

Parish Magazine

April 2020

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The Benefice comprises the parishes of Bucklesham, Falkenham, Hemley, Kirton, Levington, Nacton, Newbourne and Waldringfield in the Deanery of Colneys in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

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When members of the Clergy or Readers are not available, the Churchwarden should be contacted.

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TODDLER GROUP	Nacton Village Hall, Tuesdays 1.30pm - 3.00pm <i>Information as above</i>		
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BUCKLESHAM LADIES' GROUP	Every second Thursday of the month <i>Information</i> Trudy Woollard 659654		
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Cover picture: *Levington creek* by Swantje Holland Cover design: Dennis Lindridge
Contributions for the May magazine should be sent to:
nactonchurchmagazine@gmail.com by the 20th April please.

Editor's note

This magazine was prepared before the medical emergency. Consequently, some of the articles do not reflect the current situation.

The Reverend Canon Ian Wilson

This year, Easter will be celebrated on Sunday 12th April. But, what is Easter all about? Well, one of the best ways to find the answer to this question is to read the Gospels in the New Testament and in particular to read Mark's Gospel. Mark was almost certainly the first Gospel to be written. It is also the shortest Gospel and is the one that takes us on a daily journey with Jesus in the week that leads to his death and resurrection - what is known as Holy Week - and almost a third of Mark's Gospel is dedicated to this journey. Of course, Jesus' physical journey to Jerusalem begins some time before his arrival in Jerusalem, but it is the Sunday known as Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, where it begins in earnest.

On the **Sunday** then, Mark tells us about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem where he rides into the city on a donkey and crowds are there to greet him. Some spread their cloaks on the ground. Others cut branches in the field and spread them on the road and the people who went ahead of Jesus, and those that followed, shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming of the kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" (Mark 11.9b-10)

On the **Monday**, Jesus goes to the Temple and drives out those who were buying and selling in the Temple. He also turns over the tables of the moneychangers and said, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers", and because of this actions, we are told that the chief priests and the scribes 'kept looking for a way to kill him'. (Mark 11. 15-18)

On the **Tuesday**, again in the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus' authority 'to do these things' is challenged by the chief priest, the scribes and the elders, but Jesus manages to turn the tables of the group of inquisitors and makes them look foolish.

He then tells them the Parable of the Wicked Tenants which they take offence at and results in them wanting to arrest Jesus, 'but they feared the crowd, 'so they left him and went away'. Others try to trap him into saying something incriminating, but again, he successfully sidesteps these and makes his inquisitors look foolish. (Mark 11.27-13.37 - a busy day!)

On the **Wednesday**, Mark tells us that 'The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him'. That day Jesus also has a year's wages worth of 'ointment of pure nard' poured on his head (in recognition of his imminent burial?) by an unnamed woman, and Judas decides to see the chief priests to betray Jesus. They are 'greatly pleased' with this and promise to give him money. (Mark 14.1-11)

On the **Thursday** (Maundy Thursday), Jesus has his last meal with his disciples where tells them that one of his closest disciples will betray him. It also the meal where he refers to the bread that they were to share as being his 'body' and the cup of wine that they will all drink from as being 'his blood'. It was also at this meal that Jesus warns Peter that this is the night that he will deny he knows Jesus three times. After the meal, Judas leaves to betray Jesus and Jesus takes the disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. Once there, having asked three of his closest disciples to 'watch and pray', Jesus becomes aware that he will soon be killed, so he prays to God, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible, please take this cup from me; yet not what I want, but what you want'. Judas then brings the arresting party to where Jesus is and, having identified him 'with a kiss', they arrest Jesus. He is then taken before the High Priest put on trial and is condemned to death for blasphemy. It is during this trial that Peter denies he knows Jesus three times and on the third occasion even swears that he does not know 'this man'. (Mark 14.12-72 - an eventful day!)

On the **Friday** (Good Friday), as those who condemned Jesus to death the night before had no authority to execute Jesus, they take him to the Roman who could, Pontius Pilate. Pilate puts Jesus on trial and at the insistence of those who had access to Pilate's residence, he agrees to crucify Jesus. After being tormented by the soldiers, Jesus is nailed to a cross at Golgotha (The place of the skull) and after hours of agony and torment, Jesus cries out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and dies. After the Romans ensure that Jesus is dead, Jospheh of Arimathea takes Jesus' body down from the cross, wraps him in a cloth and buries him in his own tomb. There was no time to anoint Jesus before his burial as was customary as the Sabbath was about to begin and this type of 'work' was not permitted. However, we are told that 'Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid'. (Mark. 15.1-47 - an agonising day.)

On the **Saturday** (the Sabbath - Holy Saturday), Mark is silent because it is the Sabbath and it is a time of mourning; a time to pray.

On the **Sunday** (the first day of the week), Mark tells us that the women who saw where Jesus was buried go back to the tomb, not to make sure he is still there, but to anoint his body and then...?

Well, if you want to know how the story of Jesus ends, (or better still continues), why not join us for our Easter celebration on Sunday 12th April. All the services across our benefice are contained in the magazine.

With every blessing,

Ian

Benefice Book Club

Interesting, distressing, well written, inspiring, emotional, challenging; some of the descriptions by our members of the latest book *Run Baby Run* by Nicky Cruz. Nicky is Puerto Rican and was a member of the infamous New York gang the Mau Maus in the 1950s. He had a difficult and violent family background where he felt unloved and became involved in drugs and violence himself, becoming a hardened criminal, joining the Mau Maus and going on to become its leader; and all before he was 18 years old.

A visiting evangelist, David Wilkerson, saw something in Nicky and in spite of the threat to his own safety, he pursued Nicky until the boy finally agreed to attend one of David's youth events. David told Nicky that Jesus loved him and would forgive him for everything he had done; love being something Nicky had never experienced from his background. He swaggered along with some of his other gang members not realising that this would be a changing point in his life. He had a powerful conversion which led to him becoming an evangelist himself, eventually founding the Nicky Cruz Outreach, an evangelical Christian ministry. Now in his early 80s Nicky has written a number of books and with his family, is still involved in his ministry, reaching out to young people caught up in the drugs and gang culture.

It is a book of two halves, the first concentrating on the violence and exploits of Nicky and his and other opposing gangs. The second is how he turned his life around, studied at Bible college and became an evangelist himself. It is ultimately a book about love, redemption and hope for the future through faith in Jesus Christ.

We are all aware some 60 years later of the continuing gang and drugs culture in our own country as well as in America and elsewhere. One of our group taught *Run Baby Run* to teenagers many years ago and said what a profound effect it had on many of

those young lives. Perhaps as another suggested, this book should again be on the curriculum at GCSE level in our schools.

Janet Stalker

Nacton Women's Institute

At our February meeting Pip Wright came to tell us about exploring East Anglia by free bus pass. The bus pass is available at female state pension age to men or women (no gender discrimination here!) for travel in England on local off-peak bus services i.e. Monday – Friday 9.30am till 11.00pm. There are no time restrictions on Saturdays, Sundays or Bank holidays. As long as one can read a timetable the possibilities are endless, especially if combined with a car or train journey to a point to start a day of exploring by bus. It has to be said, of course, that if one lives in a village with a very poor bus service then you have to have other means to get out of the village to begin with and sadly, rural bus services seem to be being withdrawn far too frequently. However, as a dedicated bus pass user myself I can vouch for the fact that there are some beautiful routes out there to see the countryside and enjoy our towns and villages.

On Saturday February 22nd the annual WI village lunch was held – not such a high attendance as some years but many thanks to all who did come and everyone who provided food and/or helped on the day itself.

The next WI meeting will be held on Wednesday April 15th at 7.30pm in the village hall and will feature a talk on “China past and present” with David and Anne Prynne. Linda Rachel

Levington Women's Institute

The topic for our meeting in February was ‘Frauds and scams’, by member Lauren Edmunds & her colleague, from Barclays Bank. This was extremely interesting & useful. They quoted thought-provoking, real-life stories from their customers’ experiences. It was reassuring that, nowadays, banks have the power to question customers if they suspect that a requested transaction is the result of a scam and can, in certain circumstances, block a payment.

Several members attended our County Federation’s AGM at Trinity Park. As well as a smattering of the usual AGM-type business, there are always a number of interesting and inspiring speakers at this annual event. The keynote guest, this year, was

Paralympian Danny Crates. Danny is a very likeable character & was very entertaining. He told of his life following losing an arm in a horrific car accident at the age of 20. He clearly has enormous reserves of mental strength as he told of his recovery & decision to turn to athletics. He specialised in 800m sprinting and he is a former world record holder in this event. He won gold medals in the Paralympic Games, European Championships and World Championships. Unsurprisingly he now makes his living as an inspirational speaker.

Our next meeting is on Wednesday 8th April (Village Hall 7.30pm) when our speaker will be from Suffolk One, talking about 'Good Health & Fitness' – something important to us all, whatever our ages (though I doubt we will be able to challenge Danny in the 800 metres!).

Marian Rose

Bucklesham Brightwell & Foxhall WI

Our year began in January with the members paying our subs for the year, we then settled down to a beetle drive. This is a time for members to catch up after Christmas and socialise.

February's meeting was a talk by the Royal Agriculture Benevolent Institution given by Lucy Bellefontaine. Lucy told us how the R.A.B.I. is celebrating 160 years existence. The Queen is their patron. They cover all of East Anglia supporting farming families who have to cope with floods, disease, mental health, homelessness and death. They do lots of fund raising, combined with money left to them in legacies, in order to cover all the help they give to the farming community. They also have their own housing in Bury St. Edmunds for retired farmers.

Our March meeting will be our 92nd birthday which we will celebrate with other WIs. Rosemary Farrow.

Levington Gardening Club

On the evening of our 65th Flower Show, Saturday 11th July, everyone is welcome to meet up at Levington Ship just after 5.00 pm. At 6.00pm we will be entertained by a guitarist. Food will also be available. This will be a ticket only event and further details will be available later. Meetings of the Gardening Club held in the Village Hall

now begin at 7.00pm. At our last meeting in February we welcomed back Anne Tweddle, who gave a very informative talk on pruning. Our next meeting is on Wednesday 22nd April when Karen Kenny will be talking about 'All Things Herbs'.
Doreen Ralph.

The Plough Sunday that Wasn't

Despite the vicious winds and downpours of rain, those of us living in Suffolk may feel we got off lightly. Hearing the tales from other parts of this country and seeing pictures in newspapers or on television screens, makes us feel fortunate in comparison. But even here there have been problems. The greatest one for Bucklesham has been the last minute cancellation of 'Plough Sunday' on the first Sunday in October. The event has been running since 2000 bringing excitement and entertainment to all ages, while widening the range of farm machinery on show, in addition to the much-loved Suffolk Punches. For only the second time, the fields were considered too wet for the horses, the operators and the spectators. It has been a savage blow to fund-raising for both the Suffolk Punch Trust and St. Mary's Church, who have shared the substantial sums of money that have been contributed in past years. This February the Church organised a light-hearted Quiz to try and fill the gap; 55 players came in teams of 5-6, raising a total £430 in close competition (and lots of laughter). A tombola, using the prizes gathered for the Plough Day contributed £222 (£100 was also raised at our Harvest Supper) This coming October will sadly see the last Plough Sunday – The Ramsey family have quite understandably decided it is time to retire from this venture. Their generosity and hard work over the past twenty years has been hugely appreciated.
Tim Voelcker

A new order of things



Lucy Mills

Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end

– attributed to Seneca

I have started learning to play the ukulele. As someone who already plays the guitar, playing a stringed instrument feels familiar; there is an element of ease in which my fingers know, broadly, what they should do.

But it is not the same instrument. Not only is it much smaller and much lighter, the chord shapes are completely different. Even the arrangement of strings – just four strings, not six – is different. The lowest string in ‘note’ is the second string down from the top as you look down while holding the instrument, rather than the guitar’s familiar low E progressing to high E. The

Continued overleaf

The Sign

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calendar & lectionary

- 1** Frederick Denison Maurice, priest, teacher of the faith, 1872
- 5 Palm Sunday**
Matthew 21.1–11, Psalm 118.1–2, 19–end
- 9** Maundy Thursday
- 10** Good Friday
- 11** Easter Eve
- 12 Easter Day**
Acts 10.34–43, Psalm 118.1–2, 14–24, Colossians 3.1–4, John 20.1–18
- 19 2nd Sunday of Easter**
Acts 2.14a, 22–32, Psalm 16, 1 Peter 1.3–9, John 20.19–end
- 21** Anselm, abbot, archbishop, teacher of the faith, 1109
- 23** George, martyr, patron of England, c.304
- 24** Mellitus, bishop, 624, Seven Martyrs of the Melanesian Brotherhood, 2003
- 26 3rd Sunday of Easter**
Acts 2.14a, 36–41, Psalm 116.1–3, 10–end, 1 Peter 1.17–23, Luke 24.13–35
- 27** Christina Rossetti, poet, 1894
- 28** Peter Chanel, missionary, martyr, 1841
- 29** Catherine of Siena, teacher of the faith, 1380
- 30** Pandita Mary Ramabai, translator, 1922

Continued from previous page

shapes are different, the number of strings is different, the order of strings is different.

Over the three days of Jesus' death, the agony of the in-between and the glory of the resurrection, one beginning ended and another began. And although the echoes of familiarity were there, a fundamental change had taken place. Reality had begun a Holy Spirit-led remaking, where the dominance of death had been displaced by a life so exuberant, so full of possibilities, that the order of things would never be the same again.

When Jesus stood with Mary in the garden she did not, initially, recognise him. But in the speaking of her name the familiarity struck her in the heart, and she knew him.

When new life begins, we learn to play in a different way. The old patterns at first seem hard to break. But in embracing the new habits we are called to form, we find that there is power in the new beginning, a delight of discovering what wonderful music can be made.

If we try and play exactly the way we did before, the notes will sound all wrong. Because when we are born into this new reality by the power of the Spirit at work in us, living in ways that do not embrace this new way of living makes a discordant sound. We are called not to conform to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we 'may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.' (Romans 12:2)

In the Easter season, we are reminded that it is never too late to begin again; it

is never too dark for light to break through; it is never too difficult for God to change our lives, for nothing is impossible with God. Hope is always an option.

We follow the risen Christ. Our gospel is one of transformation, from death to life: life that calls us, here and now, to play a different tune.

*Lord,
may the Spirit of resurrection and
transformation
begin something new in me today.
Remind me that no darkness is so big
that you cannot conquer it,
no problem so prickly
that you will not walk through it with me.
May the reality of what Jesus has done for
us
be reflected in my life.
In his name, Amen*

*Lucy Mills is a writer and artist.
www.lucy-mills.com*



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prayer

The Love of God

God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

In the face of Jesus
We behold the glory of Love's power
In meekness perfected;
Love's faithful witness to the end
To bring love in where love is not,
Manifesting Love's compassion,
Love's eternal activity towards humanity;
That through his offering of the perfect life,
All those who come to him
May burn upon the alter of his love,
And one with him may dwell within the sanctuary of his love.

(Gilbert Shaw)



Becoming Reverend



**Matt
Woodcock**

**Thursday 23
September**

Bosch gave me a whistle-stop tour through hundreds of years of church history today.

Fascinating. In the Enlightenment period, people were deceived into thinking that they didn't need God any more. They began to believe that science, reason and human progress could answer all their questions and make their lives complete. They were wrong.

I went from the intellectual, theological denseness of Bosch to the earthiness of Acomb Working Men's Club. It was no less fascinating. Anna's brother was in there, playing fives and threes with an old guy called Ernie. I'd done press stories on Ernie's son who is a well-known Elvis impersonator. Ernie cleans drains for a living. He was fascinated by my calling to the priesthood. We got onto the subject of monks. He shared a brilliant story about working at Ampleforth Abbey. He'd asked one of the brothers to show him where to find the hot water supply. Ernie was escorted down to the cellar where he noticed a huge barrel of cider. It was 10 a.m. Ernie and the monk re-emerged at 1.30 p.m. totally plastered. 'That was

one of the best sessions I ever had!' he cackled.

Sunday 26 September

All day I chewed over this quote from Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*:

individuals can no longer take themselves seriously and that, in spite of the fact that they now have the liberty to believe and do as they like, many do not believe in anything any more, and all spend their lives in frenzied work and frenzied play so as not to face the fact, not to look into the abyss.

I reject this. Most people still have an innate desire to believe in something. That inner spiritual thirst is there somewhere. Surely? When people are brave enough, compelled enough, to slow the frenzy of work and play and stop gorging on the fleeting pleasures of shopping, sex, footy, lager and tacky TV, the bigger questions of life, a deeper truth, will emerge. Whenever I come out in a cold sweat, traumatized at the potential that God doesn't exist, that I'm talking to myself in prayer, my thoughts turn to Jesus. He draws me back to belief. He restores my hope. He pulls me from the abyss. Admittedly, I had a night off the bigger questions of life. I indulged in rubbish telly, a few cans of lager and an early night with Anna.

Wednesday 29 September

I'm getting jittery about going back to college. Essays will soon be coming out of my ears. It will take huge amounts of

self-discipline to juggle the work, and then come back to York at weekends to be a dad to two screaming babies. One of them keeps having a disco in Anna's womb. Putting my ear to her tummy is now my new favourite thing to do in the entire world. We went out for a meal after getting more Tesco vouchers. On the way out we pulled each other close in the hallway and petted heavily. Thursday 30 September

It was great to see all the boys at Cranmer again. I'm living in college this year next door to Paul Bromley. Things should be easier and much more fun. I won't miss Dan's moody introspection. After an all-age welcome-back service I met Harry Sawyer who I'll be doing a pioneer placement with. He's a big guy with one of those beards that doesn't cover the area above his lip. David reassured me – between mouthfuls of quiche – that my family had to come first and I could take whatever time I needed. What a stunning man.

One of the new intake is only nineteen. Nineteen! What's he doing?! I've been assigned to be his 'college

buddy' to ensure he settles in. He's very bouncy and smiles for extended periods. I took him to the Elm Tree and the Colpitts to get properly acquainted.

I'm not great mentor material. My track record is terrible.

If all goes to plan I'll be a reverend in about nine months. And a dad in less than three. Ouch.

Tuesday 5 October

I felt completely out of my depth in our first Old Testament lecture. We're looking at the wisdom literature contained in books like the Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. There were a lot of words being used like 'flux' and 'relativism'. Aidan talked a lot. At least 90 per cent of it was absolute garbage. Things didn't get any easier in our systematics seminar. I'm determined to not just get my head round this stuff but find a way to apply it to real life.

Systematics seems to boil down to one of two conclusions:

1. The answer is always Jesus.
2. It's all a mystery.

I just need to find some colourful and creative ways of saying that in my essays. We headed to the Colpitts after college Communion. It was hard work maintaining polite conversation with some of our new intake. Hopefully they'll learn to put down those Bible commentaries for the night and engage in some pub banter.



*This is an extract from
Becoming Reverend by
Matt Woodcock (Church
House Publishing, £9.99).*

Julian's Gardener-Christ



Ronald Blythe

Chilly spring rains, pear blossom clotted on the bough, damp cat, seeds to sow, and a new name to paint on the incumbents board. The reassuring prayer of a mower that starts at first pull. And Easter everywhere. So why not preach on immortality? But first of all, I must get those boyhood visions of graves' balancing rather grim porcelain blooms and hands in glass cases out of my head. 'Immortelles', they call them. Rained on, spotted, rusted, they did a turn.

The Quaker hymn 'Immortal love, forever full, Forever flowing free' does more than this because 'Faith has still its Olivet, And love its Galilee.' Thus we re-map our village. Drenched sticky buds are about to burst. Sheep complain or rejoice – it's hard to know which – in sodden grass.

Taking a country funeral on a wet spring morning is a contradiction in terms. The

high language of heaven rules out low thoughts. At the Easter sepulchre, itself a dusty answer, the message is: 'He is not here. He is risen.' Just a heap of linen. And lavish piles of linen here, white as snow. And an angel whose face was like lightning.

And then – maybe because Adrian is getting rid of the last signs of winter outside – this changing of the familiar figure of Jesus, the rabbi-healer, into a gardener, unrecognizable to those who knew him best.

The gardener-Christ entranced Julian of Norwich. She came upon him as he was receiving orders from his master, and dressed roughly in a 'single white coat, old and worn, stained with sweat, tight and short . . . threadbare . . . ready to fall apart at any moment'.

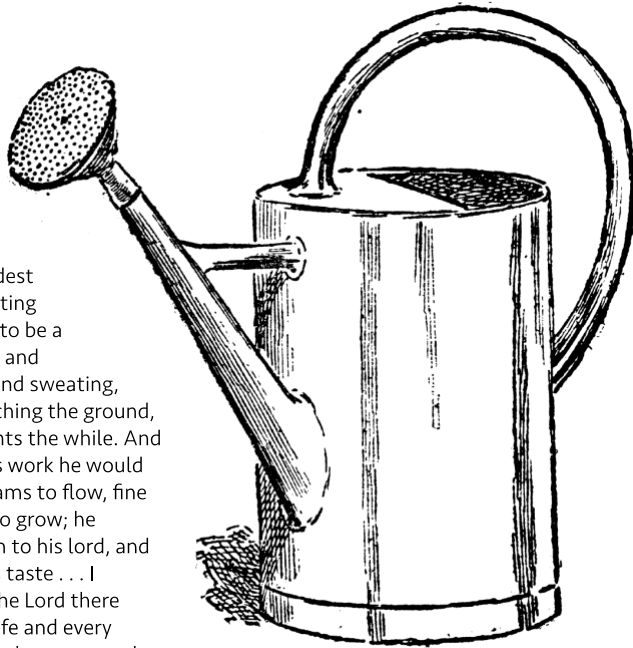
Outwardly, he looked as if he had been working hard for a long time, but to



my inner understanding he seemed to be a beginner, a servant who had never been sent out before. Then I understood: he was to do work that was the hardest and most exhausting possible. He was to be a gardener, digging and banking, toiling and sweating, turning and trenching the ground, watering the plants the while. And by keeping at this work he would make sweet streams to flow, fine abundant fruits to grow; he would bring them to his lord, and serve them to his taste . . . I thought that in the Lord there was everlasting life and every goodness, except the treasure that was in the earth. And that treasure, too, had its being in the wonderful depth of his eternal love.

‘Tragic language meets in time and place, and above stripped altars.’

Julian’s thoughts on the cultural divinity don’t come amiss when I watch gardening TV, but it is strangely upsetting that Christ’s terrible death was begun in a garden – maybe one in which he had enjoyed watching gardeners at work. Gethsemane.



It was there that he became ‘sorrowful and very heavy’. And it was in the garden that he asked his Father to let this cup pass from him – this appalling fate. It was springtime, and new life was everywhere. He, too, was youthful. Passion – interior suffering. The intensity of the hymns.

Samuel Crossman wrote his ‘Love unknown’ – he had been reading George Herbert – over the hill near here. Tragic language meets in time and place, and above stripped altars. But the spring birds do not speak it. They are noisy with nests and partnerships, and pure life. And the horses on the hill do brief, cumbrous gallops, disappearing and reappearing over the horizon. And this for no apparent reason.



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recipe

Moroccan Saffron Cake

Ingredients

150ml (¼ pt) full milk
3 cardamom pods
1 star anise
1 pinch (teaspoon) saffron threads
450g (1lb) flour
½ teaspoon salt
7g (¼ oz) sachet of dried yeast
200g (7 oz) unsalted butter
120g (4 oz) light brown soft sugar
120g (4 oz) sultanas
60g (2 oz) candied peel
1 teaspoon mixed spice
½ teaspoon cinnamon
1 tablespoon honey

Method

1 In a small pan, bring the milk almost to boiling point with the cardamom, star anise, and saffron. Set aside to infuse for 20 minutes.

2 Mix the flour, salt, and yeast, then rub

the butter to form breadcrumbs. Stir in the sugar, sultanas, peel, and spices.

3 Form a well in the centre, and pour in the honey then the strained milk. Bring this all together in the bowl until it forms a ball, then transfer to a floured surface and knead for 10 minutes or so.

4 Place into a lined, greased 1kg (2lb) loaf tin, cover with a damp tea towel, and leave it to rise for at least an hour in a warm place.

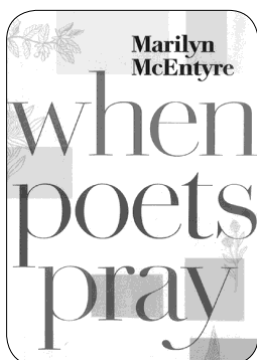
5 Heat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas 4 and bake for about an hour until you have a browned crust and probably a crack in the middle.

6 Once cooled, cut into slices and serve with butter or clotted cream.

This recipe was written by Simon Walsh and originally featured in the Church Times.



books



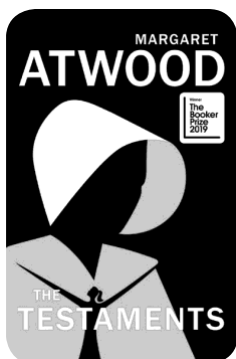
WHEN POETS PRAY
Marilyn McEntyre
Eerdmans £14.99 (£13.49)

When Poets Pray is a collection of 24 poems, each of which is followed by a prayerful and personal engagement with the text. The beauty of the book lies in the way in which McEntyre invites us to become part of a conversation with the writer and McEntyre herself. We don't just listen: we join in. It becomes a Trinitarian act of understanding and attentiveness as we listen to both voices and develop our thoughts and responses.

THIS short book demands slow and steady attention. It is not a book to read in one sitting: it is too rich and too deep for that kind of gorging. It is a book to be enjoyed, treasured, and prayed with. And the author is a sensitive and thoughtful fellow pilgrim.

McEntyre treasures a fundamental connection between poetry and prayer. Poetry is an essential part of her spirituality, and, as a teacher, she has frequently noticed that people find poetry a way into prayer. She rejoices in the way that poetry can teach us about prayer, since both invite rather than instruct.

The Revd Richard Lamey is the Rector of St Paul's, Wokingham, and Area Dean of Sonning, in the diocese of Oxford.



THE TESTAMENTS
Margaret Atwood
Chatto & Windus £20 (£18)

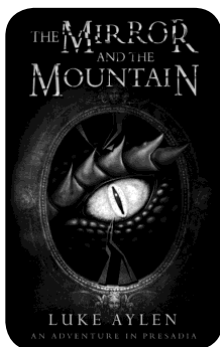
Those who have read Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, published nearly 35 years ago, tend not to forget it quickly. The Republic of Gilead, which we are introduced to, is a frightening place, not least because it is alarmingly close. It is a place where good manners embody a toxic moral compromise and become weapons of oppression and control, particularly over women's bodies.

In *The Testaments*, we return to the "biblical" police state of Gilead 15 years later. It is narrated by three different female voices, including the coldblooded enforcer of sadistic torture Aunt Lydia. It has a spy thriller feel to it as we seek out who is working with the Mayday resistance to bring down the empire. It has the

speed, wit, tight plot, and melodrama that any such thriller needs.

What we also encounter, however, is a novelist's scrutiny of how our past shapes our present responses to good and bad, asking whether it is inevitable that hurt people hurt people. The novel appeals at some uncomfortable level to the lonely survivor in each of us. Like the best dystopian fiction, it looks back and ahead at the same time. It is a timely interruption in a socially, politically, and morally chaotic world in which the lie is so often becoming the truth.

Canon Mark Oakley is Dean of St John's College, Cambridge.



THE MIRROR AND THE MOUNTAIN:

An adventure in Presadia

Luke Aylen

Lion £7.99 (£7.19)

Two 11-year-olds, Summer and Jonah, pass through a mirror and find themselves in a besieged castle from which they are rescued by dwarves, who happily co-exist with humans, selling armaments to both sides, in a magical kingdom, Presadia.

Khoree the dragon tells them that their only hope of finding a mirror to take them home is to find the lost king who made them. On the way, as in all good quests, they face hardship, and learn lessons about courage, telling the

truth, and taming the tongue.

Aylen borrows happily from folklore, C. S. Lewis, Tolkien, and Terry Pratchett, making an entirely new fabric of his patchwork. He subverts your expectations of the genre and draws his morals subtly, as in all good folk tales, as part of a narrative that you want to keep reading. I particularly liked the way in which he uses limericks as a serious literary form.

The stories race along, illuminated with a sly wit that also makes you think. For example, why should Tin be in charge just because he has the longest beard? I finished wanting to know what happened next. Fortunately, another volume is on its way.

Fiona Hook is a writer and EFL teacher.

All three of these books can be purchased online at our Church House Bookshop: **www.chbookshop.co.uk**

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poetry place

Sonnet 12: When I do count the clock that tells the time

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard,
Then of thy beauty do I question make,
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
And die as fast as they see others grow;
And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

William Shakespeare 1564–1616



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