

**Swindon Old Town Partnership of Churches
Anglican - United Reformed - Methodist - Est. 1969**

PARTNERSHIP MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2023

£1.00

Anniversaries this month



The Revd. Canon Simon Stevenette celebrates 25 years as Vicar of Christ Church with St. Mary's.

The Rev'd. Geoffrey Gleed celebrates 50 years as Organist and Choir Master of Immanuel United Reformed Church.



One in Christ - Together in Mission



Bath Road Junior Church Autumn Display

Your Contacts

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WORKING TOGETHER WITH OTHER CHURCHES IN OLD TOWN

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Partnership Letter

Christ Church Vicarage

Dear Friends,

Our continuing Christian calling and vocation

Long before we arrived in Swindon, people were praying here and long after we leave, Swindon people will still be praying away here. We are part of the sacred history of Swindon town. Each generation and, God willing, each human being has had an impact on our town leaving it a better place through their love, courage and service transforming people's lives for good. As the Bible says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever".

It was sad to learn about the terrible vandalism at Holy Rood, the old Parish Church of Old Town Swindon on The Lawn in August. We are working at Christ Church with Swindon Borough Council and the wider Swindon community to make Holy Rood much more open and accessible again as a central part of the sacred history of Swindon, reminding us of all who have gone before us. Our dream would be to create a Garden of Reflection. Also we have a vision of the Holy Rood building being regularly opened as a place of Christian pilgrimage where visitors and Swindonians can stop, look, listen, pray and share food together as I did 25 years ago on Tuesday October the 6th 1998.

You are welcome to join with Nicola and me at 9:00 am on Friday 6th October for a 'Christ in Quiet' informal morning prayer service there. We will especially pray for all those who live and work and study in our Old Town Swindon parish and for all those engaged in creation care in Swindon and across the world in the environmental crisis facing us all in the human family.

As we celebrate Harvest festival on the 1st October at Christ Church please can I remind you that through our baptism we are, each one of us, whatever age we are, full time Christian workers. We are on earth serving Jesus with a clear purpose to pass on the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ who is alive, risen, ascended and very much present with us across Swindon through his Incarnation. As we do this we are blessed by God in so many ways as he calls us, in response to being blessed, to cultivate an attitude of gratitude by being a blessing in the way we live our lives. ➤

After the service there will be a party in the Community Centre, which will be 10 years old this November, where we can share stories of how God has blessed us over our time in Swindon, part of the Old Town Partnership of Churches. However long or short that might have been, God looks for faithfulness from us, following his example that we might journey onwards with him filled with faith, joy and resilience. As we do this, we will renew Christian hope as our churches have done over the generations each week.

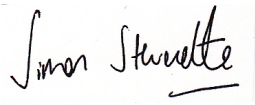
More than anything, our faith communities on earth are here to worship God, love people and share the stories of hope which have been given to us in the Bible and in our Christian experience to pass on, with those who join us asking questions longing to find out more. Praise God for new stories of hope. This is what we celebrated on Sunday 27th of August when family and friends from around the world joined at Christ Church for the baptism of Caspar Marcel Stevenette, born on 10th May 2023. I had the wonderful privilege, as you can see from the picture on the front of this magazine, of baptising my first grandchild into the Christian faith in the same baptismal gown in which my dad baptised his grandson Thomas, Caspar 's Dad, in November 1991, each of our 5 sons and me, his son, in November 1962.

I am delighted that on 6th October 7.30 pm our worship in Christ Church will be led by the Old Town Partnership Choir and Toast our music group. Also, my great friend and Christian colleague, The Rev'd. Geoffrey Gleed has accepted my invitation to preach on God's continuing Christian mission in which he calls us to share.

We will also pray for the next generation, those who come after us including Caspar and his parents Tom and Rae as they fly out to Moscow the following weekend to take up a posting with the Foreign Office serving our country's interests developing networks in Russia. God bless you Tom, Rae and Caspar and God bless each one of us as Christian ambassadors living and sharing God's wonderful story of hope, faith and love here in Swindon and wherever else God leads us towards in Christian service.

Thank you for all your friendship, encouragement, prayers and support to me as your Vicar and the Stevenette family since we joined you in the Old Town Partnership after our move to Swindon in September 1998.

Every blessing in our continuing service as God's team mates. Thanks again.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Stevenette". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a short horizontal line.

FAMILY EVENTS

BAPTISMS

We welcome into the family of the Church

CHRIST CHURCH

- Sep 24 Darcey Ellen Joynson
Oct 1 Abhinay Arora, Mehab Arora, Mehak Arora,
Beth Victoria-Jo Witts Chamberlain, Sarah-Jane Clark,
Paul Robertson Flounders

RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL VOWS

Abinhay Arora

MARRIAGE

We wish joy and happiness to

CHRIST CHURCH

- Sep 23 Stephen John Howard and Samantha Jane Robins-Drewitt
Andrew Charles Iwaniszyn and Ashleigh Ynes Carr

DEATHS

We extend our sympathy to the loved ones

CHRIST CHURCH

- Aug 12 Bernard Smedley, 86 years
Sep 5 Doris May Head, 91 years

FLOODLIGHTING

- Sep 11 For Kieran Burge – in memory of my dear son Kieran whose birthday is today. We will always miss you.
Sep 16 For Maxine and Terry Allan's 40th Wedding Anniversary on 16th July; in memory of Thomas Allan who died on 16th June 30 years ago; in memory of Myrtle Chatfield who died on 7th September 2007 and Maurice Chatfield who passed away on 18th April 2023.

If you would like to sponsor the floodlighting of Christ Church in celebration of a birthday, wedding anniversary, special occasion, to advertise your Company or in memory of a loved one, the minimum gift per evening is **£30.00**. ➤

Cheques to be made payable to "Christ Church PCC" Please write to the PARISH OFFICE, COMMUNITY CENTRE AT CHRIST CHURCH, SWINDON, SN1 3HB. email: parishoffice@christchurchswindon.co.uk. Tel. 522832.

Please note: If you would like the floodlighting to be in the magazine for the appropriate month, we will need to have your request by the 12th of the preceding month.



Wow - what a scorcher! On Saturday 9th September, with temperatures of almost 30C, intrepid riders and striders set off to visit as many churches as possible.

Thank you to the people in the Ecumenical Partnership who were at the four churches to welcome and ply with water etc., the brave people taking part.

We had 13 visitors to Christ Church, 5 of whom were from Christ Church or the Community Centre. Thank you to Caroline, Daniel, Carol, Chris and Steve for their heroic efforts on the day, despite the conditions. One of the team walked 18 miles in the intense heat and the others managed to visit a large number of churches and clock up a lot of miles.

Lastly, thank you to the people who sponsored our riders and striders. Wiltshire Historic Churches Trust will benefit from half of the sponsorship with the rest coming back to the participant's churches.

Arline Stovell
Parish Organiser, Christ Church with St Mary's

Swindon Hardship Fund (SHF) Update for Old Town Churches September 2023

We are a small charity registered in 2020, created to support people in financial hardship in Swindon. We work by making small grants to individuals with a turnaround of just a few days; referrals come from trusted partners. Recent new partners include Swindon Carers Centre (Swindon has a great many carers in need of financial support), Hazlewood Academy, and Wiltshire Womens Empowerment Programme, which specifically seeks to support people from ethnic minorities.

In the past year the scale of our work has more than doubled in response to the cost-of-living crisis. Most of our grants still go to 'gap-filling', things which the state does not help with such as furniture, mattresses, travel, floor coverings, but now we are also helping with basics such as food, rent and utilities. Many are single parent families, with domestic violence often a factor. "I truly can't express how much this has helped", response to a grant for mattresses. We have welcomed two new trustees. Trustees are all volunteers working from home, so we can direct as much support as possible to individuals experiencing severe financial hardship in our town.

We greatly appreciate the support that members of OTCP have given us. If you would like to give to SHF, you can make payments or standing orders to Swindon Hardship Fund, Sort 30-90-89, A/C 56335660, or send a cheque to Swindon Hardship Fund, 22 Savernake Street, Old Town, Swindon, SN1 3LZ, or online via Givey (incurs a small fee):

Swindonhardshipfund.org.uk,
Reg. Charity 1190979

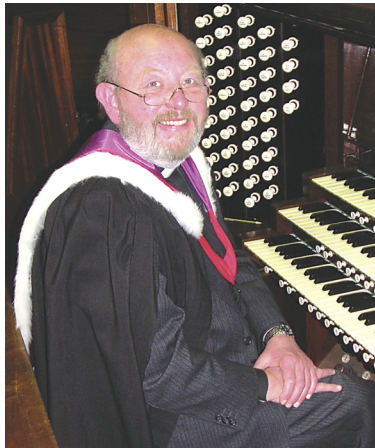
Steve Russell

Immanuel

Services every Sunday at 10.30 am with
Holy Communion on the third Sunday of the month.

Immanuel Tuesday Tea & Chat

This will take place on Tuesday 10th October at 2.30pm.
Donations of cakes would be appreciated.



The Rev'd. Geoffrey Gleed

50 NOT OUT!

Details of the celebration of Geoff's 50 years as the Organist and Choirmaster at Immanuel Church on Sunday 17th September will be in next month's magazine.

Terry Pidgeon's 90th Birthday

As part of Terry's celebration last week, Geoff Gleed wrote a Birthday Ode which was delivered in characteristic style by the poet himself!



Geoff Jottings



Did you know?

The Bible Society translated the Bible into 81 languages in 2022.

The strongest muscle in the body is the tongue. (Use it wisely).

The worlds longest ever concert lasted 453 hours. (Give thanks for slightly shorter church services).

The Church and US

The other day I was asked, "Do you honestly think that the church is still relevant to most people in this day and age?" My short answer was along these lines:

If we believe that the church is not the building but the people, then it CAN only be relevant if Christians live their lives through faith words and actions which are relevant and meaningful TODAY.

Do you agree or not?

A musical offering in words

As I will have celebrated my 50 years as Organist and Choirmaster by the time you read this Magazine, I've printed the poem I wrote for my Special Day. I hope you find it helpful.

Let us Sing
Let us sing of Christ's love
Of all he can do through you and me.
Let us sing out the story of his Kingdom.

So that more might come to learn of what Christ can mean for them, let us sing out the message loud and clear for everyone. For it is in our singing that we help to make the music of heaven.

You and I and all people together can sing the song of love and hope, of justice, joy and peace. As we join together in our singing we will surely create a harmony. That can help us discover the spirit of our ONENESS with each other and with God.

To make you smile (Seen printed in a church magazine)

At this Sunday's evening service the sermon topic will be "What is Hell?"
Come early and listen to our choir. ■

Immanuel's links with Highworth

Many readers will know that Robert's ministry, as well as looking after Immanuel, also includes the oversight of Highworth United Reformed Church. This church has a small congregation worshipping in a delightful listed chapel dating back to 1825. Thanks to the generosity of some members in Victorian times and some judicious investment management, it also benefits from a substantial annual income which is used to support a number of local charities.

Sadly, the Highworth fellowship can no longer provide elders who can manage the church's work and witness. Since elders are a legal requirement of any URC congregation, the Immanuel Elders have very readily agreed to add the Highworth church to their existing responsibilities. This means that the Highworth church can remain open, and that its very valuable work in the community can continue.

We are currently preparing to jump through some interesting legal hoops with a view to the emergence at the end of December of "Immanuel with Highworth URC" - one church in two locations - although for day to day practical purposes the two fellowships will continue very largely as now.

We would very much welcome the support and prayers of our Partnership friends as we embark on this exciting new chapter. And our Highworth friends would be delighted to welcome anyone from the Partnership to one of their services. Robert leads worship there on the fourth Sunday of each month, and there are services led by others on every second and fifth Sunday. And some would say that the best news is that all Highworth services begin at a very civilised 10.45 am!

Don Macarthur

Window Wanderland

Residents of Lawn, in partnership with Lawn Community Association, are organising our first Window Wanderland. It is a festival of light and colour, where people transform their neighbourhoods into a magical outdoor gallery of unique displays in their window.

There will be a map and a walking trail on the weekend of 10th - 12th November with the very general theme of remembrance.

Bath Road

All services start at 10am

1st	October	Holy Communion, The Rev'd. Rach Collins
8th	October	Morning Worship, Eric Hewitt
15th	October	Morning Worship, Geoff Rhodes
22nd	October	Morning Worship
29th	October	Morning Worship

The livestreams of our services are now on YouTube instead of Facebook.

You'll be able to watch them at
www.youtube.com/@bathroadmethodistchurch,
where the livestreams will start at 10am.

Open House - Mondays 10.30 am to 12 noon

Please feel free to come along.

Bath Road Church Community Breakfast

9.00 am to 11.00 am

14th October

£1.00 for a bacon roll with tea or coffee

All are welcome.



MOPS

(MOPS stands for Mix of People
5th and 19th October)

We meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 2.30pm to 3.30 pm in the Crossland Room at Bath Road Methodist Church. The usual format is to spend the first half hour chatting and the second half hour listening to a speaker or doing an activity.

October 5th

October 19th

ORGANISERS: Brenda Hewitt, Tel. 683926 and Janet Hunt, Tel. 521934

Our Ukranian friends



On Easter Monday in 2022, Steve, Gemma and I welcomed a traumatised family from Ukraine into our home. We sent out a plea for help to support them as they had come over on the family scheme which meant we didn't qualify for any financial help from the Government. There were 17 of them and we needed to provide not only a roof over their heads but food, clothing, toys, everything. The response we received was amazing and we remain truly grateful to everyone who responded.

The family are incredibly musical and we decided to host a concert in our garden with drinks and homemade cakes to say thank you for all the help they and we received.

We were blessed with lovely weather so, on Saturday, 24th June, gazebos were erected, tables and chairs put out on the lawn, bunting was hung alongside the Ukrainian flag, and kettles were at the ready. The youngsters delighted everyone with their playing and singing and the father, Slavik, interspersed the music with the story of how they came to be in England. His story had to be interpreted by his sister-in-law, Luda, who lives in Wootton Bassett and who has been a huge support to them having got them to the UK in the first place.

They had originally lived in the Donetsk region which had suffered attacks from Russia when it was annexed in 2014. They moved to Kyiv. 8 years later, having built their own house, they had to move again because of bombs raining down

on them again from Russia. They went to Poland and then came across to England. With the help of their Church, Swindon Evangelical Church, we managed to get them moved into a large flat above a pub that Arkells had recently closed. They have lived there for just over a year and are now having to find another home as the property is up for sale. It is very difficult to find letting agents or landlords willing to rent homes to such a large family, even though the majority are now adults and wage earners. If you know of anyone willing to rent a large house to the family – 15 of them as the grandmother and sister would remain with the sister in Wootton Bassett – then please do let me know!

The man who created those lions in Trafalgar Square

It was 150 years ago, on 1st October 1873, that Sir Edwin Landseer, artist and sculptor, died. He is known mainly for his animal paintings and for the lion sculptures at the base of Nelson's Column in London.

He was a popular painter in his lifetime, appealing to people across class boundaries, and his death was marked by houses lowering blinds, flags flying at half-mast and crowds lining the streets for his funeral at St Paul's Cathedral.

An art prodigy, the young Edwin learned swiftly from his father, who was a talented engraver, and received tuition from several skilled artists. He first exhibited at the Royal Academy at the age of 13 (an 'Honorary Exhibitor'), was elected an Associate at the minimum age of 24 and became an Academician in 1831, aged 29.

Although Landseer was a Londoner, having been born there in 1802, he became very fond of the Scottish Highlands, which he first visited in 1824, and many of his best-known paintings, such as Monarch of the Glen, are set there. Queen Victoria commissioned many from him.

But his connection with the Highlands also stemmed from the time he enjoyed there with his lover Georgiana, Duchess of Bedford, the wife of his first major patron – John Russell, the 6th Duke of Bedford. She was twice Landseer's age when he met her at the age of 21, having been commissioned to paint her portrait, but they fell in love and the Duke, who was considerably older, permitted the relationship, which continued after his death.

But because their only child, Lady Rachel Russell, did not bear his name, Landseer was unable to cope mentally and he suffered a severe nervous breakdown, leading to prolonged depression and hypochondria. In 1872 he was declared insane at the request of his family. He had been knighted in 1850. ■

Christ Church with St. Mary's

Christ Church with St Mary's Family Weekend at Home 'Rhythms of Life' Saturday 21st - Sunday 22nd October

Further information can be obtained from all the churches
All are welcome

The weekend will include Prayers Stations and Labyrinth around the church on the themes of Beloved, Behold, Belong, Become.

Saturday 21st October

10.00 am 'Christ in Quiet' Worship

11.00 am Dramatic presentation of the Bible in one hour -
The Rev'd Richard Cresswell, Vicar of Bradley Stoke

1.00 pm Bring and share picnic

2.00 pm onwards:
Choice of either Craft activities or a short walk around The Lawn with the option of a longer walk Smyth's Ridge at Barbary Castle.

6.30 pm Fish and Chip Supper followed by Fun Games

Sunday 22nd October

10.00 am Celebration Partnership service at Christ Church with
The Right Reverend Vivienne Faull, Lord Bishop of Bristol
Theme: A meal with Jesus; a picnic in the park (Luke 9;10-17)

12 noon Question time with the Bishop Viv in church.

12.45 pm Gather for a 1.00 pm parish lunch at the Community Centre.
Arranged by Fellowship of Faith

3.00 pm A short walk

4.00 pm Cup of tea and cake
and a short discussion on what God has taught us.

Sunday Club Shoebox Appeal



We have begun to collect items for the children to pack into shoeboxes later in October, on behalf of the charity 'Link to Hope'. This is a small charity, who will be delivering the shoeboxes to families and the elderly in Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria. We would be grateful of any donation, from an empty shoebox, a single item or completed box.

Last date for donations is Sunday 28th October.

Please leave donations at the Parish Office, or pass to Sue.

For further details, please visit www.linktohope.co.uk or see Sue at coffee on Sundays. You can also email Sue@christchurchswindon.co.uk.



The Friends of Christ Church Charity Christmas Market

Date for the diary

The trustees are once again organising this popular annual event on Saturday 18th November 11am-2.30pm. The Mayor of Swindon is opening the event and Christ Church Choir and Hand Bell Ringers will be performing in the Community Centre and church. There will also be an opportunity to visit the ringing room in the bell tower.

Living with Dementia

I have just returned from visiting my sister, Val who is in a care home because she has dementia. It was a two hour journey to get there and a two hour journey home and in that time I wondered if it was worth all the effort as the time I spent with her was so short, not that my time was restricted in any way on the part of the care home, on the contrary, I could have stayed as long as I liked but it was not an easy visit. There was a time three or four years ago when I would go down to see her and I would take her out and we would have tea together or an ice cream from a delicious ice cream restaurant right on the sea front. Now she does not know me and neither does she know her own daughters.

It was her birthday recently, she was 99 and the care home staff had made it a special day and judging by the photographs I saw of the celebrations my sister seemed to enjoy the day, so I went with high hopes that she might be pleased to see me. I was wrong. However, I noticed that she had a better relationship with the carers than with me and I suppose this is good in the circumstances.

This led me to think that her world has changed and family is not her world now, her world is within the care home, the carers are the people she relates to now and not us, not even her daughter who visits very frequently.

These thoughts led me to think of a comparison of the relationship that we and others might have with God. Some might have a relationship with God but as other things crowd in on their lives, that relationship becomes weaker and weaker until, maybe, it no longer exists. Does this sadden God I wonder? I think it must. Is this what Paul might have been referring to when he wrote to the Ephesians and said to them "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 4: v.30)? The one comforting aspect is that, just as we go on loving our family members, come what may the same applies to God, for again I quote Paul who said that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

My sister does not remember me now, she cannot remember the life we shared, the holidays we enjoyed together travelling to many parts of the world but I comfort myself with the fact that one day she will know, she will know all her family and she will know how much we love her.

Margaret Williams

OCTOBER

To find out the latest information for Christ Church, please sign up for our weekly email from the Christ Church News Desk:
www.christchurchswindon.co.uk/blog/

Alternatively, check our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/Christchurchswindon>

Listen to our latest service at a time to suit you from 1.00 pm each Sunday by going to our website and clicking on 'Services'

Morning Prayer at Christ Church

9-9.30 am Monday, Tuesday and Thursday in the Lady Chapel
apart from the first Saturday when it is 7.30 am.

9-9.30 am Wednesday and Friday, virtual Morning Prayer

Telephone [0800 260 5903](tel:08002605903) to join by phone

Use this Pass code [69404 36078](#)

Call Stephen 07885b217077 if you would like to join and need advice.

Every Wednesday, 10.30 am-11.00 am - Christ in Quiet with Holy Communion

01 Sun	8.00 am	Christ Church, 1662 Holy Communion
	9.00 am	St. Mary's, Holy Communion
	10.00 am	Christ Church, All Age Service and Baptism Welcome
	3.00 pm	Hillie's Bereavement Care Service at Christ Church
	6.30 pm	Christ Church, Holy Communion
02 Mon	7.30 pm	Christ Church Staff meeting in the Community Centre
03 Tues	1.30 pm	to 3.30 pm Afternoon Tea in the Community Centre
	2.30 pm	to 4.00 pm Tea & Chat in the Goddard Arms
04 Wed	10.30 am	to 11.00 am Christ in Quiet Service in Christ Church
	7.00 pm	Christ Church, Fellowship of Faith
06 Fri	7.30 pm	Celebration of The Rev'd. Canon Simon Stevenette's 25th Anniversary at Christ Church
07 Sat	7.30 am	Morning Prayer and Men's Breakfast
	7.30 pm	Swindon Choral Society Concert in Christ Church
08 Sun	8.00 am	Christ Church, Holy Communion
	9.00 am	St. Mary's, Holy Communion
	10.00 am	Christ Church, Family Holy Communion,
	6.30 pm	Christ Church, Healing Service

- 10 Tues 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm Afternoon Tea in Christ Church
Community Centre
- 11 Wed 10.30 am to 11.00 am Christ in Quiet Service in Christ Church
7.00 pm Bible Encounter Group in Christ Church
- 13 Fri 6.00 pm and 8.00 pm Cadlelight Concert
Vivaldi 'Four Seasons'
- 14 Sat 5.00 pm Brunel Brass Concert in Christ Church
- 15 Sun** 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
9.00 am St. Mary's, Informal Holy Communion
10.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
6.30 pm Christ Church, Choral Evensong
- 17 Tues 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm Afternoon Tea in the Community Centre
- 18 Wed 10.30 am to 11.00 am Christ in Quiet Service
7.00 pm Christ Church Fellowship of Faith
- 21 Fri
- 23 Sat 12 noon Wedding in Christ Church
2.00 pm Wedding in Christ Church
- 22 Sun** 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
9.00 am St. Mary's, Holy Communion
10.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion with
The Rt. Rev'd. Vivienne Faull, Bishop of Bristol,
followed by lunch.
6.30 pm Informal Evening Worship
- 23 Mon 7.30 pm Christ Church PCC meeting in Community Centre
- 24 Tues 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm Christ Church Afternoon Tea in the
Community Centre
- 25 Wed 10.30 am to 11.00 am Christ in Quiet Service
7.00 pm Christ Church, Bible Encounter Group
- 26 Thur 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm Art Group in the Community Centre
- 27 Fri 7.00 pm Pink Flloyd Tribute Band Concert
- 29 Sun 8.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
9.00 am St. Mary's, Informal Holy Communion
10.00 am Christ Church, Holy Communion
12 noon Holy Baptism in Christ Church

Is now a good time to grow old?

“Don’t grow old,” a parishioner of advanced years warned me some while back. “You won’t like it.” Sadly, that dear woman is no longer with us, and I’m a whole lot older than when she offered me that kind advice. But was there wisdom in her words?

It’s true that generally people are living longer and in better health than in generations before, but there are increasing challenges for older men and women in our society.

My friend, Maggie Dodd is an ‘Anna Chaplain’ for older people. She is one of around 300 such chaplains up and down the country. They spiritually support people – of strong, little or no faith – in care homes, sheltered housing or in their own homes. Maggie has told me how life is becoming harder for older people, and we’ve swapped notes on what we have both observed. She told me: “Some of the basic services older people need are becoming more difficult to access. I hear about doctor’s surgeries asking for patients to print out their own forms or send photos to or from smartphones. Banks are phasing out high street branches, pushing everyone towards online banking. Many older people feel very uneasy about going online, worried of being scammed out of their savings.

“A trip to the shops is also becoming more complicated. Checkouts in supermarkets are increasingly self-service. Mobility can also be affected as car parks often need an app to be uploaded onto a smartphone to park. In many car parks there is no option to pay by card or cash!” Plans to remove the ticket offices at train stations will make matters worse for many older would-be rail travellers.

Maggie told me “This gradual marginalisation of people can leave them feeling lonely and isolated. Loneliness can have a huge detrimental effect on health and wellbeing. Prolonged social isolation and loneliness are the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day.”

It’s good that many churches run special events and activities for older people, as well as groups for all ages. But is this enough? Christians are called to follow Christ’s example and speak out for at risk of being marginalised in our society. Today, that could be our older brothers and sisters.

By The Rev’d. Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St. Alban’s, Hertfordshire and a former Communications Director for the Church of England.

The man who created those lions in Trafalgar Square



It was 150 years ago, on 1st October 1873, that Sir Edwin Landseer, artist and sculptor, died. He is known mainly for his animal paintings and for the lion sculptures at the base of Nelson's Column in London.

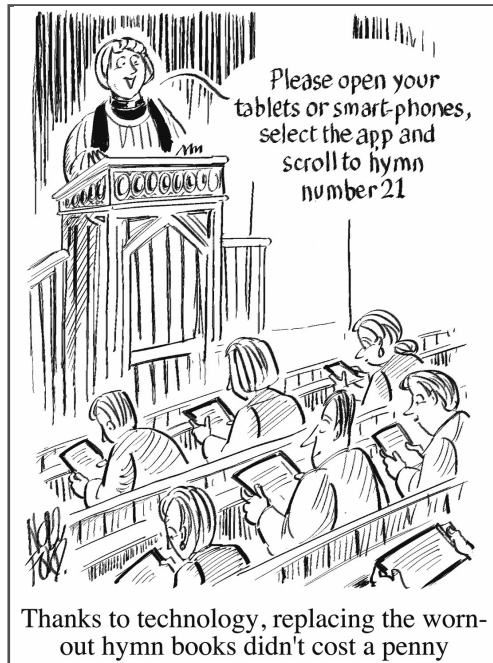
He was a popular painter in his lifetime, appealing to people across class boundaries, and his death was marked by houses lowering blinds, flags flying at half-mast and crowds lining the streets for his funeral at St Paul's Cathedral.

An art prodigy, the young Edwin learned swiftly from his father, who was a talented engraver, and received tuition from several skilled artists. He first exhibited at the Royal Academy at the age of 13 (an 'Honorary Exhibitor'), was elected an Associate at the minimum age of 24 and became an Academician in 1831, aged 29.

Although Landseer was a Londoner, having been born there in 1802, he became very fond of the Scottish Highlands, which he first visited in 1824, and many of his best-known paintings, such as *Monarch of the Glen*, are set there. Queen Victoria commissioned many from him.

But his connection with the Highlands also stemmed from the time he enjoyed there with his lover Georgiana, Duchess of Bedford, the wife of his first major patron – John Russell, the 6th Duke of Bedford. She was twice Landseer's age when he met her at the age of 21, having been commissioned to paint her portrait, but they fell in love and the Duke, who was considerably older, permitted the relationship, which continued after his death.

But because their only child, Lady Rachel Russell, did not bear his name, Landseer was unable to cope mentally and he suffered a severe nervous breakdown, leading to prolonged depression and hypochondria. In 1872 he was declared insane at the request of his family. He had been knighted in 1850. ■



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Remembering the Beatles

Sixty years ago, on 15th October 1963, the term 'Beatlemania' first appeared in the Daily Mirror newspaper in the UK. It described the intense, frenzied reaction of fans of the Beatles and their music.

The group – John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr – had been attracting wild adulation in the north of England, notably at the Cavern Club in Liverpool, since the start of the 1960s. But from 1964 Beatlemania spread throughout the country, and then the world – particularly the USA, where the Beatles were transported to concerts by armoured car for their own protection.

Commentators were eager to diagnose the cause of the phenomenon – sometimes not convincingly – but it was agreed that the high-pitched screaming by girl fans had similarities with religious fervour and hysterical worship of young men they saw as gods.

As is well known, in 1966 John Lennon remarked that the group had become more popular than Jesus, but this was a step too far for many, leading to a backlash and violence at subsequent concerts worldwide. This and the inability of the group to hear themselves play above the screams led to the Beatles stopping touring altogether. Their 1965 album Rubber Soul already projected a different, more progressive, thoughtful feel.

But a cultural trend had been set, and subsequent boy bands, from the Monkees to One Direction, tended to get the kind of 'worship' from their fans that was undeniably linked to a freedom from authority and convention.

It was not totally new, however. Back in the 1840s, fans of Hungarian pianist and composer Franz Liszt apparently displayed a similar level of fanaticism, which poet Heinrich Heine called 'Lisztomania'.

Don't mention it!

As part of his annual talk to our local Town Council, our minister told some funny stories. Since he planned to use the same anecdotes at the forthcoming Harvest Dinner at church, he asked the young reporter covering the event not to include them in his report. Reading the newspaper on the following morning, he noticed that the well-meaning reporter had ended his story on the banquet with the observation "The minister told a number of stories that cannot be published."

A Bear called Paddington

It was 65 years ago, on 14th October 1958, that Michael Bond's children's book, A Bear Called Paddington, was published. It marked the debut of the lovable Paddington Bear, who is now a household name after appearing in two irresistible films.

Paddington starred in more than 20 books written by Bond, who died aged 91 in 2017. The original story was inspired by the author witnessing Jewish and British evacuee children passing through Reading station. Bond wanted the bear to have come from "darkest Africa", but this was changed to Peru when his agent pointed out that there were no bears in Africa.

Many people have found Christian characteristics in the bespectacled, kind, red-hatted, innocent Paddington, who always tries to do the right thing but often gets into trouble as a result. He is invariably polite, but has a "hard stare" for those who behave badly. The two hugely successful films, with Ben Whishaw voicing Paddington and household names in other roles, established the bear in the national psyche – a natural successor to Winnie the Pooh.

A stuffed toy Paddington Bear was chosen by British tunnellers as the first item to be passed to their French counterparts when the two sides of the Channel Tunnel came together in 1994. The books have been translated into 30 languages and have sold more than 30 million copies.

Paddington has also reached the very top of society. Comedian and later President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky dubbed him in the Ukrainian version of the films, and to cap everything, Paddington joined the late Queen in one of her last public appearances – a brilliant comedy segment in the Platinum Party at the Palace on 4th June 2022, in which the Queen 'revealed' that she always carried a marmalade sandwich – Paddington's favourite food – in her hand-bag.