

newt

schools community faith



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Forgiven

... and forgiving

EASTER 2023

St John & St Stephen's Community Magazine
stjohnandststephen.org.uk



*Tenth Anniversary
Edition*

FORGIVEN ... *and forgiving*

Welcome to NEWT 39

The hardest word ...

I think it was Elton John who sang '*sorry seems to be the hardest word*', and he wasn't too far off the mark. When we offer an apology, we often fear what the reaction will be. We might think too: *why should it be me who makes the first move?* Teaching our kids to say sorry is also hard – for them and for us!

We've seen some newsworthy apologies in the past few years - to the victims of the Hillsborough football disaster; apologies for violent behaviour towards women by some in our police force; even whole institutions apologising for the extent to which they might have been complicit in the slave trade.

To say sorry is to admit fault – and none of us likes doing that. It's almost always the only thing that brings healing and reconciliation, though, after a fall out. Someone has wisely said it's not enough to say, "I'm sorry but...." – it has to be, simply, "I'm sorry".

Someone once asked Jesus how many times they should forgive a person who had wronged them. The one asking the question thought they were being generous when they suggested maybe seven times would be enough. But Jesus, always fond of an apt exaggeration, answered 'not seven times, but seventy lots of seven times'.

Forgiveness doesn't equate to putting up endlessly with bad behaviour, though. You might forgive someone but at the same time, if necessary, put some distance between you and them,

especially if their behaviour doesn't change. But by forgiving, although it's very hard, we can free ourselves from being eaten up with resentment – which is, in itself, a kind of prison.

... and a beautiful word

In church when I was little, we learnt an acronym for the Christian idea of forgiveness: *grace*. Spelling it out - G.R.A.C.E. - it stands for 'Great Riches At Christ's Expense'. I've always remembered that. Grace is a lovely name for a girl – and also a beautiful concept. It is undeserved love.

Christians believe that even while we were going our own way and ignoring God, God was making a way back for us through grace. We can't earn it, only receive it. It's the opposite of karma, where your bad deeds come back to haunt you.

As another band once sang:

*What once was hurt
What once was friction
What left a mark no longer stings
Because Grace makes beauty
out of ugly things.*

(from *Grace*,
by Adam
Clayton, Dave
Evans, Larry
Mullen and
Paul Hewson,
aka U2).

Claire.



Copy date for NEWT's
Summer edition will be
22nd June 2023

Please send contributions to
the Parish Office [office@
stjohnandststephen.org.uk](mailto:office@stjohnandststephen.org.uk)

or directly to the editor at
chris@meunier.org.uk



OPENS LONGER

A Warm Space at St John's

This winter lots of local churches have been opening their doors on weekdays to offer a warm space and a cuppa to whoever needs it. At St John's our Café had already been open after 9 am school drop off on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays ever since lockdown finished. Now, inspired by the call to provide warm spaces, we've been opening up longer hours and more often. And serving *free* fairtrade tea and coffee (and biscuits too) every morning.

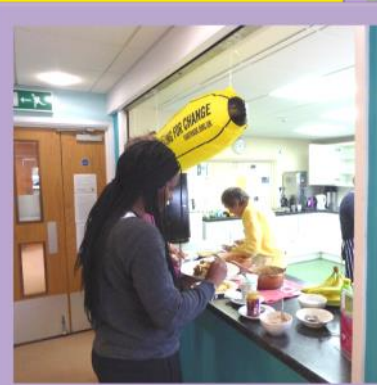
The mums who come into the Café often bring toddlers with them, so we decided to make Monday our Kids' Café morning – any carers and pre-schoolers especially welcome from 10-11.30. There are plenty of toys, and carers say how much they appreciate the relaxed space.

Tuesdays is our craft morning: some people are working together on a new hanging for a piano; others just drop in to knit (crochet/embroider ...) or just natter. We've had lots of donations of wool, thread, needles etc too so anyone who wants to learn a new skill is very welcome to use these.

The Tuesday regulars were keen to extend the gathering over lunch, so that's when we're staying open to serve baked potatoes from 12.30 – 1. It's the only event for which we make a charge - £1.50. In the first week after half term it was Shrove Tuesday, so we enjoyed some pancakes for lunch then too.

On Wednesdays our women only Bible study and Fellowship group, Oasis, has long been meeting in the café and they're more than happy for new people to come along and join them from 1.30, starting with a shared lunch. Thursdays too has always been an open morning with informal Café Communion at 10.30 – followed by tea/coffee, biscuits and chat of course.

Fridays is our quietist morning at present – we've called it Games Café and have a wide mix of board and card games



for anyone who wants to come and play. We're considering new plans, so keep an eye open for posters outside our Café with an update of what's happening after Easter. Your ideas and offers of help to Jo Laynesmith, please, e-mail:

office@stjohnandststephen.org.uk

Inner **HEALING** and Outgoing **WELCOME**

at New Town Primary School

Rosie, the school therapy dog

We welcomed a very special visitor to the New Town school family this term: Rosie is joining our pastoral team for a few days each week to work with children across the school. They may have suffered bereavement, feel anxious or depressed, or simply need some time with Rosie to help heal from trauma or develop nurture skills. She has certainly brought much joy to the school community so far!



Above: Aryan enjoying time with Rosie

How is it that we animals seem to be able to calm some children so much?



Values cup

Our school values sit at the very heart of all we do at New Town. They guide how we behave and interact with one another. Our focussed values in Term Three were **Tolerance** and **Inclusivity**, and we were excited to recognise a number of wonderful nominees for our newly established Values Cup from across the school.

However, one pupil went over and above by always including new pupils in her games and activities, and being exceptionally kind to those who found things more difficult from time to time. Isabella was delighted to receive the Values Cup in front of the whole school family. We are very proud to have such amazing ambassadors in our school, who live and breathe our values.



Isabella, Cherry Class, winner of our school's Values Cup

Forgiving people! Who do you think you are?

ROLE PLAY at the **MAIDEN ERLEGH SCHOOLS** in Reading and in Earley

Playing the characters of Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas and Simon Peter, REinspired volunteers have this last term helped year 7 students at both of the local Maiden Erlegh schools to start a new topic in their RE curriculum. It asks the question Jesus once put to his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"

We based our role play on the evidence of the gospel accounts in the Bible, but imagined what each of our characters would have said if called to a court room investigation a few weeks after Jesus of Nazareth had been executed on a Roman cross. What would each of them have had to say about the role that Jesus had played in the thirty or so years of his human life? – that he was a mad person? or a bad person? or perhaps, somehow, God with us?

Following our role play, the students, working in small groups of about six, would then need to play the role of jurors, sifting the evidence of each witness and testing one another's arguments.

First witness Pontius Pilate, being a Roman governor, dismissed all the Jews including Jesus, as mad, with their intense belief in a single, almighty yet compassionate God. For him military and political power were the ultimate reality. Forgiveness was weakness. Although Jesus seemed to him to be quite innocent, he would at the least get a beating, and if it made life easier for Pilate he could be killed.

I played Caiaphas, the Jewish High Priest, who had had Jesus arrested and then had then pressured the Roman governor Pontius Pilate to execute him. My character's biggest problem with Jesus was that he kept telling people they were forgiven, despite what they had done wrong. Surely only God could forgive, and only temple sacrifices offered by us, the priests, were the way to seek God's mercy! In role, I could feel Caiaphas' religious insecurity and his fury.

But for Simon Peter, the final witness, his master's gift of forgiveness had transformed him from a failed, frightened follower who had run away scared. Now he was the bold leader of a new and rapidly growing community with love and forgiveness at its heart. Simon had lived and travelled daily with Jesus for three amazing years of inspiring spiritual teaching, miraculous healings and peaceful, loving perseverance, only to see his master cruelly killed.

"The volunteers are always interesting and particularly good with one on one discussions with students. Would love them to visit us again."

Teacher



Then the disciples had seen and touched Jesus, raised to life again after his execution, and had also watched him being taken into heaven. Now this new great community of believers all understood what Jesus' true role was. He wasn't a mad deluded man as Pilate said, nor was he a bad trouble-maker or impostor as Caiaphas had insisted. They were all convinced that he was the awaited 'Messiah', the 'Son of God' and the one sacrifice for all our sins.

So, now in class it was jury decision time. Which of the three witnesses was most credible and why? Who was Jesus?

P.S. What do you think about forgiveness?

Help REinspired

Our local schools, both primary and secondary, would love to have more of what REinspired can offer. But resources are limited. So, if you think you might like to volunteer, or to give a donation, please contact

Carrie or Julia at:

office@REinspired.org.uk

0118 966 3929

FORGIVENESS *and* **NEW BEGINNINGS**

at St John's CE School

As we began the important reflective period of Lent, we gathered together as our St John's family to mark its beginning, on Ash Wednesday. Children who joined in with our Ash Wednesday service were able to share in receiving ashes from our Reverend Claire Alcock, and we reflected as a whole school community on the ideas of forgiveness and reconciliation. Children took time to think about their daily lives and of moments where forgiveness would be important in helping make a fresh start and a new beginning.

A fresh start and new beginning offer us all the chance to reflect and better ourselves. At St Johns, we took the opportunity to create a new beginning for our library – a project of which we are incredibly proud!

Previously, the library was located in a smaller space in the school, but we took the opportunity to create a larger, more modern space for our children to enjoy. We worked closely with a library design company who, with our input, helped us create it with: bespoke fitted shelving units of all sizes, new foldaway tables, comfy portable stools, a soft sofa and multiple book shaped cushions for children to sit on and enjoy reading.

We were also incredibly fortunate to have one of our parents, Mrs Jenner who is mother to Mabel, offer the support of her colleagues at Stibo Systems in Reading. They generously donated from their 'Global Development Funds' to provide a large collection of diverse and inclusive new books for the new library. Mrs Jenner and her colleagues also spent time listening to children from every year group read these new books, and they worked hard to help us relocate our existing books into our new library.

The staff and children at St John's are incredibly grateful for all of their hard work and generosity. The children at St John's now have an inviting, comfortable and exciting new library in which to enjoy selecting books to read. What a wonderful new beginning!



The Stibo Systems' team was honoured to have the opportunity to support our local community by providing books to St John's brand-new library and by reading with their pupils. Our team was impressed with the reading ability of the children as well as their genuine interest in the subject of diversity and inclusion. We live in a cosmopolitan community where our cultures unite under one umbrella at St John's to fulfil our purpose, as parents, to bring up the next generation of people into our shared society. It is a pleasure to have been given a glimpse into the wonderful work the school does for the children - we wish the children all the best in their exciting adventures ahead.



The Cumberland Road MASJID project

A newly remodelled mosque building is racing towards completion at the corner of Cumberland Road and Norwood Road, and NEWT was recently invited in to learn about the project.

Mohammed Nazir, a retired electrical engineer who is overseeing the building works, told us that the target is to get the new prayer facilities finished and in use before the holy month of Ramadan. That will start this year on 22nd or 23rd March when the new moon is sighted.

Another committee member, Munir Akthar, showed me the works in progress. Upstairs is a new hall for women's prayer with its own access staircase and wash facilities. With both heating and air-conditioning, it will be a much better space than the basement room they have been using up to now.



Downstairs, the men's prayer hall is also much expanded, and it too will boast a new wash area plus air-conditioning to keep it usable on hot summer days.



Munir explained how the project to provide a local prayer space for the many Muslim people who live around Cemetery Junction started some 22 years ago with the purchase of the former corner shop at 31 Cumberland Road. 15 years ago they also bought number 29, initially as a house for their Imam. As it's a relatively small community, raising the funds for the conversion project has taken some time, but now we can see the fruits of all that planning.

Once the new women's prayer hall is in use, there are further hopes to refurbish and reuse the basement space as an information centre and a welcoming place for the wider local community. Munir told me, "Your church and our mosque both aim to serve the local community, so it will be good for us to try to do more together".

THE F-WORD

Reading Minster Church - EXHIBITION - University of Reading



The F Word: Stories of Forgiveness exhibition is a thought provoking collection of arresting images and personal narratives exploring forgiveness in the face of atrocity.

It was hosted in Reading for four weeks in February and March, but if

you missed it, don't despair! All the exhibition images and stories plus many newer ones are readily available on the Forgiveness Project website at:

www.theforgivenessproject.com

Marina Cantacuzino MBE, founder Of *The Forgiveness Project*, is an award-winning journalist who has worked for most British mainstream publications including *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph* and *Hello* magazine. In 2003, in response to her anger at the invasion of Iraq, she embarked on a personal project collecting stories of people who had lived through trauma and injustice, and had sought forgiveness rather than revenge.

At the chaplaincy lecture at the University, she explained how from the start she had wanted to avoid preaching or telling people they ought to forgive. Not wanting to interfere or influence the process, she has always given the victims time for their lives to settle before asking for an interview.

You can see a recording of her lecture at <https://youtu.be/YiFT3gL3jso> and hear the discussion with the other guests - a university lecturer in psychology and the chief exec. of *Circles UK*, a charity that works with former sex-offenders to help them not to reoffend. Or you could read Marina's recently published book,



Elizabeth and Fernando Jimenez

"At first it was very difficult to forgive Nick but then I realised it was not about forgiving the man but about forgiving his stupidity."



Janis Hillard

"It is through forgiveness that I have repossessed what was stolen from me and put it back where it rightfully belongs."



Ray Minniecon

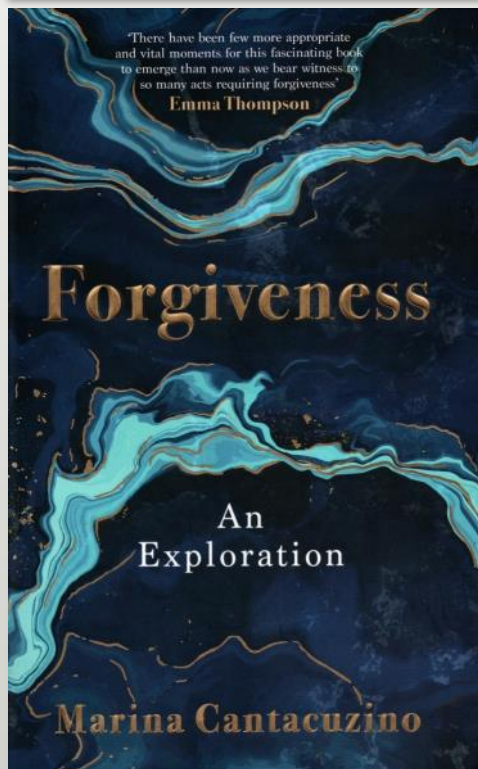
"Healing is a meaningless word for Aboriginal people because we possess a wound that cannot be healed. ... I have to work at my forgiveness every day."



Lent Film Series 2023 - 'Innocence & experience'



Once again, during Lent, we've been watching some artistic and thought-provoking films together in St John's church gallery on Thursday evenings from 7:30 pm.



Forgiveness - an exploration, published by Simon & Schuster, London, 2022 £14-99



Then, on 30th March, our final get-together will be a discussion where we can share our impressions, insights, questions and opinions.

A Man Called Ove is a Swedish film with English subtitles. Both it and *Banshees of Inisherin* deal with loneliness, isolation and anger, and in both films this leads to self-harming which fits strangely with a thread of dark humour running through each.

Banshees sees echoes of the Irish Civil War

Forgiveness in Islam

NEWT asked Imaam Yahia of the Aisha Masjid, the mosque on the Sutton's roundabout, to help us understand the importance of forgiveness in Islam.



Muslims, like Jews and Christians, believe that God's own character is full of forgiveness. Two of his 99 special names in the Q'ran are 'The Most Merciful' and 'The Most Forgiving'.

So, if you are feeling guilty or a failure, you shouldn't lose hope.

The Lord is waiting for us to ask forgiveness. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) says, "The doors of repentance are open during the day for the sinners of the night ... and are open during the night for the sinners of the morning."

In the Prophet's teaching, receiving forgiveness ourselves links with giving it to others. "The best of sinners is the one who comes and repents ... and the best of people are those who forgive." "If you forgive someone in this world, the Lord will forgive you in the hereafter."

Sometimes, though, forgiving can be very hard to do. We need to learn to control our inner self and to find patience. So, we start early with our children, teaching them to forgive, to forget and to move on.

in 1923, but from the relative safety of an offshore island. By contrast, *Belfast* is set right in the thick of the start of the Northern Ireland 'troubles' in 1969. But, seen through the eyes of children and the parents striving to protect them, it manages to strike a more hopeful tone. The transition from innocence to experience can easily lead to entrenched

bitterness, ... or perhaps to forgiveness.

The *Children Act* tells the story of a Family Court judge who finds herself gaining unwanted first-hand experience of the traumas of family separation.

Perhaps if you've missed our showings you can still enjoy watching at home.

Know your Newts

meeting the people in our community



CLAUDINEIA TAVARES JEE

Parents in the playground at New Town Primary School will know Claudia and her children Isabella and Charlie. By the time Claudia herself, living in a town in Central Brazil, was just nine years old, she had left school to work as a nanny ...

Why was that?

We had just moved to Alta Floresta in the rainforest. My mother was looking after my baby sister and brother. My father was managing a small farm with coconut palms and working as a groundsman and caretaker for the football club. I was needed to earn money, so, from Sunday afternoon until Friday night or Saturday morning, I looked after two children of another family in our small town. My sister, Claudete, then began to have epilepsy so I had to keep working.

Your family moved around a lot?

My father worked on farms, moving from one to another as he was needed. When I was 13, he took another job helping to turn felled trees into planks for house building. I was cleaning, tidying, cooking and doing the laundry for another family. My forearms were covered in burns from the ironing. A year later Dad was managing a farm that grew fruit and raised cattle. My mother worked in the owner's house. The mother in that house was a teacher. I looked after her little girl during the day and went to school in the evening. The following year, I stopped school to be a sales assistant in a clothes shop.

At 15, I had a boyfriend called Ruberval. I married him three years later in 1995 and our son Leandro was born soon afterwards. I stopped work until we moved in with Ruberval's parents so his mum could look after our son. My mother had to look after my sister so I took over her housekeeping work. Before long, our second son, Junior, was born. In Brazil, you can attend school in the evenings. By doing that, Ruberval and I completed our education at the age of 24!



- from nanny to granny

When did you come to England?

Ruberval went first in early 2004 to get a job as a chef and I joined him later that year. We left our boys with my parents. The following year, my sister had brain surgery and died so

my mother now had four boys to look after, mine and my sister's, so I returned to Brazil. But

"Ruberval and I completed our education at the age of 24!"

Ruberval refused to come back with me, saying the money was too good in England. We really fought about this and eventually we got divorced. Meanwhile, my brother Claudio had settled in England. My parents then agreed to look after all the four boys so that I could come and live with him in

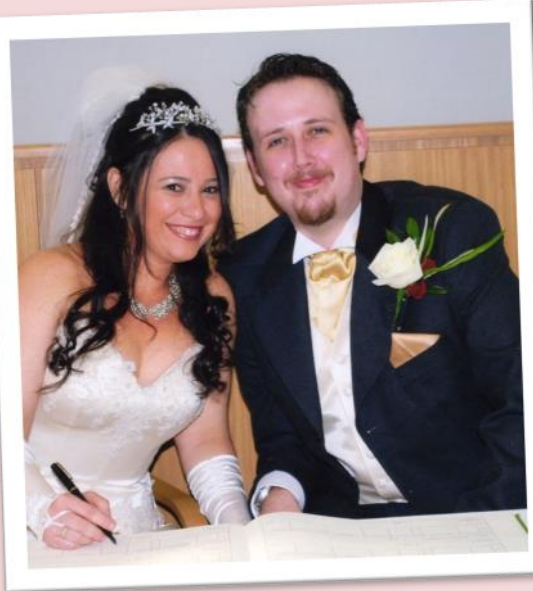
Marlow and I worked at the *Villa d'Este* restaurant. Before I arrived, his flatmate, Alex, said as a joke, 'I will be your sister's boyfriend!' But it actually happened and, although we tried to hide it from Claudio, we couldn't!

In July 2011, when Alex took me on a camping holiday in Cornwall, it was the first time I had seen the seaside! Two holidays later, he got down on one knee and proposed, giving me his mother's ring. The following January, Alex's mother gifted me my wedding dress so I could marry him. Our honeymoon was on another beach - the Copacabana in Rio! Three weeks later, I

obtained a temporary visa to work in England but it took years and a lot of applications and legal fees before I finally got a permanent visa in 2019. For our first Christmas as newly-weds in 2014, we decided to invite Leandro and Junior to visit us. On New Year's Day, I wasn't feeling well so I went to the doctor. He told me that I was pregnant! As I was scanned, Leandro and Junior were able to see their baby sister. Soon Isabella was born and, after a miscarriage, Charlie arrived in 2018.

When did you move into Newtown? And are you happy here?

In 2017 Alex's father let us move into his house in Cumberland Road. When we first moved in, I didn't know anyone and I was lonely so I joined St John's church. I feel very comfortable there. Everyone is so friendly and nice. I can always talk to Revd Christine. I was looking for voluntary work so I could make some friends. I helped Sylvia at *Monday Monsters* in St John's School hall, and Liz asked me to help with the English class at the church. I did a course in early years work and volunteered at the Honey Bees Nursery. I love living in Newtown. Everything is close by: New Town School, St John's Church, the playground, the river, the pub etc... Sometimes things happen and the police are around, but I know lots of people around here now so that makes the place nice! Everyone at the school is really good. I'm very happy. The teachers at New Town are amazing. It's a good school.



"when I first moved in I didn't know anyone ... so I joined St John's church. I feel very comfortable there. Everyone is so friendly and nice."

How did you cope with lockdown?

I worked in my garden growing all sorts of things like tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes and blackberries, and I crocheted lots of hats and bags. I like baking cakes too. After lockdown, I worked at Honey Bees until I moved to the Thames Lido as a cleaning supervisor.

And now?

Now, I manage the cleaning team at the Lido. It means working nights at least three days a week and on those days I only get about six hours sleep. I have to look after Charlie in the afternoons because he can only have 15 hours at the nursery. Now they are looking into offering 30 hours if both parents are working and can afford it.

When you look back to your troubles with Ruberval, how do you feel now?

I have forgiven him. I just felt that life's too short to keep fighting. We were trying to get Junior a visa to go to America. We were talking. We can have a conversation now without fighting. We both realise that we did things wrong.



And now you are a granny?

Yes. I went back to Brazil in July to meet my granddaughter, Clara. She's my second son Junior's first child and she's lovely!

Thank you, Claudia.

It's BIGger than just gardening

Shaheen Rashid
invites NEWT's
readers to BIG
www.bigardens.org



Who are we? British Islamic Gardens (BIG), a non-for-profit community group open to all faiths and none. We work within the Reading Green Wellbeing Network (RGWN).

What do we do? Inspired by guidance from Food4Families/RISC, BIG grows organic, sustainable plants, both edible & floral, at the Aisha Masjid & Islamic Centre (AMIC), which from Newtown is just a few short steps across the other side of the Suttons roundabout on the London Road A4.

We welcome everyone at our free:

How do we operate? BIG runs solely on donations, sponsorships, and funding.

Why do we do this? We follow the Islamic belief that people are viceregents (stewards) of the earth; the harm we have done to creation can be forgiven in remembering this duty, and working together to observe, understand, protect, and respect natural laws.

Our goal is not to create monument and legacy, but to strive every day to develop, maintain and share learning.



- Morning gardening sessions 5 days/week
- Bi-weekly Islamic Stone Art Sculpting sessions, with our Sculptor-in-Residence, Andrew McAlister Hood
- Monthly walks with Funsu's Forest Gardener, Charlotte Allchin
- Fairtrade events

e-mail for more details:

info@bigardens.org



12 nature walks...stone sculpture...fairtrade

We also host volunteer groups and run talks for school visits to AMIC.

Some Very Good News ...

Some of you may remember an earlier article in NEWT about an ex-pupil of Reading Boys school, Will McCullum, who became the joint Exec. Director of *Greenpeace*. He talked about the dream of an Ocean

Treaty to protect a third of the seas from industrial overfishing and other harms such as deep sea mining. This treaty actually happened during the first week of March 2023 and it's being called the biggest conservation victory ever!

Some of us wrote letters to our MPs and many thousands of people have donated and marched and worked to make this happen. *Greenpeace* started campaigning on this in 2005. The conference president, Rena Lee of Singapore, received a standing ovation in the UN headquarters in New York when she announced that the treaty had been agreed after hours of gruelling talks, bringing agreement between 193 nations – quite an achievement!

This new Global Ocean Treaty covers almost two-thirds of the ocean that lies outside of national boundaries. It will enable the creation of a network of marine sanctuaries where marine life such as whales, turtles and fish can thrive. There is agreement too about the genetic material of deep-sea marine sponges, krill, corals, seaweeds and bacteria, which are attracting increasing scientific and commercial attention due to their potential use in medicines and cosmetics. Healthy oceans can help combat climate change by locking away carbon, and provide food security and livelihoods to more than 3 billion people around the world.

This treaty is a sign that protecting nature for the benefit of all people, can triumph over national interests and the power of big business; it's a reminder that taking action can make a difference, even if it takes years!



Above: 'Our Will' being interviewed on national TV News the day the Oceans Treaty agreement was announced.



© Tommy Trenchard / Greenpeace

Left: What we were asking your help with last October in NEWT.

Saving precious marine ecosystems that help fight climate change.



© Pierre Gleizes / Greenpeace

Stopping the industrialised fishing that is destroying the livelihoods of ordinary people.

VICTORY!

**CHOOSE
YOUR
FUTURE**

100,000 PEOPLE
HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT
21-24 APRIL
11 AM TO 6 PM DAILY

Climate Emergency - action still needed

The recent UN IPCC scientific report has issued a 'final warning to humanity to act swiftly'. As the the window for action is beginning to close, Secretary general Antonio Gutierres has called on all countries to bring forward their net zero targets by a decade.

We have a clear responsibility to the coming generations to make sure that our leaders understand. There is nothing more important. We must urge our political leaders to act for the long term now...

This April as many as 100,000 people will participate at Westminster in an event that's impossible to ignore. Join the call to address inequality, tackle climate chaos and restore the living world.

Find out more at extinctionrebellion.uk/the-big-one/

The Rogues Return ...



Amnesty barn dance raises spirits

The *Scamping Rogues*, our local barn dance band, were back in action on 11th March, transforming St John's church into a vibrant dance hall.

It had been quite a while since we'd been able to have such fun, and the event was fully sold out - meaning that it raised some useful funds for the local group of *Amnesty International*, who organised the event.

We had men dancing as 'women' and women dancing as 'men'. No-one seemed to mind so long as they could find a partner and join in - children and oldies too. And of course, we took the opportunity to sign campaign letters for *Amnesty's* work for prisoners and victims of torture.

Dust & Glory

The Café at St John's is currently hosting a Lent art exhibition on the theme of Dust and Glory.

The exhibits include paintings, poetry and photography, all contributed by members of St John and St Stephen's congregation.

Curator Mary Chambers says "It's amazing what can be found in the dust. Each artist or poet has found something very different and has handled it in uniquely creative ways. It's been wonderful to see how the exhibition has inspired people, generated discussions, and encouraged members of our community to share their artistic talents."

What do the words DUST and GLORY mean to you? What images come to mind and how would you convey them?

If you haven't seen it yet, do pop along to the café one morning to view the exhibition and enjoy a coffee and a chat. It will be on display until Easter.

ART EXHIBITION



Ann Margaret Baker

24 May 1950 - 20 January 2023

Quite a few at St John and St Stephen's church will remember Ann and Ian Baker, because despite having moved away from Reading they've been good at keeping in touch with old friends.

Ann came to Reading in 1973 as a postgrad student in Soil Science. Ian came in 1974 to work at Metal Box.

They met at the old St John's church in Watlington Street and made plenty of other friends too at the 'Sunday Suppers' that were hosted each week at the vicarage for student age young people. They were both gifted organisers in their different ways and played an active role in our developing parish life. In 1978 they became the first couple to be married in our newly opened Parish Centre in Orts Road.

Some years later their jobs led them to move away to Windlesham in Surrey, where they raised two boys, Tom and Matt. More recently, they retired to the village of Colwall in Herefordshire. So, it was there that her thanksgiving service was held on 11th March. We heard family and friends recalling Ann's passionate love and care for nature, her skills in craft work such as quilting, and her generous nature. Several mentioned being blessed by her sausage casseroles delivered at timely moments!



As you can see in the photo above, the celebration of her life gathered together quite a group of old St John's people from the late seventies. In the centre are Ian with Leslie Russell, with whom he shared the responsibility of being church-wardens during the building and opening of the new church and parish centre. In the back row are John Scoble, our former church treasurer, Gwen Knighton, a friend of Liz Bailey's since primary school days in Swansea who did her PGCE here, Pam Scoble, Marion Wright who was our Parish Worker in those days and her husband Chris, a music teacher who wrote the tunes we often sing in communion services. Front right is Marie Simpkins, Pam and John's daughter. NEWT's editor Chris is on the left.

for Lent



DUST AND GLORY



The Association of Ukrainians in GB -
Reading Branch
21 Sidmouth St, Reading RG1 4QZ



Collecting Aid for Ukraine

We are collecting the following items

Tinned food, rice, pasta, sugar,
tea bags, coffee, snack bars.

Baby food, sanitary products,
toiletries, new or nearly new clothes.
Items can be dropped off at the
Centre on Wednesdays & Saturdays
from 11 till 2pm.



The Hiding Place by Corrie ten Boom with John & Elizabeth Sherrill

Corrie ten Boom, her elder sister Betsie, their younger sister Nollie and brother, Willem, are the children of a watchmaker in the city of Haarlem. The family and three maiden aunts live in rooms above the shop as German tanks rumble across the border into the Netherlands and bombs begin to fall (just as they are in Ukraine as you read this). The family is aghast as the homes and businesses of Jewish neighbours are specifically attacked. Mr ten Boom and his family are known across the city for their generosity. When desperate neighbours come to the door, they are taken upstairs to be concealed until members of the resistance come at night to take them to be hidden in other houses in the countryside. Everyone involved is risking their life...

It sounds like a gripping novel but it's an incredible true account of the difference that real, extraordinary, humble people and their faith, hope and love can make amidst the appalling horror of war.

Arrested together and herded onto a train, Corrie and Betsie, like hundreds of others, had to face paying a high price for their actions. How could they possibly forgive their savage captors?

Many of us have read this book before but it's time to read it again. It's good food for all of us living in today's world.

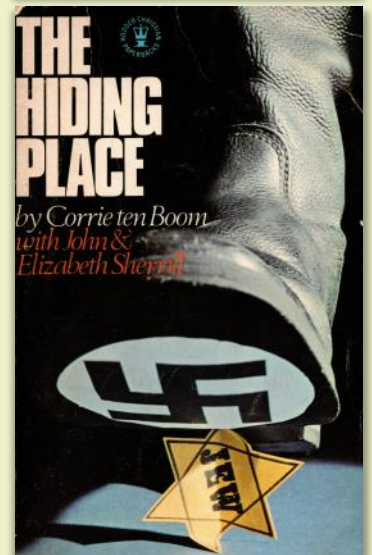
C.J.

John Murray Press
ISBN: 9780 3408 63534

Or you could visit:

jesus.net/corrie-ten-boom-forgiveness
for a brief summary of her story.

Book Review



Corrie in her old bedroom, showing the hiding place behind a false wall there.



HOLY WEEK

Sun 2nd

April



PALM SUNDAY - *greeting Jesus the long-awaited King*

10:30 am All age Holy Communion with palm waving

and palm crosses

St John & St Stephen's church

- followed by church lunch - everyone welcome

10:45 am Family Service

Wycliffe Baptist church

Thurs 7th

April

MAUNDY THURSDAY

- *remembering Jesus' last supper with his friends*

8 pm Holy Communion

St John & St Stephen's church

Fri 8th

April



GOOD FRIDAY

- *the day that Jesus was killed by hanging on a cross*

10:00 am Family Communion

Wycliffe Baptist church

10:30 am Meditation

St John & St Stephen's church

12 noon Walk of Witness with Churches Together in Reading
starting outside Marks and Spencer's in Broad St.

Sun 9th

April

EASTER DAY - *resurrection!*

10:30 am Holy Communion

St John & St Stephen's church

with activities for children

10:45 am Outdoor Family Service

Wycliffe Baptist church

in the car park (if fine)

FORGIVEN

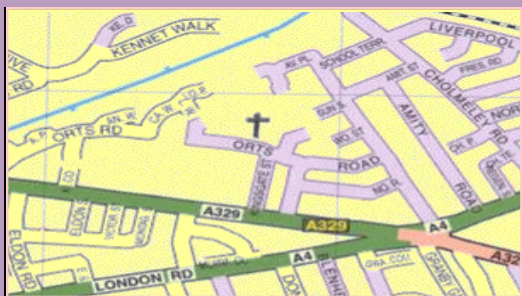
Celebrating Easter in Newtown



Church Contacts



Vicar
Rev Claire
Alcock



Sunday worship 10:30 am
- everyone welcome



Parish Centre
Administrator
Jo Laynesmith



Churchwardens
Rosie Croft &
Ian Maynard



Assoc. Priest
Christine
Bainbridge

please phone the Parish Office 0118 926 3633
or email: office@stjohnandststephen.org.uk

School Contacts



Head Teacher
Polly
Cornish



Deputy
Head Teacher
Kate
Hawkins



Assistant
Head Teacher
Hollie
Appleton

New Town Primary School 0118 937 5509
email: admin@newtown.reading.sch.uk



Head Teacher
Martina
Parsons



Assistant
Head
Cameron
Purvis



Assistant
Head
Paula
Shuman

St John's CE School 0118 937 5540
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