

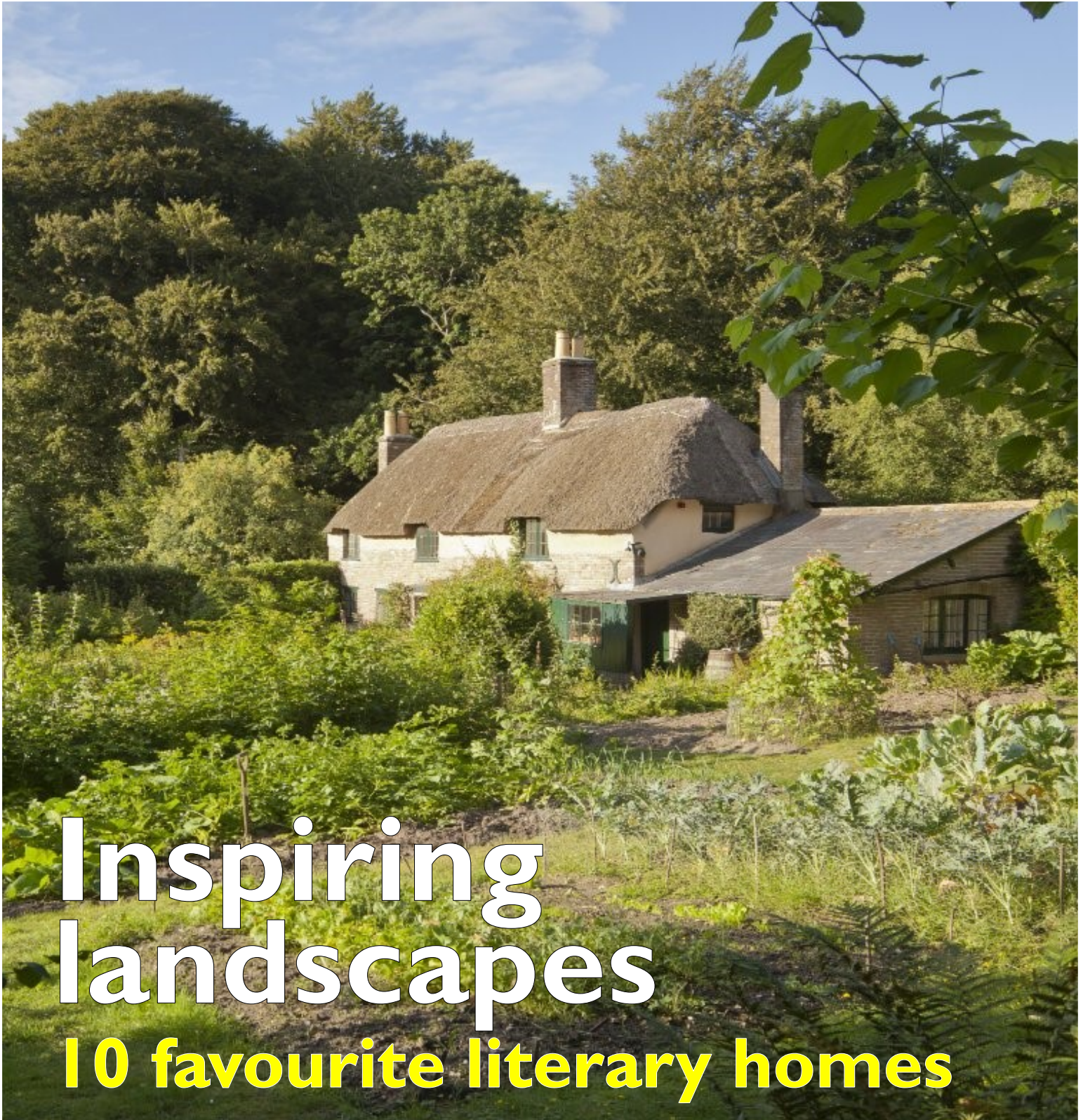
FEBRUARY 2019

SPIRE



HAMPTON HILL'S PARISH MAGAZINE

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Inspiring
landscapes
10 favourite literary homes

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Are they knocking on Heaven's door?



The Good Place © NBC/Netflix



DEREK WINTERBURN

The Bible used to be called *The Good Book*, but I am not so sure that that would be its subtitle in a modern public library; in fact AC Grayling appropriated that title for his 'humanist Bible'!

But I am often intrigued by how stories or ideas from the Bible find their way into modern films or TV programmes. For example, the summer blockbuster movie, *Black Panther*, clearly contained elements of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

I have begun to watch a TV programme called *The Good Place* (available on E4 and Netflix), though I realise that it might be premature to comment on a partially watched first series! This sitcom has a bold premise. Due to some celestial error, selfish and unpleasant Eleanor Shellstrop has made it into heaven: the 'Good Place'. She immediately recognises the mistake, but she intends to earn her spot before any higher-ups are the wiser.

Conveniently enough, her heavenly soulmate was a philosophy professor in his earthly life. He specialised in ethics — and he agrees to teach her how to be good. The show is funny and light, while dealing with the big matters of life and death. From what I have read online the writers go on to tackle various philosophical issues of 'being good' as Eleanor tries to fit in to the Good Place.

Selection process for Heaven

This isn't Christianity! The TV programme has taken the common idea of a better place after death, and set out 'to see what would happen' if a mistake had been made. A similar 'thought experiment' was written by CS Lewis in *The Great Divorce*, in which a coach party of people from Hell visit the foothills of Heaven, with a view to staying. But while Lewis was writing within the Christian tradition, *The Good Place* is very clearly not. In the first episode the 'architect' says explicitly that each religion is (only) 5% right. On the other hand he clearly lays out the selection policy for the Good Place: it is based on merit — there is an 'objective calculation' about a person's good deeds set against their bad deeds to decide on who is in and out — this has never been a mainstream Judeo-Christian position.

God's judgment of good and bad

The Bible teaches us that people are a mixture of good and bad, and that God sets out to 'make us right' (to justify us) by his free choice and love (grace). Jesus's death, resurrection and the gift of His Spirit are all about breaking the power of Sin and Death. Conversely, again and again, it challenges us with stories of successful or well-respected people who are flawed, and fail in God's sight.

The Good Place leaves God out of heaven. This means that for heaven to be the *Good Place* some other discrimination had to be applied — the calculation. Viewers see in Episode 1 that the system makes errors. I suspect that the series goes on to explore whether it is straightforward to know who is in the right and in the wrong (in a framework without

God). In a sense, the writers of the TV programme are like the Preacher in Ecclesiastes exploring what life is like 'Under the Sun' — without reference to God. And *he* came to the conclusion that it was empty: 'All is vanity.'

You can't omit God!

For a Christian the new vision of the New Heavens and the New Earth are nothing without the conviction that God is there at the centre (Rev 21:3). To be preoccupied about the next life without focusing on God is like a child being distracted from a birthday present by the wrapping paper.

However the series is challenging in at least this sense. Eleanor has to embark on an ethics programme to become a better person, because her eternal destiny depends on it. Sadly, it is well established that a course in philosophy will not do this. In fact, studies by University of California researcher Eric Schwitzgebel and his colleagues revealed that philosophers who specialise in ethics and moral philosophy are no more likely to be good than other kinds of academics. Rather, what is most effective in changing behaviour is a network of relationships, and shared values.

Jesus knew what he was doing when he created a community of friends to encourage one another in their new faith and witness. That community continues as the church, in a million different places. But central to the church's existence everywhere is a common life with God at the centre, everyone learning to love, for the sake of the world here and now, and in preparation for the life to come.



Sundays

Holy Communion (said) 8-8:30am

Parish Communion 9:30-10:30am

Together at Eleven 11-11:35am followed by crafts and refreshments

Mon-Fri

(but not Tuesdays)

Morning Prayer 9:15-9:40am

Tuesdays

5, 19, 26 Feb

Holy Communion 9:30-10:15am

12 Feb

Holy Communion and Coffee 10-11:30am (2nd Tuesday of month)

Fairtrade Stall

Sundays 3 Feb & 3 Mar 10.30am

Stock up on all your Traidcraft goodies and support Fairtrade Fortnight by buying cocoa products with the Fairtrade branding.

Games Night

Saturday 2 Feb 6pm

A fun night of games for all the family. Tickets £10, including pizza and a drink.

Ark Playgroup

Mondays 4, 11, 25 Feb 10.15am-12.15pm

Weekly playgroup for toddlers. £2 per family

Connections

Tuesday 5 Feb 11am-12:30pm

Our drop-in session for older people with games and exercises (1st Tuesday of month)

String Quartet Concert

Saturday 9 Feb 7:30pm

The Burwood Quartet play Haydn op 54 no 2, Shostakovich no 7 and Schubert no 13 in A minor.

Tickets £10 on door (under 18s free).

Profits to Shooting Star Chase and Motor Neurone Disease Association.

Pop-up Cinema (FREE ENTRY)

Saturday 23 Feb 3:30pm *Incredibles 2* (PG)

Everyone's favourite family of superheroes is back to save the planet from a new villain.

Doors open at 3pm. No need to book.

Life Groups

Tuesdays 12, 26 and Thursdays 14, 28 Feb 8pm

This month's dates for the house groups.

Lent Course

Thursdays from 14 March-11 April at 8pm

The Lent Course will take place in the hall and is preceded by soup at 7:30pm.

Invitation to all to



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER TEAM



Lake Bled

What does the first Friday in March make you think of? I hope you are all saying: 'It must be Women's World Day of Prayer!' Correct! But with one small change this year – we have moved into line with the rest of the world in calling the movement *World Day of Prayer*. In all other respects it is just the same, prepared and led by women, in fact women's gift to the whole Church.

This year the service has been prepared by the women of Slovenia, one of the smallest and youngest countries in Europe. The Slovenian women encourage us to reflect on the barriers they have faced since the end of the Second World War when their country was a part of Yugoslavia, a Marxist socialist republic. They share the challenges they have met and the hopes they have for the future.

Slovenia became independent in 1991. It lies at the heart of Europe, bordered by Italy, Austria, Croatia and Hungary. It is a land of immense natural beauty, great variety of scenery and varied climate.

This year's World Day of Prayer is from one of Europe's newest countries: Slovenia. The deanery service will be held at St James's Church on Friday 1 March at 2pm.

But what do you know about the country, until 1991 part of Yugoslavia and where religion was forbidden?



wild grouse and ibex. These are all protected by law. Some 376 species of birds have been recorded, both native and migratory from all over Europe.

Europe's top beauty spot

Lake Bled, about 30 miles from Ljubljana, is reputed to be one of the most beautiful places in Europe and Slovene lakes, rivers and seas are rich in fish, with fresh water crabs also in abundance.

Slovenia has a range of different climates depending on the region. In the mountainous areas, the winter temperatures fall well below zero. In the south-west, along the coast, there is a sub-Mediterranean climate with temperatures usually remaining above freezing throughout the year.

Most of the country has a temperate climate, like Britain, though the summers are much hotter, except on the high plains.

In central Slovenia there is a limestone area called the Karst region which contains more than 10,000 amazing underground caves. Several are open to the public, which proves a huge tourist attraction, and they are also home to the world-famous white salamander (sometimes called the *human fish*). The Karst region is also home to the white Lipizzaner horses which have been bred and trained at the original stud farm in Lipica since 1580.

Beekeeping still popular

Beekeeping occupies a special place in Slovenia's culture and economy as one of its oldest traditional crafts. The Slovenians are very proud of their bees and

Challenges for Roma equality

Roughly the size of Wales, it has a population of about two million, almost half of whom live in cities, with over a quarter living in the capital, Ljubljana. The majority of the population are Slovenes with small numbers of other ethnic groups including Roma, of whom there are

about 10,000.

Although Slovenia is the only EU country to pass a law specifically defining Roma rights, they are still treated as third-class citizens.

The Slovene region has been mainly Christian since the 8th century, although under Tito's socialist regime religious conviction

was persecuted with imprisonment and restricted access to jobs.

Since 1991, religious institutions have regained their social role, although certain cultural prejudices still remain. Of those who are religious, the majority are Roman Catholic, with small numbers of Orthodox, Lutheran and Islam.

Slovenia is heavily forested with over two-thirds of the country covered with deciduous and coniferous trees and still a million trees are planted every year! One third of the country is protected national parks which are home to many rare and endangered species, such as wolves, wildcats,



The Logarska valley, in the Kamnik Alps, attracts tourists all-year-round

God's table

there are 90,000 beekeepers in the country. The only species allowed to be kept is the native Carniolan bee which is prized for its docility, hard work, humility and excellent sense of orientation. Slovenia is the only EU member to have protected its native bee.

Honey is used not only for food but also for beauty and medicinal products and the beeswax for candles. Large, colourful beehives are a common sight around the country. In 2018, Slovenia encouraged the UN to raise the importance of bees and the threats against them by instituting a *World Bee Day*, which will now be celebrated annually on 20 May.



A colourful beehive in the EU's only country to protect its native bee

Most open of former republics

Slovenia is the wealthiest and most politically open of the former Yugoslav republics. There is some unemployment, but it is below the European average. About two-thirds of the population are employed in the service sector, including tourism, and one-third in industry and construction.

Farming is still important, particularly small-scale dairy farming and vineyards producing excellent red and white wines, but the area dedicated to farming is in decline.

What of equality?

Women have a life expectancy of 82. They have the same access to education as men and similar numbers of women and men attend university. Sixty-five per cent of women work, mostly in health and social services. Women earn on average seven per cent less than

men, except in construction where their wages are higher.

Healthcare is generally good and many services are free. There is maternity leave for working women from a month before the birth until



The image from this year's service

the child's first birthday, on full pay. But child care and housework are still mainly seen as women's responsibility!

Joining World Day of Prayer

Slovenian women joined World Day of Prayer in 2000. Today, around 500 people from Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Pentecostal and evangelical churches attend the services in six locations around Slovenia.

At the heart of this year's service is an open invitation for all to come to God's table: *Come – Everything is Ready!* Let the stories from the women of Slovenia inspire us to open our hearts and our homes to those who are not yet at the table.

■ Please join us at St James's Church for this year's service on Friday 1 March at 2pm — we look forward to seeing you there.



A heart-shaped vineyard near Maribor, producing quality wine, but farming areas are in decline

Around the Spire

Fairtrade Fortnight focus on plight of cocoa farmers



THIS YEAR'S Fairtrade Fortnight, from 25 February-10 March, puts the spotlight on cocoa.

Farmers of this iconic Fairtrade product have seen prices fall to crisis levels recently. The situation highlights in stark terms the scandal of unfair trade.

A living income is a fundamental goal for Fairtrade, and nowhere is the need for a living income more clear than in the cocoa industry. Europe is the world's biggest importer of cocoa. Some 70% comes from West Africa — almost half from the Côte d'Ivoire where one in six people are employed in the cocoa sector. Yet a shocking 60% of all cocoa farmers there live below the poverty line.

Many are underpaid and exploited and cannot earn enough for basic things we take for granted, such as food, education and housing.

It's even worse for the women who are often overlooked and under-represented, and paid less than men for the same crop.

We know that buying Fairtrade-branded cocoa products from our Traidcraft stall and supermarkets can make a difference, but there is more to be done.

The Fairtrade Foundation have launched a three-year campaign to encourage consumers, companies, governments and others to right this wrong.

■ Support our Traidcraft Stall on **3 February** and **3 March** from 10.30am.

Mayor helps garden to take shape

DESPITE THE RAIN Lou, Bryan, John and Ros from our Gardening Team have completed the next stage in the garden development at the front of church.

Fifty native shrubs were planted to create a mixed hedge alongside the wall and railings. They were provided free as part of the Mayor of London's tree and shrub-planting initiative.

During the work a large stag beetle grub was accidentally dug up and rehoused.

The next stage of the work will be to define the flower beds and use plants donated by the congregation. The turf will be ordered and laid in the spring when the weather is warmer and the frosts have finished.



The Church is here to stay in Europe beyond Brexit

THE ANGLICAN Bishop in Europe says the Church will continue to have a strong relationship with the EU, whatever happens.

The Rt Rev Dr Robert Innes said: 'I was delighted that The House of Bishops urged our political leaders to work together across tribal divisions. The Diocese in Europe, the 42nd in the Church of England, has a presence right across the European continent. We have over 300 chaplaincies, from Iceland in the north, to Turkey in the east. We maintain close relationships with

other Christian Churches in Europe. We will continue to campaign in the European Institutions on key issues of human rights, migration and freedom of religious expression and belief. The UK may be set to leave the EU after 45 years, but Anglicans have been in Europe for over 400 and will remain here.

'In the 1975 referendum, the campaign lobby to get the UK out of the EEC used the slogan *Out, and into the world*. The real risk we face without a deal is that the UK will be just out.'

My wish for the children



DANI ROBERTSON

I learned amazing tales of preachers boldly proclaiming the Gospel, even facing prison or death.

I spent a half a college year just studying the book of Exodus, reading it five times, and writing a paper comparing the laws in Exodus 20 to the Codes of Hammurabi.

And onward to England...

After we both graduated, I tagged along with him again... this time all the way to England.

After being dumped on the pavement by our taxi driver, who said we needed to pack less, we settled in and haven't looked back. We first visited St James's on Christmas Eve 2017 and were astounded by the beauty of the church and all the smiles that greeted us.

We were home. Something still wasn't right though. I needed to be more involved, to help build up the body of Christ. I prayed about it for many months and got involved slowly in church life, first by reading and leading intercessions, then by volunteering with the Shell Seekers, teaching my first ever Sunday School lesson.

My hope for children and young people

A few months later I delightedly accepted the role of Children and Families' Worker.

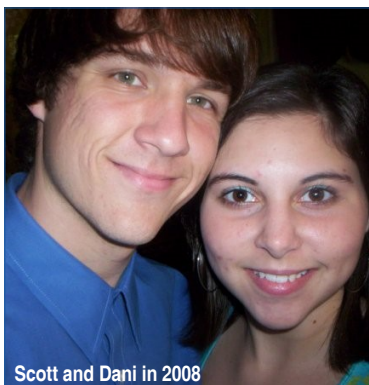
My desire is for the children and young people at St James's to be inspired by the word of God, to be excited about the community we build together, and for this to radiate through them in their daily lives as they share God's love with everyone they meet.

We may build this community together through ice skating, weekends away, and even over a bucket of chicken nuggets, but God and prayer will always be at the centre of what we do.

Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' (Matt 19:14)

As Children's and Families' Worker, I hope to provide opportunities for the children and young people to come to Jesus and encounter Him in real and moving ways. This may be through song, dance, crafts, or stories, but it will most definitely be through laughing, crying, and a lot of prayer.

My parents were right — God did have something special for me to do, but God has something special for *everyone* to do, and I can tell you what it is: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself.' (Matt. 22:37-40)



Scott and Dani in 2008

Where in the world?



LAURENCE SEWELL

What is fair trade?

Most of us will be aware of the Fairtrade symbol, increasingly seen on products on our supermarket shelves, that represents the movement for change that works directly with businesses, consumers and campaigners to make trading in products more equitable for farmers and workers.

The UK Fairtrade Foundation is part of the world's largest and most recognised fair trade system. It was co-founded in 1992 by, among others, Traidcraft, the church-based organisation that many of us will be familiar with, and which has been one of the pioneers in the fair trade movement since being established in 1979.

Traidcraft Exchange (the charity arm of Traidcraft), working in partnership with Traidcraft, demonstrates responsible trading relations and provides policy advocacy on trade issues. We shall be looking at some of these and thereby showing you the positive benefits of supporting Traidcraft endeavours.

Wood, paper, oil and gas

But it won't stop there. Visiting your local DIY superstore or stationery supplier, you may have seen the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) symbol which is a global certification system that allows consumers to identify, purchase and use wood, paper and other forest products produced from well-managed forests and/or recycled materials. This magazine is printed on such paper!

We shall look at the benefits and challenges in this system, particularly as they affect logging in some of the world's most precious ecosystems.

Less familiar to many is the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the global standard to promote open and accountable management of oil, gas and mineral resources, and which seeks to address the key governance issues in these sectors.

Future columns

Over the coming months I will explain how our actions and behaviour can influence a fairer and more balanced economic relationship between producer and consumer.

In this new series we aim to explore fair trade matters; where everyday things we consume originate from, be it foodstuffs, clothing or other products.

I'll explain how they are processed and produced; and discuss issues of governance and values along with what is termed the 'supply chain', in the case of foodstuffs what is often called from 'farm to fork'.

Risks to our planet and peoples

There has been a growing realisation especially in the West that we cannot continue consuming more and more of the world's resources to satisfy our wants and drive our national economic performance, without serious consequences for the planet, its people and environment.

Of course, producing food and fibres, or extracting minerals and the trade in these products, are a necessary part of generating economic wealth and well-being, and in the case of the less developed parts of the world in supporting livelihoods and bringing lasting solutions to reducing poverty.

So, consumption is crucially important to global economic and social well-being; but, only if done in a sustainable and fair way.

There are too many instances of exploitation of producers and labourers, and injustices in the trading arrangements.

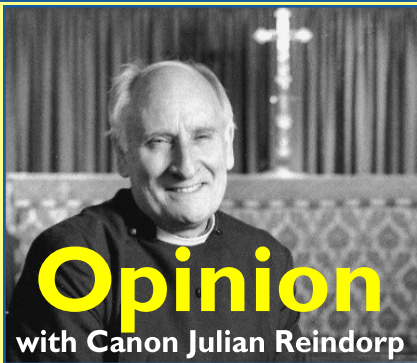
Examples include how tea pickers in Assam are trapped in poverty, the Rana Plaza garment factory tragedy in Bangladesh in 2013, and the use of child labour and conflict-ridden terms of trade in mineral mining in the Eastern Congo.

Responsible consumption

This column is not going to argue that we should necessarily stop consuming many of these items, but that we should be consuming more responsibly. I aim to make a small contribution to raising awareness around issues of fair trade, to influence consumer behaviour, or at least make us think more about how things get to the shops or their online platform!

Whilst it is not a strictly Christian message, it does have Christian overtones about husbanding our resources on this earth, equality of treatment, and our responsibility for wider environmental protection.





Opinion
with Canon Julian Reindorp

BREXIT HIDES UK ISSUES

Brexit has dominated the news and as a result key ongoing issues in our nation's life, such as the challenge of climate change, and the long-term effects of austerity, have been largely ignored. For many the effects of austerity largely contributed to them voting leave.

VIOLENCE AND THE CUTS

In parts of our cities many people do not feel safe. Knife crime and robberies made from scooters like mine are one illustration of this. The links to austerity are clear. Almost 900 youth workers jobs have been axed since 2016; youth services have faced £13m cuts; 760 youth centres have been closed since 2012.

Since 2010 the Metropolitan Police have lost 3,000 officers, another 3,000 community support officers and 5,000 civilian staff. Neighbourhood teams have been cut badly. The BBC report on policing in Hartlepool revealed that after a 37% reduction in police numbers across Cleveland, and switching a custody suite to Middlesbrough, there wasn't a single police officer available in Hartlepool, a town of 80,000 people, on a Saturday night.

CLIMATE CHANGE

We may wince when we hear President Trump denying the effects of climate change and its human causes, but I responded similarly to a report in the *Daily Mail* about increasingly hot summers with the headline 'Riviera Britain'. We have made progress on climate change promises — last year our carbon emissions fell by 2.6% — but we only have to look at France and President Macron's attempts to cut emissions by increasing fuel duty, now swept aside by popular demonstrations, to see the challenges. Currently, 85% of our environmental protections come from the EU and they are legally enforceable. The Government have so far resisted attempts to make their new targets legally enforceable. How quickly will other demands undermine their aspirations?

UK MEETS HIV TARGETS

The United Nations has set a so-called '90-90-90' target for every country, challenging health authorities to diagnose more than 90% of people with HIV, put 90% on treatment and ensure 90% have viral suppression (meaning they are not infectious). Public Health England estimates it has more than met the targets. There are 103,000 people with HIV in Britain, with just 8%, about 8,200 people, unaware they are infected. Some 98% of those diagnosed are on treatment and 97% virally suppressed. In December, on World Aids Day, Labour MP Lloyd Russell-Moyle told colleagues in the House of Commons that he had been on HIV drugs for 10 years. In the 1980s and early 90s, a diagnosis was regarded as a death sentence.

MRS MAY AS PM

As I write this Mrs May is our Prime Minister. Her speech on her appointment in 2015 was a very clear description of the state of our country and her hopes for change. Many of us may feel she has failed to live up to her hopes, but listening to the Brexit debates, people across the House of Commons, often disagreeing with her, acknowledged her courage and persistence. Opinion polls suggest she is far more popular than her party. When after a particularly gruelling day of defeats in the Commons she was helping children switch on the lights of the No 10 Christmas tree, I marvelled at her stamina, not least with her diabetes. But I suspect that people may have smiled as she sang 'O Come all ye faithful'. What about her MPs?

HEATED HANDLE BARS

My Honda scooter was stolen from outside our church in October. The police found it heavily damaged, the insurance company wrote it off and five weeks later I bought a second-hand identical scooter. Its previous owner had put on heated handle bars, and with the flick of a switch my hands are heated in less than five minutes!

Heartfelt thanks for your support



DENNIS WILMOT

Last year was the first where we asked the congregation to support our chosen charities rather than the money coming out of church income.

This represented a big challenge to the Charities Support Team, as we had previously received £10,000 without any effort — and I would like to applaud your generous response.

At the start of the year the Lent Appeal raised £2,733 for the Church Mission Society (for David and Shelley Stokes in northern Argentina), and Welcare. During the year various events including the wine tasting, St James's day activities, with the raffle and auction, plus Nick and Genevieve's Alistair Griffin concert raised a total of £2,512 for four charities: Bishop Wand School, London Churches Refugee Fund, TWAM (Tools with a Mission) and ALMA (Angola London & Mozambique Association).

The Harvest Appeal raised £1,152 for The Upper Room project in Hammersmith. Excluding Christian Aid and The Children's Society, which were always separate, the total



raised by the congregation in 2018 was a creditable £7,897. We also raised £3,733 for Christian Aid, and £1155 for the

Left: Alistair Griffin



Milo hospital is to be one of our main beneficiaries in 2019

Children's Society from the collection boxes, Christingle candles and the plate collection, about the same as in 2017.

For 2019 we are hopeful that fundraising will enable us to continue to support the causes we value. If you have any ideas or could offer to host an event such as Nick and Genevieve's charity concert, do come and speak with me.

Support for Milo hospital

With the church cutbacks it was refreshing to receive a large donation for Milo hospital in Tanzania. In November, Adrian and Hilary Murray, two doctors from North Wales, paid us a visit. Later this year they begin at least a year's work at Milo. This was an inspiring visit and they already have plans to make Milo a centre of excellence for maternity care and the treatment of HIV.

The Charity Support team met the next day and decided to make Milo one of our main charities for 2019. Other visits by David and Shelley Stokes, and Dave Farris from for the Children's Society, have equally shown that the congregation is more likely to support a charity when they understand where the money goes. Long may it continue!

Getting our skates on!



SOME OF OUR young people went ice skating at Hampton Court Palace on 4 January. They are pictured with Scott. There were no injuries, just a few sore bottoms! It was a cold night — so at the end of the skating everyone indulged in cups of hot chocolate.



REGISTERS

NOVEMBER

FUNERAL
6 Edith Marjorie Saunders, 85, Liss, Hampshire

DECEMBER

BAPTISM
9 Joshua William McManus, Hampton Hill

FUNERALS
27 Margaret Claire Conley Hill, 85, East Molesey
28 'Peggy' Rose Penfold, 88, West Molesey



Authors in residence



JANET NUNN

I have always been fascinated by people's lives and have visited many homes lived in by authors and poets. It is very evocative to see how they lived, often reflected in their writing. My mother was a great fan of Agatha Christie and read all her books. I had always wanted to visit Christie's house in Devon and recently I got the chance. Many of the homes featured here are owned by the National Trust and often have the original manuscripts.

Greenway, near Kingswear, Devon



Nestling high on the banks of the River Dart amongst the trees is Greenway, Agatha Christie's holiday home (the large cream building). Access is by a very narrow road or by boat and then a steep climb up to the house. If you arrive by water you climb from the boathouse, the setting for *Dead Man's Folly!* There are copies of all her books, her typewriter and the grand piano she played. There are deck chairs on the lawn to sit and absorb the stillness and views.

Menabilly, near Fowey, Cornwall



This was the home of the Rashleigh family who bought it from King Henry VIII after the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1500s. Daphne du Maurier, seen above, was granted a lease in 1943 and made it her home until it was taken back by the Rashleighs in 1963. The surrounding area and house were the inspiration for Manderley (the house in *Rebecca*). Her love of Cornwall also led to *Jamaica Inn* and *Frenchman's Creek*.

Chawton Cottage, Chawton, near Acton, Hampshire



This 17th century cottage is where Jane Austen spent the last eight years of her life with her mother and sister. (She died in Winchester, aged 41, in 1817). When Jane arrived there she had three novels in draft – *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and

Northanger Abbey. She went on to write two more, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. The house is now a museum and you can see the table where she wrote, her piano, and manuscripts.

Bronte Parsonage Museum, Howarth, Yorkshire



The Parsonage where the family lived is at the top of a hill. I visited on a cold, misty damp day, but this, and the Yorkshire Moors behind, showed the harsh conditions in which they lived and which are portrayed in their books. The Brontes had a difficult life and all six children died before they were 40. Charlotte, Anne and Emily were the sisters who devoted their lives to writing. *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* remain classics. The mahogany desk at which Charlotte worked was bought for £20,000 in 2011 and donated to the museum.

Hardy's Cottage, Higher Brockhampton, near Dorchester



This is a lovely cob and thatched cottage at the end of a lane. Hardy was born here in 1840 and stayed until he was 34. Under the Greenwood Tree and *Far from the Madding Crowd* were written here. The cottage is furnished as it was in his day and Thorncombe Woods which surround it feature in his books, as does a lot more of his beloved Dorset. In his bedroom you can see the desk where he did his writing.

Clouds Hill, near Wareham, Dorset

This isolated cottage was home to T E Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia). Probably built as a forester's cottage, Lawrence used it as a holiday cottage before moving in permanently. There are only three rooms. I recall the large brown leather divan beside a gramophone. The cottage had no electric light or heating. He died in 1935 from a motorcycle accident. Carved into his effigy in St Martin's Church, Wareham, is a book, his most famous publication, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.



Milton's Cottage, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire

This timber-framed 16th century cottage is now a museum and where Milton completed *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667. It also inspired him to write *Paradise Regained*. The three museum rooms contain rare books, paintings and prints that give a unique insight into his life, work and influence. Milton's Cottage was secured for the nation after a public appeal to prevent it being moved brick by brick to the USA.



Bateman's, Burwash, East Sussex



This was the home of Rudyard Kipling from 1902-1936. Kipling was born in India, schooled in England, worked in India and then came back to England to live here. The house was built in the 17th century of local sandstone and is set in the stunning landscape of the Sussex Weald. Objects on display include his citation for the Nobel Prize for Literature, awarded in 1907, and original paintings from the *Jungle Book*.

Bleak House, Broadstairs, Kent

Charles Dickens leased this house high on the cliffs at Broadstairs from 1837-1859. Dickens used it as the setting for John Jarndyce, from *Bleak House*. He also wrote *David Copperfield* whilst there. The building is now a hotel, but you can visit a museum there. I vividly remember the study with his writing desk looking out to sea.



Hilltop Farmhouse, near Hawkshead, Cumbria

Beatrix Potter's 17th century farmhouse is a time capsule of her life in the Lake District, containing 1433 objects and 2200 works on paper. Potter bought Hilltop Farm when aged 39 with the royalties from *The Tales of Peter Rabbit* and the house gave her lasting happiness. It is quite small with a lovely garden complete with vegetable patch and lettuces for rabbits! The views from it of the fells inspired 13 of her 33 books. Beatrix lived across the road with her husband, but Hilltop was where she did her writing.

