful celebration, with many people attending. The wonderful nativity story is always the same but each year brings a different presentation. This time Mary and Joseph and all three kings were our Iranian friends - and at least one king, giving his gift, said the Farsi equivalent: "I bring a gift, fit for a king" - and these kings, as adults, had an added touch of authenticity. Our Junior Church is now smaller in numbers but is great in spirit and effort - additional help, any time of the year, much appreciated!

Tuesday 31st December: A new year - and a new decade - on its way in. We live in a world where there are everyday worries, but there is much to be grateful for and to look forward to. A random selection: the election has given us the most diverse Parliament ever, in the UK with (out of 650) 220 MP's being female, one in 10 identifying as "non-white" and (according to

the publication Pink News) “45 MPs identifying as LGBT.” Meanwhile, the Thames, declared technically “dead” in the 1950’s is now teeming with life, with the announcement last September that 138 seal pups had been counted on Thames riverbanks. And, the world is getting greener. According to a report by Nasa (the earthly equivalent of all-seeing eyes), the planet is 5% greener now than it was 20 years ago. Trees are an important part of the future. Ireland’s government announced, last August, plans to plant 22 million trees each year until 2040; New Zealand has pledged one million by 2028 and China has “huge programmes” to conserve and expand forests. All of these should lead to the earth being able to change its name from World to Green Land.



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Wednesday 8th January: When we travel up to our cottage in Borth via the M4, popping off to see Sally in Caerphilly, our route takes us, for many miles, along the River Wye, which in itself is the major tributary of the Severn. My father’s passion was fishing in the Severn in and around Shrewsbury. Salmon were, even then, in the 1940’s and 50’s not easy to catch but he kept on and his largest fish was “24 lbs 8 ozs and 4 drams”. I remember it precisely.

A report today says that salmon in the Wye are being “driven to the edge of extinction” with declining water quality and the taking of water from the river being the joint cause. The salmon - whose life is remarkable for the distances they travel both in rivers and seas – are now reaching the point that they may, in the near future, not exist in that river. Restocking is possible but in 2015 Natural Resources Wales, who manage the river, insisted, with no reason being given, that restocking salmon, through a private programme, would cease. This is now being reviewed – but, for now, another example of quangos causing quandaries.

Saturday 11th January: The annual get-together of the Birch/Mitchell clan this year in the church-rooms in Swansea, where Robin and his family attend. The main space has a balcony with views to the sea. A good turnout - and a very enjoyable time - but not everybody was able to come because of work commitments so we were a bit down on the previous total of 27. Richard, as a social worker, was on duty with no swap possible (but Jane and the boys came from Taunton) and Megan and Jack both had next day duties at the church in Coventry where they work, Thomas was in Scotland. Games were played, food eaten and stories swapped. The weather was atrocious but we were dry and fine inside (great balcony and views but

stepping outside meant a soaking)!

Monday 13th January: And so to bed.

I'm sure most of us have been tempted to take hand-washes (or even towels) from hotel rooms but the "go-for" targets now are mattresses. This arises from hotel-chains competing with each other for the most comfortable bed experiences and spending large on mattresses. Smuggling towels is one thing but mattresses? The best luxury hotels with amenities include good-size lifts, leading directly to underground parking!.

Tuesday 14th January: Giving back.

Professor Nicola Curtin of Newcastle University was one of the scientists who helped to develop Rubraca, a drug to combat ovarian cancer. The University owned the royalties for the medication and sold them to a development company for £31 million. This was part shared with the development team and Professor Curtin got £865,000 which she has used to found PARP (Passionate about realising your potential), appropriately, a fund to help people overcome barriers to employment and education. Typically they assist people - similar to those who benefit locally from money raised at our Nativity play - young carers who need help.

Saturday 18th January: "Football going green."

When I've checked who Leyton Orient are playing - which I feel is prudent to do - the name Forest Green Rovers comes up from time to time, both in League and C cup. I'd imagined that they played somewhere close to London. I couldn't have been more wrong. Their stadium is in the Cotswolds, in Nailsworth which is near to Stroud. They exist because of one man - Dale Vince (aged 58, if you get in the paper they usually give your age!) founder of the green energy company Ecotricity who, when he took over the



team in 2010, turned the club vegan and since has introduced other ideas - including making his players wear bamboo shin pads to help reduce the use of plastic. A new 5000 seat stadium is planned. It's been designed by Zaha Hadid's architectural practice - she sadly died before her work for the London Olympic Stadium was brought into being. It will be the world's first eco-stadium made of wood with an organic pitch free from pesticides, fertilizers and chemicals and maintained by an electric lawn-mower powered by solar energy. I don't know how Dale feels, but I'm reasonably certain he has almost inexhaustible thoughts and energy - so much that even considering it, I feel exhausted. I'm closing the diary until next month. (Not so bad. This is Diary 41!)

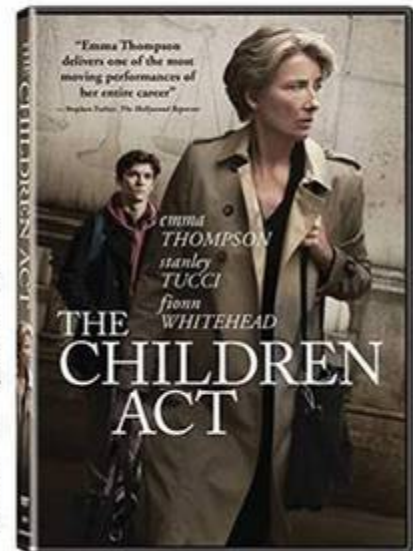
John Birch

Review

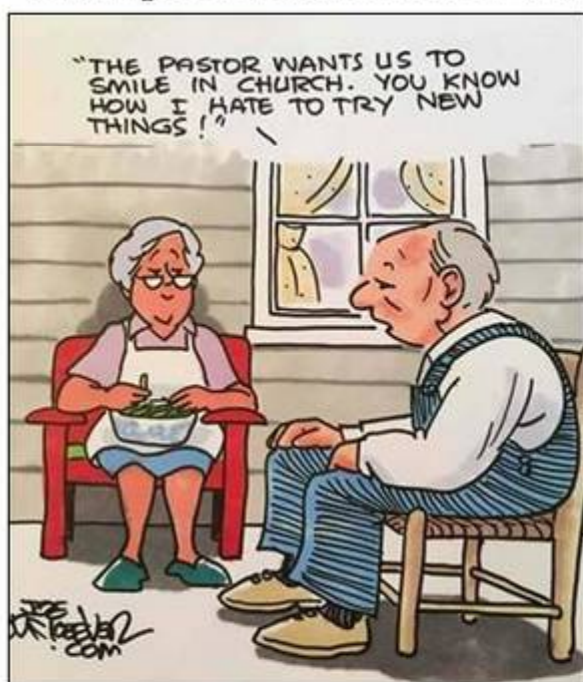
Ian McEwan: **The Children Act** (novel, 2014); **The Children Act** (film, 2017)

In the past, people tended to say that the film version was not/could not be as good as the original written text, rather than accepting that different media have different strengths and weaknesses and that, therefore, they require different techniques to put across the same points. Graham Greene is an early example of a novelist who showed no contempt for film, rather the reverse as he was a film critic in his early days and was happy to script the movie version of his own novels, including Carol Reed's brilliant **The Third Man**. This tendency has become more marked since Greene's time and a contemporary writer of fiction who clearly enjoys collaborating on the film version of his own works is Ian McEwan.

If I as an individual had to choose between the novel and the film under consideration here, I would unhesitatingly choose the film, partly because the role of the High Court judge, Fiona Maye, is played by Emma Thompson who truly inhabits the part. This has been described as her best role to date and, apparently, the film version would not have been made had she not accepted the leading role. Also, granted that this is a chamber piece (no pun intended), consisting largely of interior scenes, it seems an excellent idea to have imported Richard Eyre as director since he is best known for his work in the theatre. The story is easy to summarize, although a summary can give no idea of the richness and subtleties of the text. Fiona Maye is a married and childless High Court judge approaching sixty who lives and works in Grays Inn. She works in the Family Division and the demands of her profession absorb her almost completely, to the detriment of her marriage to an academic. She has lost her ability to let go and to express herself emotionally except through music. Fiona Maye, "my Lady," is an accomplished pianist with a fine voice and Emma Thompson both plays and sings herself in the film. We learn in passing of many cases, both those she is handling herself and those of close colleagues. However the one that dominates the novel is that of a boy approaching eighteen who is a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Hospitalized, and close to death, he is receiving frequent visits from elders and refusing the blood transfusion that he must have to recover from leukemia. The court learns that the boy is



extremely clever and that he is probably being unduly influenced in his decision by the wishes of his parents and of his Church. Fiona Maye takes the unusual step of visiting the boy, Adam Henry, in hospital before addressing the grave decision she must make. Here she crosses a frontier and is to be tested in ways she cannot understand when she takes the step. Like Fiona, Adam is very musical and in the novel he is teaching himself to play the violin. Among the handful of tunes he has learnt to play is "Down by the Salley Gardens." This is a poem by Yeats, put to music by Benjamin Britten, which Fiona Maye frequently uses as an encore with a singer colleague when they perform at Christmas for members of their profession. Adam is enchanted by Fiona's measured manner and the serious attention that she is giving to his case. He plays Britten's music and Fiona sings Yeats's words. Adam expects Fiona to see him again; he, the adolescent, knows nothing of frontiers either. For both, the encounter has stirred emotions that are to prove fatal in Adam's case. The judge imparts her decision to the court: it is in the best interests of the child that he be given the transfusion. Adam recovers but insistently pursues Fiona first by letter and then, because she doesn't reply, by following her to Newcastle when she begins a circuit of northern cities. Her evening meal with senior colleagues is interrupted by Adam's arrival. She listens to him and then tells him firmly that he must return home and make it up with his parents. As they part they kiss, something that later alarms Fiona in case it is reported to senior colleagues. The novel ends with Adam suffering from a recurrence of the original disease and this time refusing a transfusion, whereupon he dies. Fiona is desolate and breaks down, giving way to all



those pent-up emotions she had previously kept under strict control.

This is by no means a didactic novel and so anyone would hesitate to state what is the principal theme. For me, at least, it is that Fiona has never in her life taken a walk on the wild side because from the time she was young she was too ambitious to take risks. Approaching sixty she is tempted; she sees what could have been. "My Lady" is prepared to take one step over the frontier but without accepting the responsibility that follows on her unusual decision to visit a

THURSDAY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME.

The next two meetings will be on **February 20th** when we shall either have a speaker / or a food sampling session. On **March 19th** Isobel Redmond will be sharing her favourite music with us as she is cast away 'On a Desert Island'. Everyone is very welcome to these small but friendly meetings starting at 2.30 pm with refreshments in the Church Room, Further information or help with transport contact **Rosemary Birch**



young boy whose future she must decide. Thus Adam is left adrift after her ruling, deprived of his faith by her decision and needing guidance – her guidance and company as he sees it – and this she cannot give without throwing everything away. Is she guilty, in existential terms of bad faith? The author leaves it to us to decide. However, Mc Ewan appears to deplore that in the case of minors, judges are required to intervene where, had it not been for parents hating one another, a sensible decision about the care of the children could have been reached by a social worker in half an hour.

A further point that emerges is that behind the example of the individual judge, Fiona Maye, who feels that in Adam's case she has acted only according to the letter of the law and been too timid to address its spirit, is a wider reproach that McEwan seems to be addressing to our judiciary. In the novel several instances are given not only of faulty judgments, which surely are inevitable in the course of any professional life, but of others where the police and the judiciary have together taken the easy or lazy way out; the police possibly to fulfil a given target and the judges out of idleness or lack of interest in a given case. In such instances, we infer, justice has not been done to the individual but only **seen** to be done. McEwan gives his opinion in a politely oblique way, but he makes it easy for us to read between the lines. It seems a great pity that the film version of his novel is bound to be overlooked because it is a chamber piece, too quiet in tone and too "bourgeois" to be a popular success. But perhaps McEwan, Thompson and Eyre didn't care because they knew that they were crafting a very fine, thought-provoking film and all three of them are able to rest on their considerable and acknowledged laurels.

Verity Smith

Book Review

Flights by Olga Tokarczuk

On being recommended to read this book (novel?), I was advised to simply take each passage as it comes and not to expect things to relate to one another or make a coherent whole, rather as an



Olga Tokarczuk

eighteenth century aristocrat might have a room of unrelated 'curiosities' to display to guests. Like the aristocrat's collection, one is drawn in by fascinating items and the power of the novel is in these stories within the work; such as the story of the tourist's missing wife and child on holiday on a Croatia island, the (imagined) story of how Chopin's sister transported his heart after his death back to his native Poland under her crinoline, and the affecting tale of a Polish woman who, after many years abroad, makes a long journey back home, to help a terminally ill former boy friend end his life. She is a doctor and can exchange his drip for her phial of chemicals and back, so that no one is any the wiser. There is also the powerful story of Eryk, an alcoholic who learned English while reading Moby Dick in prison. He is a loner increasingly agitated with the daily routine of his post-jail life as a ferry conductor/driver, and he begins to harbour homicidal fantasies of taking others with him into death. On the day when things have gone wrong for him, "he'd already steadied his eyes on the line of the horizon, its reflection slicing straight across his pupils, the top half lighter from the sky, the bottom half darker, from the water." To the reader's relief, Eryk decides, on the brink of disaster, not to take all his passengers down with the ferry and himself, but to turn back towards port. It was a close run thing.

The work is translated from the Polish. The title 'Flights' is translated from the Polish 'beguni' and really means 'wanderers' and describes a notional Slavic sect that always travels from place to place (on foot), relying on the kindness of strangers for food and shelter. One of these wanderers appears half way through the book; a desperate woman in an unnamed Russian city; she meets a seemingly crazy "shrouded" woman who shows her that there is an escape from her suffering. The shrouded woman shouts all day: "Whoever pauses will be petrified, whoever stops, pinned like an insect, his heart pierced by a wooden needle, his hands and feet drilled through and pinned into the threshold and the

ceiling this is why tyrants of all stripes, infernal servants, have such deep-seated hatred for the nomads - this is why they persecute the Gypsies and the Jews, and why they force all free people to settle, assigning the addresses that serve as our sentences.”

The novel purports to explore the great advantages of the foreign, the unregarded, the macabre, and the virtues of travel, as opposed to a settled repetitive existence. Critics have pointed out that this would appeal to this author, cooped up as she was from childhood in communist Poland with little freedom to travel abroad, what one of her characters describes as “rotten, claustrophobic, northern life in that absurd, unfriendly communist country of the late sixties.” It can be seen how she might divide the world into happy, free mobility on one side, and unhappy totalitarian fixity on the other. The opposing view that the settled life might have its advantages is hinted at in the book when the narrator gently makes fun of eternal travellers who, on meeting, ask each other the three travellers’ questions: “Where are you from originally? Where have you come from today? Where are you going to?” Eternal flights can be as repetitive as eternal stillness!

Following the narrator’s fascination with the strange and the macabre, large sections of the book are taken up with describing deformed or injured bodies and bodies after death, mummified or preserved in chemicals. The narrator is drawn on her travels to museums that house freaks of nature - for example, the two-headed and the unborn. I find these passages difficult and unpleasant in spite of the brilliance of the descriptions based on meticulous research.

In one fragment - ‘Travel psychology: lectio brevis I’ - the narrator is at an airport where academics are invited to give mini-lectures in waiting areas. One of them talks about the idea of travel psychology, ‘constellationality’: “In life it is impossible to build a consistent cause and effect argument. Constellation, not sequencing, carries the truth. Life is made up of situations. There is, of course, a certain inclination toward the repetition of behaviours. This repetition does not, however, mean that we should succumb to the appearance of any sort of consistent whole.”

The reader has the feeling that this is the lesson of the book, which many would refute, claiming that individual life is based more on values and is much more than a ‘museum of curiosities’. Nevertheless, the writing is so powerful that one is prepared to plough through the ‘message’ whenever it appears and appreciate the memorable and imaginative passages.

Marion Ditchfield

GROWING OLD II: A QUESTION OF LIFE AND DEATH

Introduction

In the previous article we left Hamlet contemplating the problem of mortality - "The undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns" - a contemplation that modern society, with its consumer culture and emphasis on the present moment, is particularly reluctant to undertake; not helped by the fact that both science and philosophy seem to have concluded that they have no useful contribution to make (being 'illegitimate questions'). Even so, it was concluded that, illegitimate question or not, our mortality remains the most obvious fact of our existence. We live now, but one day we will cease to live. And if it is impossible to say anything useful about the 'undiscovered country', then at least we can pose the question of what it means to be alive and conscious - something which is almost as elusive and mysterious as the undiscovered country itself.



What is consciousness?

Imagine you are taking an important exam. Most of us can remember what that felt like. You turn over the question paper and immediately your mind goes a blank, you start to panic and can't remember a damn thing. There's a horrible feeling in the pit of your stomach, but you know you have to concentrate, so you spend the first ten minutes or so just trying to calm down and perhaps try to figure out what the question means. To make matters worse, everyone around you seems to be writing and getting down to it, so you try to make a few notes. Eventually, you calm down enough to remember a few facts and you write a line or two. But it takes a huge effort of will. And that's the problem. Absolute concentration, the necessity to put everything else out of mind, requires a huge conscious effort. It is not 'natural' activity. Most of our daily life is spent at a level of consciousness far below this with our minds happily ticking over at routine tasks - doing things which require only minimal amounts of our attention, day-dreaming perhaps, content to largely react to what is going on around us, to coast along. In fact most of our daily life is spent at this 'coasting' level. Eventually, we come out of the exam - and we feel absolutely drained of energy. Indeed, we are drained of energy because to concentrate at that kind of level - the exam level, at that level of consciousness - requires a lot of energy, a lot of calories have to be burnt by the brain.

The development of consciousness

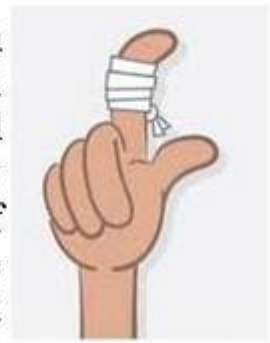
All this comes about because the conscious mind is still a weak function in evolutionary terms, ie a late outgrowth of the instinctive, unconscious and subconscious levels of the mind. How this came about is still unclear (to say the least), it is not even known whether it was a gradual evolutionary process or happened more rapidly (perhaps exponentially as the success of a mind that could 'reason' - if only in primitive terms - led to all kinds of feedback loops which speeded up the developmental process). And there is even no agreement on whether this evolutionary process has come to an end or is capable of further development - put, in the crudest terms, whether we are capable of being 'cleverer' or not. And curiously, the paleo/archeological record offers few clues either as by the time we reach 'man the tool maker' or 'man the cave painter' etc, we have reached, for all intents and purposes, the modern man and the modern mind. Finally, there is even no real agreement on the definition of the conscious mind itself, on what we are actually talking about. It really is an undiscovered country out there.

Consciousness as separation

All that can be said is that the development of consciousness (however defined) must have been a strange and frightening process: frightening because its key feature was (and is) separation - the terrifying realization that one is 'alone' in the universe, that there is a 'self' (however defined) and an 'other' (however defined). And that they are entirely distinct - and that, ultimately the former has little or no control over the latter. It may have been a process mediated by the gradual development and elaboration of rites and ceremonies to placate the 'gods', burial rituals and, eventually, the appearance of grave goods which signified the emergence of an awareness of our mortality - the puzzling and disturbing fact that we will cease to be.

The foregoing is a process now lost to pre-history but we can see it (and possibly remember a little of it) reflected in day-to-day child development. For example, a baby has no fear - it simply exists. As long as its need for sustenance, shelter and contact are met it has no preference for who looks after it. Anyone will do. There is no 'self' and there is no 'other', its existence is entirely undifferentiated from the world about it. But gradually its consciousness develops and with it the need for a strong emotional attachment to navigate it through this frightening process - most usually provided by poor old mum or the nearest mum substitute! And if mum tries to hand the baby over to someone else or leaves it on its own for only a matter of seconds, the result is meltdown. There is simply nothing more frightening than the realization that one exists separately from the universe.

This process of separation is spread over years - through childhood, through adolescence, through the teens and well into adulthood. In a sense it never stops and if it is hindered or compromised at any stage (particularly in the early stages), the result is always trouble, as the legions of behavioural psychologists, child care experts, social care workers etc testify. In fact, none of us ever quite loses that early pre-conscious relationship with the material world.



For example, the person coming out of the exam - who may just have been battling with the more difficult aspects of quantum mechanics - accidentally bangs his finger in the door; immediately the door is anthropomorphised into a kind of enemy and receives a fierce kick in return. The process is ridiculous and lasts only a milli-second - but in that time he is transported back to a world of 'magic' in which inanimate objects are assumed to have (or are felt to have) some kind of actual living existence and can therefore be punished.

Does any of this matter?

This then is perhaps the most significant aspect of consciousness, ie our state of separation from the material universe into which we are born, the creation of a 'self' and an 'other' - and, most importantly, an awareness of that separation. The cynic might retort - so what, what does all this amount to? I've plenty to be getting on with in my daily life without having to worry about this philosophical 'hill of beans.' Which, in a sense, is fair comment. Living takes up too much of our time and energy to bother about what life actually is - what 'the meaning of life' may be.

In another sense, it is the single most important fact of our whole existence. For creation, the universe, the cosmos - call it what you will - has found a way of becoming aware of itself, of being self-reflexive, of making us - our consciousness - the means of doing so. And in doing so, it has gifted us an almost unlimited power, not only over ourselves but also over the material universe in which we are embedded. In theory, there is no reason why we couldn't destroy both ourselves and the world we live in. Except, possibly, our instinct for survival.

So what is consciousness 'made of'?

Which leads, inexorably, to the nature of consciousness itself and to the strange (but now fashionable) question of what, if anything, it is made of, ie. whether all matter is conscious or whether consciousness (in its broadest sense to cover any conscious experience, thought, emotions etc) is something distinct from matter. At the present time the debate leans towards the former position - ie that there is an element of consciousness in all matter, or, somewhat more cautiously, that consciousness is one of the

fundamental properties of matter itself. Which means that creation itself came with the potential (in the right evolutionary circumstances) for consciousness to develop, and all that that implies including whether or not we live in an intrinsically 'moral' universe.

Conclusion

However, these are enormously complex questions and outside the scope of a short article. It is best to return to the question of whether, in our day-to-day lives any of this matters. It depends on whether you want some kind of explanation of why you were born, lived and died, why you were created in the first place. In this respect, there is an old joke about a frog and a snail. One dark and stormy night there is knock on the frog's door. He answers it



to find a wet, bedraggled, snail on his doorstep. The frog asks him what he wants and the snail replies that he has come a long way and that he is wet and hungry and "can he come in." The frog replies "certainly not!" and picks him up and throws him other side of the road. Exactly a year later - on another dark and stormy night - there is a knock on the frog's door. He opens it

to find the same wet bedraggled snail there as before. The frog (still angry) says "what do you want?" to which the snail says "what was that all about?" (It is better in the telling, rather than the reading!)



There is a sense in which we would just like to know when we die "what it was all about". We might get an answer but very possibly we might not and we will have to face the possibility that we will never know. In a previous issue of *New and Views* I reviewed a book called *Last and First Men* by Olaf Stapledon. In the book, civilisations come and go (over some two billion years) and the human race reinvents itself some 18 times, but still comes to an end when the planet is consumed by the sun. Stapledon is a true mystic. It is impossible to ascribe a particular ideology or religious belief to him. Man can only contemplate, but never know, what the purpose of his creation might be - or might have been. In religious terms we might say that man might be part of God's purpose but not his whole purpose - he might even ultimately be dispensable. But as the Last Man puts it, '... man is a fair spirit, whom a star conceived and a star kills. He is greater than those bright blind companies. For though in them there is incalculable potentiality, in him there is achievement, small, but actual. Too soon, seemingly, he comes to his end. But when he is done he will not be nothing, not as though he had never been; for he is eternally a beauty in the eternal form of things.'

John Ditchfield

JOHN BIRCH'S COMPETITION

Competition No. 23 : Places of Interest in the UK. Part 5.

(All answers begin with E, F, G or H)

1. St Giles Cathedral.
2. Home of the Derby.
3. National Park (Somerset/Devon).
4. Homes to thousands of sea-birds.
5. Mendelsohn never saw it.
6. Cambridge's best-known museum.
7. Between Cinderford and the Wye.
8. On the railway North from Edinburgh.
9. Associated with the Rocket.
10. Rock festival location.
11. Site of a Scottish massacre.
12. Famous for its blacksmith shop.
13. Divides England from Scotland.



The answers to Competition No 22 Part 4

1. Clifton
2. Coalbrookdale
3. Coventry
4. Cragside
5. Culloden
6. Dartmoor
7. Dolaucothi
8. Doncaster
9. Dove Cottage
10. Dover Castle
11. Devon House
12. Durham Cathedral
13. Dylan Thomas Boathouse.

This month there are joint winners, Joan Holton and John Marshall. A (large) bar of chocolate (each) awaits you on the Traidcraft stall - your choice from several flavours. PLEASE HAVE A GO at this month's competition. Give your entry to me or email jbirch1821@gmail.com



WORDSEARCH: MOVING TOWARDS SPRING

Y	B	I	R	D	S	C	H	A	T	T	E	R	I	N	G
	L	N	B	F	R	S		B	N	N		H		S	N
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W	E	E	R	O	D	M	B	W	T	Z	E	R		S	D
M	S	W	O	E	B	S	D	K	E	M	I	L	D	N	D
H	I	T	B	L	T	U	S	L	C	B	R	U	C	O	U
I	S	G	E	O	C	T	C	P	Y	A	B	A	P	W	B
	C	B	R	K	R	A	U	D	R	L	L	R	W	D	S
	E	E	L	A	T	N	A	B	I	O	I	B	L	R	E
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G		N	E	N	L	F	B	O	M	H	O	O	I	S	E
O	S	R	I		F	T	S	I	T	B	P	C		N	L
R	G	Y		A		E	S	E	R	E	S		A		G
F	L		D	C	I	L	R	A	G	D				E	
F	C	H	E	R	R	Y	B	L	O	S	S	O	M		P

BIRDS-CHATTERING BLACKBIRD
 BUDS-SPROUTING BUMBLE-BEE
 CHERRY-BLOSSOM CLEAN DAFFODIL-
 BUDS FLYING-LADYBIRDS FRESH
 FROGS GARLIC GREEN HAZEL-



CATKINS HOPE ICE-
 MELTS LEAVES-BUDDING LIGHTER
 MIGRANT-BIRDS NEW NEW-BORN-LAMBS
 NEW-DUCKLING PEACOCK-BUTTERFLY
 PRIMROSE SHOOTS SNOWDROPS
 WARMTH

DIARY

All services taken by Revd Dr Ian Tutton unless indicated

Mondays 10am to 12 noon Studying together, Elders' Vestry

Wednesdays 10am to 12 noon Toddler and Parent/Carer group, Church Rooms

Thursdays 8pm Choir practice alternate Thursdays

Sundays 10.20am Choir Practice

Christian Meditation - Meditators meet alternate weeks to meditate together. For further information, contact Georgia at gmrtutton@aol.com



FEBRUARY

- 1 10.30am Drop in-Coffee Morning, Traidcraft Stall & Clothing Exchange
- 2 **11.00am Family Communion Service**
- 9 **11.00am Family Service**
6.30pm Evening Praise with Communion
- 16 **11.00am Family Service**
- 18 7.30pm Elders Court
- 20 2.30pm Thursday Fellowship social afternoon and talk
- 23 **11.00am Church 110th Anniversary Service in Free Church, followed by lunch in the Hall**
- 28 1.00pm Organ Recital by Mark Underwood, Lunch in support of Christian Aid at 12.15pm

MARCH

- 1 **11.00am Family Communion Service**
- 6 2.00pm World Day of Prayer Service at All Saints Church, Childs Hill, NW2 2TJ. The Subject is "Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk" and it is prepared by Christian women of Zimbabwe.

- 7 10.30am Drop-in Coffee morning, Traidcraft Sale, Clothing Exchange in Church
- 8 **11.00am Family Service**
6.30pm Evening Praise with Communion



NEWS AND VIEWS



PRODUCTION

DISTRIBUTION

EDITORIAL PANEL

TYPESETTER

EDITOR

John Ditchfield

Jill Purdie and others

Joan Holton and Marion Ditchfield

John Ditchfield

Marion Ditchfield

The March issue of News and Views will be published on Sunday 8th March 2020. Articles should be delivered to the editor, Joan Holton or the typesetter, John Ditchfield, (john_ditchfield@hotmail.com) by Sunday 16th February.

We welcome articles, as well as reviews of books, films, plays etc. from members and friends. These will not always represent the views of the editorial panel or of the Church. Publication is at the discretion of the Editors.

Remember - we are on line at www.hgsfreechurch.org.uk where you will find past issues of News and Views.

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