

Trinity News

January 2022

No.515



Trinity United Reformed Church

Mansel Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 4AA
www.trinitywimbledon.org

Church News

Changes of address & contact details

Miss Ann Bremner

Kew House Care Home, 58 Spencer Hill Rd, SW19 4EL

Mr & Mrs Ron Temple

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New member

On Advent Sunday, 28 November - Mrs May Nicol.



In memoriam

Mrs Joyce Rochez



A most elegant and charming person, Joyce worked at Southlands College when she first came to Trinity. She joined Trinity in March 1994, and was ordained an Elder in 2006.

Joyce was a very faithful friend to the group of members for whom she had responsibility, a regular attender at services, and always a wonderfully

supportive person - attending meetings and volunteering wherever she was able.

She was a much-loved member of the Trinity fellowship. We had missed seeing her at church since ill-health prevented her from attending in recent years.

Joyce had celebrated her 90th birthday in 2021. She died on 12 December, and we were able to join her funeral service at Havant by weblink on 29 December. A mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, our sympathy is extended to all Joyce's family, especially her son Nicholas and daughter Fiona, at this sad time.

Mrs Annie Spain

Annie joined Trinity in 1970 by transfer from St Columba's Church of Scotland, Pont Street. She was brought up in Glasgow, her family hailing from Rothesay, for which she had a strong and lasting affection. She trained as a teacher, and moved to London in the mid 50s, where she taught science and maths until retirement.

Annie was a talented singer, who was a long-serving member of Trinity's choir, and also a member for many years of the Philharmonia Chorus. Married to Andrew Spain, a trombonist in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, they had one son John.

Although Annie's poor health had prevented her from coming to church for over ten years, latterly being confined to home, she was always good company, with a fund of stories, and took a lively interest in current affairs. Conversations with Annie were always interesting, and usually entertaining. She had a clear-eyed approach to her faith, and to age, infirmity and the prospect of death.

Annie died on 28 November aged 92. Her funeral service was held on 30 December. Our sympathy is extended to John at this sad time.



A very happy birthday to those celebrating this month, including Norman Angus, Ann Bremner, Katy Collins, Susan Collins, [Margaret Noble](#), Adashe Siva, Harriet Vary and Madeline Vary.



2	Sun	10:30	All Elders' meeting
4	Tue	20:00	Advent Bible study of Mark's Gospel (5)
5	Wed	20:00	Elders' Council
11	Tue	20:00	Advent Bible study of Mark's Gospel (6)
18	Tue	20:00	Outreach & Witness Team

Sundays in January

Sunday 2 January at 11:00 – Holy Communion

Service led by the Revd Stephen Lewis (Interim Moderator)

Sunday 9 January at 11:00

Service led by Mr Mark Dennis (Trinity Elder & Lay Preacher)

Sunday 16 January at 11:00

Service led by Mr Mark Dennis (Trinity Elder & Lay Preacher)

Sunday 23 January at 11:00

Service led by Mr Mark Dennis (Trinity Elder & Lay Preacher)

Sunday 30 January at 11:00

Service led by Revd Barbara Pearson (retired URC minister from Tolworth & Ewell). The service will include the commissioning of Katrina Clifford as a lay preacher (conducted by Revd Stephen Lewis)



Join us in the New Year for a series of services exploring six questions that God put to people in the Old Testament. God puts these questions to us as well; and we will try to discern what our response should be.

9 January: “Where are you?” (Genesis 3: 9)

Asked of Adam as he hid from God. Do we hide from God? What might we do about that?

16 January: “What is in your hand?” (Exodus 4: 2)

Asked of Moses when he lacked confidence. We often do as well. How can we be encouraged to offer ourselves to God in his service?

23 January: “What are you doing here?” (1 Kings 19: 9)

Asked of Elijah when he was hiding out of fear. What are we afraid of? We should not dwell on past failures. Rather, concentrate on the present and how it might lead on to the future.

The series will continue in February.

13 February: "What can you see?" (Zechariah 4: 2)

Asked of Zechariah, encouraging him to dream and envision. Look ahead to the future of the church? Where do we see the church going?

20 February: "Can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37: 3)

Asked of Ezekiel when he dreams of his people of Israel looking like a vast pile of dried up bones – lifeless and powerless. The question is asked to encourage Ezekiel to take a positive view of God's transforming power. Do we trust God to transform our lives, our church, our world?

27 February: "Who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6: 8)

Asked of Isaiah. And if God were to ask us the same question, what would we say?



**Messy
Church
is back!**

Join us online on **Thursday 6 January** for our Epiphany Virtual Messy Church. Discover how different countries celebrate the visit of the Magi through crafts, cooking, story and music".

Go to www.trinitywimbledon.org to join in.

Mystery of 'holy graffiti' door chalkings

A mysterious series of letters and numbers are appearing on the doorframes of houses across the country. It may look like a string of code, or a complicated scientific equation, but this is merely the resurrection of a centuries-old Christian tradition, currently being touted as 'holy graffiti'.

In celebration of the Epiphany (6 January), the wise men's visit to baby Jesus in Bethlehem, Christians mark their homes above the front door with chalk, as a symbol that their homes are a place where Jesus lives.

Sometimes families say a prayer before "chalking the door" and then mark

$$21 + C + M + B + 22$$

The letters "C", "M" and "B" represent the names of the three wise men, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, who brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby Jesus. The numbers 21 and 22 symbolise the calendar year, and the + represents the cross (or north, south, east and west). The initials also stand for the Latin prayer request *Christus mansionem benedicat*: "May Christ bless this house".

The trend for 'chalking the door', a blessing which is believed to have originated in and spread from central Europe at the end of the Middle Ages, has seen an uptake in recent years as Britons look for a sense of community in a bid to lift spirits. The holy graffiti saw a huge growth in England last year amid Covid restrictions as Christians marked their doorway in a traditional Epiphany celebration. Why not join in this year?



The United Reformed Church 50th Anniversary



We are still here after 50 years. What does that say to us? And what is God saying to us?

What opportunities does it give us to reflect on our story,

on who we are, on what we stand for, on who we follow – and to share that with others?

As local churches and as the URC, marking our 50th year can help us to plan for the future – not only to keep pursuing our ecumenical vision, but also to plan for how we will continue to be an active, engaged and faithful Christian presence in our communities and in new ones. Not least, marking our Jubilee will be an opportunity to give thanks.

50th anniversary tickets available

Free tickets to the URC's 50th Anniversary Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving are now available.

On the afternoon of Saturday 1 October 2022, in Methodist Central Hall Westminster, London, where the Uniting Assembly of the URC took place in October 1972, a chance to give thanks and to celebrate the five decades of the United Reformed Church. We want as many people as possible from across the denomination to attend.

Several venues, including United Reformed Church House, local URCs and buildings of ecumenical partners, will be available for people to visit during the day, to offer activities, information, workshops,

reflection, discussions, singing, catering and other support for visitors before the service.

This is a free event and we will be asking nearer the time for a confirmation of numbers.

Book your tickets through the Eventbrite booking system here: bit.ly/urc50.

A reflection on our upcoming anniversary

The Revd Dr John Bradbury, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church, reflects on the upcoming anniversary of the URC in 2022 at <https://youtu.be/MyR9oCfOwHQ>



To celebrate the United Reformed Church (URC's) 50th anniversary, choirs, bands, individuals, songwriters, composers, and poets are invited to submit an entry into the URC at 50: Worship Resources Competition.

There are four categories in which you can enter: Traditional hymn/song, Poem, Contemporary hymn/song, Rap.

Judges will select a winner from each category. Winning entries will be included in a digital version of the URC at 50 resource pack for local churches for them to use in jubilee celebrations and/or Sunday services.

Judging schedule

The closing date for entries is 8 April 2022.

Judges will assess each entry in May 2022.

Winners will be informed in June 2022.

Winners will be publicly announced at General Assembly in July 2022, at which the songs, or recordings, will be performed/played/sung.

The winning entries will be recorded and/or filmed in July 2022 for sharing online.

Criteria

To enter, you must be a member or active adherent of a URC or a URC local ecumenical partnership, or URC Youth.

Entries can be new lyrics submitted to existing music within the public domain.

Entries must have a jubilee/URC at 50 anniversary theme and be suitable for use in collective worship.

Musical entries to new tunes must include lyrics plus musical score (PDF or JPG) and/or an audio recording (MP3 or MP4).

The competition is open to people of any age.

One entry per person/group.

Submit entries to: mission@urc.org.uk

Prizes

Winning entries will be played/performed at General Assembly in the Jubilee year. Winners will be awarded a commemorative trophy. Winning entries will be included in a URC at 50 resource pack for local churches for them to use in local jubilee celebrations and/or Sunday services.

Please note: The URC reserves editing rights to ensure entries comply with copyright and are suitable for distribution across the denomination. Entrants will be contacted to ensure they agree with any changes made. In addition, the copyright of the work submitted needs to be with the individual/group or shared/managed by the URC, it must not be work published by any other body.

www.urc.org.uk/50



Queens Road housegroup

The housegroup has continued to meet during the pandemic but, rather than meeting at Andrew Sutton's home in Queens Road, it has been using the Jitsi system, which is similar to Zoom, and will continue to do so for now. We hope to be able to meet in person as soon as possible.

At the end of last year the group finished its study of St Mark's Gospel and now plans to study the book of Ezekiel, using study notes published by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC). Ezekiel may seem a strange choice, a book about an eccentric prophet who gets up to strange antics to illustrate his sermons. But Ezekiel's ministry was addressed to a people suffering trauma and the book contains a powerful message for today's people, primarily because of what he says about God.



We would be delighted to widen our group to include other members of the congregation. Our first meeting of 2022 is planned for **Tuesday 25 January at 11am**. Please speak to Andrew Sutton or Alan Young for further information.



Our 'For Others' Secretary, Robin Ingram, is pleased to report that the total raised for Gift Day this year has reached £10,700 which with Gift Aid will increase to c.£12,500. This is about £1,000 lower than last year, but in all the circumstances, a very satisfactory outcome and thank you to everyone who contributed.

The following charities will receive £500 each:- St Raphael's Hospice, South London Refugee Association, South West London Samaritans, Wimbledon Foodbank, Alzheimer's Research, Cancer Research UK, Macmillan Cancer Support, Barnabas Fund, Medecins sans Frontières and Save the Children. Following provision of £2,000 for Disaster Relief, the remaining funds will be split 2/3rd to Faith-In-Action and 1/3rd to Water Aid.

Recycling tips

Used stamps

Last month we reported that Edna Sloan would be retiring, after many years, from collecting used stamps for St Raphael's Hospice.



We now have a new collection box on the reception desk in the Mansel Road Centre where you can recycle used stamps for RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) and make a difference to blind and partially sighted people.

Start collecting stamps as they come through your post box or at your work. Stamps don't need to be thoroughly sorted, but it helps if you can separate them into British and foreign stamps (Channel Islands and Isle of Man count as foreign). Make sure you leave a centimetre of envelope or packaging around each stamp. This is just a recommendation and stamps that have been trimmed less or more will still be accepted. They will be recycled into much-needed funds for RNIB's services.

Recycle your empty medicine blister packets

If you take any medication that comes in blister packs once empty the packs can be recycled in most Superdrug shops – including the one at 104-105 Centre Court Shopping Centre, Wimbledon. Just hand them in at the dispensary counter.

For more info go to

<https://www.terracycle.com/en-GB/brigades/medicine-packet-uk>



From the archives

Seventy-five years on, the worst winter of the century!



Wimbledon Common in winter 1947

Seventy-five years ago Britain - and Trinity - suffered, probably, the worst winter of the twentieth century. Few of us now remember it but one wonders how the people of today would have borne it.

January 1947 began comparatively mild but cold weather set in on the 21st and continued throughout February with strong easterly winds and frequent heavy snowfalls. It was a dull, gloomy February, too, with no sunshine recorded at Kew for twenty consecutive days. Roads and railways were blocked, there were snowdrifts and villages were cut off.

But there were other problems. The fighting spirit that had seen the country through the War was all but gone by early 1947. Meat, butter, lard, margarine, bread, tea, cheese, soap, clothes, and sugar were all rationed - as was petrol, which was available only for essential motoring and not for pleasure. The freezing weather meant that stockpiles of coal froze solid and could not be moved to the power stations so domestic electricity was limited to nineteen hours a day and coal was unavailable for heating. Winter vegetables, a mainstay,

could not be harvested because they were frozen in the ground - this led, briefly, to the introduction of potato rationing.

Life was cold and grey and morale was low. Amongst all this Revd Douglas McRitchie wrote in the 'Wimbledon Presbyterian':

We have been experiencing an old fashioned winter with a biting east wind and an abundance of snow and ice. In these days of fuel shortage we intensely dislike it. For a whole weary month our (church) attendances have been cut by two-thirds. We are low and rather depressed, I fear.

The congregation had become used to coming to church on foot or by public transport because of the petrol rationing, but when they did arrive through the snow they found an unheated church. And if they struggled to a social event there was little tea or food available to cheer them up. Ordination of Elders, fixed for 16 February, was postponed for a month. The annual Sunday School party was enjoyed 'in spite of the bitterly cold weather'.

The Guild continued with its programme and in late January 'those members who ventured through the snow (to the Burns Night) were well rewarded'. In February 'the few members who braved the cold for a film evening were rewarded with a happy evening' and in March 'only a few braved the blizzard for a lecture by Lt Col Tenison on *Great Fishes*'. (!)

The middle of March brought a thaw. But as the temperature rose and the ice melted there was severe flooding, the Thames Valley being particularly hit, and burst pipes which, it is estimated, affected 100,000 homes.

Maybe we should reflect that life in the pandemic isn't quite so bad after all!



On 30 October we welcomed the Revd Dr John Bradbury, General Secretary of the URC, to Trinity.

Dr Bradbury has given us permission to reprint here the sermon he preached on that day.



The scribes, it has to be said, do not come off particularly well in Mark's gospel. Religious teachers of the law, they are part of the religious establishment that sought to entrap Jesus, and led to his death. And those who come to ask questions of Jesus also do not always come off very well out of Mark's telling of the story. In this chapter, immediately before the section we've heard this morning, we've had two sets of folk who come to ask questions, not because they are seeking the truth, or even genuine conversation and discussion about difficult matters, but because they want to trap Jesus. We have some Pharisees who try to trap Jesus about the question of whether taxes should be paid to the occupying colonial forces, and we have some Sadducees, another grouping of observant religious Jews, who come asking tricky questions about the resurrection and who ends up with whose husband or wife come the resurrection. Their sole concern was, seemingly, to show Jesus up as some kind of fraud. As someone who did not know the rules, understand the tradition, or teach properly. These scribes clearly were clear about what they knew, what was right, and they were out to ensure their point was proved, and any potential threat from this new upstart teacher was firmly put in its place.

I'm sure we've all encountered the type – those who enter conversation solely to make their own point. Not to engage. Not to discuss. Not to listen. Not to seek, with another, greater understanding – but purely to declaim their prior convictions.

There is one scribe there, seemingly, who is not quite like this. One who comes near, and overhears the disputing going on. One who is listening with care. One who stands out from the rest, and does not seemingly seek to trap Jesus, but with him to discern the truth. He asks a straightforward enough question – and perhaps at first we're not quite sure whether this is another attempt to trick Jesus or not.

But it becomes clear that it is not. He's asking precisely because he thought Jesus had been responding well to his colleagues. He asks Jesus what he considers the most important commandment.

Jesus responds initially in a way that we might expect. He quotes the Shemar, that confession of the oneness of God, and the commandment to love God with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your might. This central confession of Jewish life is exactly the answer a good Jew would give. Except that Jesus does two things which are perhaps just slightly surprising. He speaks of heart, soul, *mind* and strength. He adds in mind. We are to love God with all our *mind*. There is still that overriding sense that we are to love God with absolutely all of ourselves – that has not changed. But adding that emphasis of *mind* is perhaps noteworthy in the context of the preceding non-dialogues where those engaging with Jesus had not wanted to stop and think at all. Our love of God is precisely not to be mindless – the mere repetition of what we were brought up to believe or to do, or the mere acceptance of what others tell us about the faith. Rather our faith is to be mindful – thoughtful, engaged, questioning. It is part of how we truly love God.

But Jesus has not finished yet – he goes on. Having been asked what the most important commandment is – notice the singular, one commandment, Jesus goes on and names two. For after the love of God, Jesus goes on to say that the second is 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. He then returns to the singular – 'there is no other commandment greater than these'. Jesus pulls two commandments into one. Both together, form the greatest commandment.

In some senses there is nothing too radical here. Jesus is again quoting from scripture – this time Leviticus which in chapter 19 tells us to love our neighbour as ourselves. What is perhaps more radical is the way in which they become flip sides of the same coin.

Jesus presents us with a challenge, one as live for us today as for that scribe who engages him in conversation. Our love of God, and our love of our fellow humans are inextricably linked, and we fail badly when we untie those two things from one another. Closely linked to the imperative to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength is the prohibition against idolatry. We are called to love God to the exclusion of anything else that we might love. And that is a real challenge. The original human sin is to de-centre God, place ourselves in the Godlike position, or to raise to Godlike status things which are

not God. We like to make ourselves gods in our own worlds. We so easily slip into worshipping money, power, sex, status, possessions, things which in the eyes of the world make us great. Church life is not exempt from this either. We worship how things were – seeking to regain a status in the eyes of the world we feel we've lost, rather than necessarily keeping our eyes on the living God who calls us ever forwards.

If we truly love God with heart and soul and mind and strength, everything else becomes somehow relativised. Everything else becomes seen through the lens of God – we view the world, and our place in the world through the lens of God's will for us. And of course, we view others as created by God, loved by God, sustained by God. If we truly let God be God, God's relationship with the whole of creation as its creator and as the one who through the Holy Spirit sustains all life in being at every moment, brings us into a new relationship with the whole of creation. And so it is that we can see why for Jesus love of God and love of neighbour are two aspects of one commandment.

As we love our neighbour – this is an extension of our love for God, as our love of God spills over into the love of all that God has brought into being. We are de-centred – the other before us becomes as important as we are ourselves. For we are to love them as we love ourselves.

Here we need to note something else, though. Just as God creates, loves and sustains in being the whole of creation, and all we encounter in the world, so God has created, loves and sustains each of us. Jesus presumes a love for ourselves, something perhaps we don't always find easy to presume for ourselves in our moments of darker despair. Yet in God's ways with the world, love of God, love of our neighbour and love of ourselves are all entwined. If one aspect of that triangle is not in place, everything becomes skewwhiff, nothing finds its rightful place – the world becomes out of joint.

The thoughtful scribe, who shows all the signs of loving God with all his mind, responds to Jesus and moves the logic of this all a little further. He notes that this double commandment 'is more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices'. Mere religious duty, mere going through the ritual – whatever our ritual, is not what God seeks. We may not go to the temple and sacrifice as Jesus would have done as an observant Jew. But we do come to Church, sing our

hymns, read our readings, listen to our sermons even – but these are nothing compared to that injunction to love God and love our neighbour. It's not that they don't matter, of course – it is rather that they don't matter at all if the love of God and neighbour is not something which takes over our whole lives, not just our Sunday mornings.

Love of God, and love of neighbour take so many different forms. We heard the opening of that touching and tender story of Ruth and Naomi earlier. The daughter-in-law who is willing to leave her hope for a future, her own people and nation behind, for the sake of the love of her mother-in-law. Love of God and love of neighbour is deeply personal, it is about our immediate family and friendship circle. But our neighbour too takes on a planetary dimension. The God who is Lord of all, who brought all things into being calls on us to love the neighbour we cannot see, or even perhaps imagine, far away from the places that we call home. This week, as the COP 26 summit begins, we are acutely aware of our global interrelatedness. How we live our lives in environmental terms has a profound effect on others thousands of miles away. Love of the creator of all things, love of our global neighbours requires at this moment radical changes to how our way of life is sustained and lived. Changes that require both strong government action, as well as personal change we need to take to transform the way we live.

The question about which commandments matter more than others may at first seem to us obscure. Is this an angels dancing on a pinhead kind of a discussion? Yet in this conversation between this thoughtful scribe and Jesus we are taken close to the very kingdom of God. For when God becomes the centre of our lives, the centre of our community life together, we find that our neighbours – near and far – become central to our lives too. We find that when we reach out the hand of friendship and love to those in need around us, we find we are loving God. As we learn to love and accept ourselves, we are learning to love and accept all the other broken folk that we come into contact with. As we love God, we come to love our planet home, and all who dwell within it.

So let us, like the thoughtful scribe, engage our minds and our hearts and our souls and our strength to respond to these commandments. For as we do so we will find that our lives are transformed, the lives of the communities we serve are transformed, and the life of the very world is transformed. And that is good news. Amen.

'The Daughters of Dissent'

During last year's lockdown a number of Trinity members took part in an online musical, newly created by Roger Jones, URC Minister for Tolworth, Epsom and Ewell, who worshipped with us for many years. The theme was the five daughters of Zelophophad. These ladies appear in only a very few verses of the Bible in Chapter 27 of the Book of Numbers, and thus have escaped much attention - until now that is. On Saturday 18 December the World Premiere of 'The Daughters of Dissent' was screened at Tolworth URC with an enthusiastic but somewhat reduced audience, thanks to the rise of the Covid-19 Omicron variant. Tolworth church gave those present a warm (but socially distanced) welcome with mulled wine and Christmas fare served up to us individually at our seats.

When Roger started the project we had some Zoom sessions, but essentially the musical sprang from individual video recordings by singers or actors at home on their own or sometimes with other family members. Members of the Tolworth, Epsom and Ewell URC churches also took part, as did some of our old friends who have moved on from Trinity. One good thing about the online world is of course that participants can come together from far afield - in this case from Inverness, Staffordshire and The Wirrall. The challenge of mixing all the individual recordings into a dramatic whole is however considerable. So it was a delight to see how Roger put it all together in the end, in a production with characteristic humour, as well as a serious point for 21st century audiences. Roger is hoping to be able to show the musical again soon.



Trinity members and old friends at the screening of Roger Jones' new musical at Tolworth URC on Saturday 18 December