

# St Mary's News

March 2023



## *Includes ....*

**Doing Little Things** – the Revd Tony Rindl

**Trade Justice** – Jacky Mee

**Holy Land** (part 2) – Brian Macfarland

*... and much more!*

## Doing Little Things



A young boy is walking along a beach with his grandfather, and they come across thousands of starfish washed up on the sand. And the boy begins to throw them back into the sea, one by one. The grandfather says to the little boy; "Son you can't possibly help all these stranded starfish," but the boy picked up another and before tossing it back into the sea said, "No, but I can help this one."

The month of March begins with St David's Day. David was a 6<sup>th</sup> century bishop who is attributed to having established several monasteries and generally enabling the Christian church to grow in Wales. It is reputed that he embraced much from the Celtic traditions of worship and spirituality. On his death bed he is reported to have said to his monks: "Be joyful, brothers and sisters. Keep your faith and do the little things that you have seen and heard with me."

I think there is so much wisdom in this. So often we are drawn to the headline grabbing achievements of others as a measure of success. The international evangelist whose preaching converts thousands. Such people are a rarity, and the headlines are not always favourable. Besides even if the headlines are positive, often or not what lies behind the headlines are lots of little things that make up the big moment. What God requires most of all from us is faithfulness and obedience.

Often when we read the Gospel accounts of Jesus or read the Book of Acts, we can be mistaken in thinking what we read was a daily occurrence and not the significant moments, or highlights or turning points. Clearly what is faithfully recorded is important, but no doubt following Jesus as an early disciple required lots of faith,

learning and acts of service. Occasionally we get glimpses of what those small acts of service might have been. At the beginning of St. Matthew's account of the Last Supper we read;

*'On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, "The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.'*

(Matthew 26:17-19)

Similarly in the Book of Acts we learn of the work of the deacon distributing money and food amongst the poor and the widows. No doubt the dramatic miracles, eloquent preaching and other significant turning points are important, but I believe the Early Church grew by simply creating caring communities that came together to study, to pray, to share, to serve, or obey the simple command to love one another. In other words, do the little things and do them often.



I am not saying that we can't have big visions and hopes and expectations, after all we worship and believe in a mighty God who can do immeasurable things, but it is not about us, it is about God. It is about our relationship with God and seeing God in all things and all people.

There is the story of the traveller who comes across some stone masons. He asked the first one what he is doing, and the craftsman replies that he is chiselling a lump of rock. He asked the next workman what he was doing, and he replied that he was earning money for his family. Then the traveller asked a third stone mason what he was doing, and he replied, 'I am building a cathedral.'



We all have a part to play and by doing little things well and often, we are contributing to something much bigger than ourselves. March also heralds the beginning of Fairtrade

Fortnight and we recently had a wonderful Encounter service where we learned more about the Fairtrade organisation and how by forming co-operatives and attaining higher ethical trading standards, it helps impoverished farmers in the developing world to earn enough money to provide for their families, which in turn can contribute to greater provision of healthcare and education within the community. We were also reminded that climate change can also have a devastating impact on communities around the world, especially in impoverished regions more exposed to the effect of such changes. By making conscious decisions to support Fairtrade produce or reduce our own carbon footprint, maybe little things (perhaps a small inconvenience and a few extra pence) but in doing so, not only do we draw closer to God but contribute to bigger things such as global movements like Fairtrade.

A whole day can be made up of doing the little things and each one can draw us closer to a God who invites us:

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11:28-30)

Each little thing, each act of kindness, is an opportunity to draw closer to God, to learn from Jesus, to discover more about the very nature of God, who is gentle and humble in heart.

No single person can single-headedly change the world, but we can make a world of difference in someone else's life. We can send a card to someone we know who is grieving or struggling with life and say we are thinking of them. We can call round and have a

chat with an elderly neighbour who lives alone and rarely goes out. We can smile at that stranger in the high street who seems to be carrying the weight of the whole world on their shoulders.

I am very mindful of the story my dad used to tell about his experience of coming to this country as a child refugee from Austria at the beginning of the Second World War. The headmaster in the school in Blackpool would stop and ask him how he was.

I am sure the headmaster would not be aware of the impact but be assured eighty year later it is still remembered. For an eight-year-old boy fleeing the Nazis, an act of kindness from someone in authority was very special.

I do wonder if this Lent we might practice doing little things more often. By doing little things and often, we are reflecting the heart of Jesus that is gentle and humble.

*The Revd Tony Rindl*



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## Report of Parochial Church Council

The following report summarises some of the matters considered at the Council's meeting of 27th February.

The Venerable Janet Mackenzie, Archdeacon of Hertford, attended the meeting. She has temporary oversight of St Mary's, prior to the collation of the Rev. Canon Charles Hudson as Archdeacon of St Albans in May.

*Finance:* Members of the Council met with Colin Bird from the Diocesan Board of Finance on 16th January to discuss our financial situation. He advised that we should aim to get our day-to-day records updated to the end of 2022 by 31st January; estimate a budget for 2023 using the larger known expenses and income streams; install Jacky Faria as book-keeper to take over day-to-day records from January; and prepare a three-year plan to achieve financial sustainability. The Council has taken steps to put this advice into effect. It was not possible to bring our 2022 records up-to-date by 31st January but strenuous efforts continue to be made. A budget for 2023 will follow.

*APCM:* The Annual Church Parochial Meeting will be held on 21<sup>st</sup> May. Given the situation with the records, it may prove difficult for the 2022 annual accounts to be prepared in time. Consequently, a further Parochial Meeting may need to be arranged in consultation with the Diocese to approve these. There was discussion about the Annual Report and the Council agreed it would be made more concise.

*AV System:* It is anticipated that the updated audio-visual system will be installed in May.

*Pre-School:* Nine new children joined in January and are settling in well. Anthony Gray has taken over as Chair of the Pre-School Committee. The Annual General Meeting was held on 10<sup>th</sup> February and was well attended.

Once approved, full minutes are normally available on the St Mary's website: <https://www.stmaryswatford.org/pcc>.

If you wish to send correspondence to the PCC please send it to the PCC Secretary, Marcus Jones (email: [ttekcos@aol.com](mailto:ttekcos@aol.com)).

*Marcus Jones*  
PCC Secretary

## Trade Justice

You may have heard that sadly, after 44 years, Traidcraft plc has gone into Administration. Work well done, since our Supermarkets now stock many Fairtrade items.

But the work of Traidcraft continues with the charity 'Transform Trade' (formerly Traidcraft Exchange). This charity campaigns for Trade Justice, working with producers, for example in Kenya and Bangladesh, helping them in these difficult times of Climate Crisis. A global community of farmers, workers, collectives, campaigners, donors and supporters, who work together for trade that values people over profit, so everyone benefits.

[www.transform-trade.org](http://www.transform-trade.org)

*We can contribute to the work of 'Transform Trade' by giving goods for Recycling. Do you have ANY old or unwanted Jewellery and Watches (even broken and damaged items)? Please consider putting these in the Box provided at the back of Church. Thank you for your support – for people centred trade.*

*Jacky Mee*



## Holy Land Trip – Part 2

In a previous issue I described the first part of our 10-day Holy Land tour last November. We were 21 in our group, presided over by the Revd Tony Rindl, and were met at Tel Aviv airport by our Israeli guide, Ami Galili.

Here, I continue my travelogue, perhaps limiting myself to the highlights, since we took in quite a lot. Many of the sites we visited were, for a Christian, mind-blowing with their biblical significance, not least our extraordinary rainbow experience during our voyage on the Sea of Galilee, which I described in the previous article.

By the fourth day we had settled into the trip. Our group blended together nicely, and the congenial company was as enjoyable as the sightseeing. After breakfast at our hotel in Tiberius, we drove to the Jordanian border where we had a fairly smooth passage through immigration control.

Although Ami stayed with us, we took on a Jordanian guide and boarded another coach onto which all our luggage had been loaded. An hour's drive took us through a couple of small towns before we ascended a scenic winding road that took us to the top of Mount Nebo. This was where Moses had his glimpse of the Promised Land before dying. (*Deuteronomy 34:1*)

From the peak we could look down into a valley far below with a spectacular view of the plain of Moab stretching to the horizon, although mostly it looked brown and barren and hardly like a land "flowing with milk and honey". Supposedly, on a clear day one can see the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem about 30 miles away but one would probably need a telescope for that. A museum built on the peak had some interesting mosaics on display.

When visiting Jordan, a must-see site has to be the ancient city of Petra, famous for its pink sandstone cliffs into which entire buildings, mostly tombs and temples, are carved. Access to the city



is through a mile long narrow canyon with towering cliff walls. Emerging from this, one is bowled over by the iconic picture-postcard façade of “The Treasury”, 120 feet high and carved into the towering cliff opposite the canyon mouth.

The forecourt was seething with activity - tourists, vendors, as well as camels and donkeys adorned with colourful livery. The animals were for hire, for those unable to explore on foot the enormous valley where virtually every cliff seemed to be adorned by the pillared facades of temples carved out of the rock by Nabatean Arabs who settled there around 400 BC. It thrived for 800 years until a destructive earthquake in 363 AD caused its decline. Today it is a World Heritage site, also a favourite filming location, notably of *Indiana Jones and his Last Crusade*.

We had about six hours to explore the valley with all its temples, some of which were only accessible via rocky mountain footpaths past spectacular sandstone cliffs. It was not nearly enough time for a site covering over 100 square miles, but enough for most of us as we trudged back to our coach on tired legs. Petra was probably the most physically taxing site of our holiday, but it was well worth it.

The next day we drove to the border crossing and back into Israel. Our road North towards Jerusalem took us past the Dead Sea, and Ami had arranged for us to stop for a dip. At 1412 ft below sea level, it is said to be the lowest body of water on the planet. We knew the build-up of salt deposits over millennia has made the water so dense that it is impossible to sink, and it was an experience we all wanted to try. We were not disappointed. Ami advised us not to try to swim, to avoid getting water in eyes or mouth, but lying back in the water was amazingly like lying on a soft mattress.

It was fun frolicking, but staying in the water for longer than half an hour is not recommended. Beach showers and changing rooms were available, so we got back on the coach quite refreshed.

It was a unique experience and another item to knock off our bucket lists!

We drove to Jericho and checked into our next hotel, with chalets and a large open-air pool. Unfortunately, an afternoon relaxing by the pool was not on our agenda, as there was too much to see, but some of us managed an evening swim after dinner.

One of our visits was to the Good Samaritan road from Jericho to Jerusalem, mentioned in the parable (*Luke 10:25-37*). It is arguably the most profound parable, covering brotherly love, stereotypical racial prejudice, and hypocrisy, and one that has generated numerous philosophical interpretations, some quite convoluted. Samaritans were reviled by Jews, so the choice of a Samaritan being the hero of the tale was significant.

A take-home point is that Luke, at least, must have been free of Jewish prejudices to have recorded the parable exactly, and also when describing Jesus curing the 10 lepers, he specifically mentions that the only one who returned to thank Jesus was a Samaritan (*Luke 17:11-19*). Historians can often be biased in their recording.

We stopped at a tourist spot and a short walk took us to a viewpoint where tiered stone slabs formed a mini open-air chapel, complete with stone table. Revd Tony conducted a communion service, with a backdrop of the Judean Desert, the location of the temptations of Jesus (*Matthew 4:1-11* and *Luke 4:1-13*), the event that marks the period of Lent.

Whether this was a literal event or related by Jesus as a parable has been discussed by theologians for centuries, with comparisons of the yielding of Adam to temptation in the lush comforts of the Garden of Eden, and Jesus resisting the offerings of Satan in a wilderness.

Gazing out at the barren desert undulating to the horizon behind Revd Tony, one had the overwhelming feeling that being out there for 40 days and 40 nights would not be a pleasant

experience, and easy enough to succumb to the Devil's offerings of food and glory.

It was a short service, perhaps just as well since in the final few minutes a camera-clicking horde of tourists ended our tranquillity. However, they respected our service and waited until the conclusion in relative silence, although one supposes our little group added some interest to many a holiday photo. I'm sure I speak for the whole group when I say that the service was a moving experience.

Another memorable event on our pilgrimage was a visit to the River Jordan where Jesus was baptized (*Matthew 3:13-17*). The river flows out of the Sea of Galilee and into the Dead Sea, 90 miles to the South, and much of that length forms the border between Israel and Jordan. To reach the baptismal spot we drove between fenced off areas of desert which Ami casually informed us were minefields!



The site was well organized for tourism. A boardwalk had steps leading down into the water. The river was quite narrow, almost like a wide canal, and the Jordanian bank opposite seemed only a few strides away. Revd Tony organised a bible reading after which some of our party chose to step down to wade or paddle. Others just sat on the benches to contemplate.

There appears to be no dispute that this was the location where Jesus was baptized, presumably because early Christians made a point of recording it. It's interesting that Constantine, the first Roman emperor to embrace Christianity, had a wish to be baptized at the same spot in the River Jordan as Jesus. Unfortunately, he left it until just before his death in 337 AD at the age of 65, in the belief that his baptism would cleanse him of all his sins, so it's not certain that he achieved his wish, but it indicates that even in the fourth century, the spot where Jesus was baptized was known.

Christianity owes a lot to Constantine for ending its persecution and legitimizing it as a religion. We can even thank him for declaring Sunday as a day of rest. And of course, giving his name to Constantinople. But that is another story.

In a final instalment, I hope to describe the last few days of our tour, visiting both Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

*Brian Macfarland*

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## Thursday Concerts – 12.30pm

- |                   |                                  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>9th March</u>  | Ivan Deb (piano and organ)       |
| <u>16th March</u> | A Due (piano and drums)          |
| <u>23rd March</u> | Valeria Trofimova (voice)        |
| <u>30th March</u> | Charis & Jack (violin and piano) |



Please come-  
ALL WELCOME!

## Fairtrade Encounter Service

### 26th February 2023

The monthly Encounter service in February focussed on Fairtrade and the Climate Change emergency.

A Fairtrade afternoon tea was enjoyed by the congregation during the service. This included Fairtrade banana loaves (some with Fairtrade chocolate chips), Fairtrade chocolate brownies, Fairtrade chocolate brownies, Fairtrade jam tarts, Fairtrade cinnamon biscuits, Fairtrade peanut butter sandwiches, Fairtrade jam on scones, Fairtrade coffee, Fairtrade tea, Fairtrade hot chocolate,



Fairtrade orange juice, Fairtrade apple juice and Fairtrade bananas!

50% of the food we buy in UK comes from small scale farmers around the world in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and South America. Many of them live in poverty and are exploited by those buying their produce to sell in UK.

Jesus told us to “love our neighbour” which includes supporting the farmers who produce our food and other commodities around the world. Paying fair prices for goods is vital for trade justice. The Fairtrade system guarantees fair prices for the goods farmers produce. This enables them to buy food to put on



their families' tables, to send their children to school, to access healthcare facilities and run sustainable businesses.



A social premium is paid to the Fairtrade co-operatives to which the farmers belong, enabling clean water supplies, schools and books, teachers' houses, storage facilities, clinics and many other infrastructures to be built.

Producers in developing countries suffer from a changing climate.

Floods destroy crops, high temperatures and erratic rains increase pests which destroy crops, storms destroy villages, bridges and roads. Rising sea levels inundate island nations in the Pacific. Rich nations, who have benefitted from industrialisation using fossil fuels during the past 250 years, have a duty to help support poor neighbours of ours in our global village.

Watford Fairtrade Town Campaign is asking you to look for the Fairtrade Mark when you shop and purchase Fairtrade items when you can. If you have never bought Fairtrade now, in Fairtrade Fortnight (27<sup>th</sup> February to 12<sup>th</sup> March), is a great time to start!

*Brian Mee*



*Photos by Lesley*

## Services

The Church is usually open each week

Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3.00pm  
and on Saturday between 12.00noon and 2.00pm

### Sunday

9.00am Holy Communion (said) in church  
*on 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday only each month;*

10.30am Morning Service in church and via Zoom  
*every Sunday;*

5.30pm Encounter in church  
*on 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of month only*

(preceded at 5.00pm with refreshments)

### Wednesday

12.30pm Holy Communion in church

*(for Zoom links please contact the Church Office)*

### Thought for the Week

on our website and on Facebook - based on a bible verse or passage,  
it is a short reflection by one of the leadership team  
for you to think about during the week.

It can be downloaded and listened to whenever and wherever.

Please keep up to date with what is on offer  
via our Facebook page  
or the website [www.stmaryswatford.org](http://www.stmaryswatford.org)

# Who's Who at St Mary's

## Vicar

The Revd Tony Rindl  
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## Churchwarden

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## Facilities Manager

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