



THE  WINDOW
News and Views from the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames

A Window on Christianity

Carol Worthington

A Window on Christianity is the title of a book I have written which is about to be published this Summer. I have written it because, during my 20 years as a school inspector, I observed an alarming deterioration in the provision of religious education (RE) in community schools. Fewer teachers attended church and RE specialists became rare. Yet, RE remains compulsory in schools for all ages from 4 to 16. In recognition of the part played by religious intolerance in acts of terrorism, there have been recent calls from government, media and clergy for improved religious literacy in our modern society.

My book provides a simple, factual background to Christianity, its origins, beliefs and worship. There are eight chapters and an Epilogue. They begin with the question of what Christianity is, and go on to tell how it evolved from Judaism through the story of the Israelites and their relationship with their invisible, omnipotent God, YHWH, whose name was never to be spoken aloud. The story traces the significance of the sacred covenants made with Abraham and Moses. The successful kingdoms of David and Solomon are followed by conquest and exile. The prophets, vainly attempting to bring the people back to their God, make predictions about the coming of a Messiah, or Christ.

The story of Jesus's life is told, emphasising his sacrifice as the new 'Passover Lamb', whose blood sealed the new sacred covenant with God. The beginning of the Christian Church, under the leadership of St Peter and St Paul, and its growth in the Roman Empire, is traced.

An important chapter on Christian worship includes a chart showing important Holy days and seasons throughout the Christian year.

There follow chapters on the Bible and churches in Britain, particularly emphasising the influence of the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer in embedding Christian values in British society. A chapter on Abrahamic religions of the Holy Land is included, emphasising that Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all descended from the covenant made by their one God with the patriarch Abraham, and are religions of peace. The last chapter tells of Angels, Saints and some of the signs and symbols of Christianity which are often referred to or observed in our society, but may seem mysterious and not easily understood.

The Epilogue considers the view that British society is becoming ever more secular, yet, in fact, the impact of Christianity remains ever present, though often not recognised, in popular celebrations such as Pancake Day and Mothers' Day. This book aims to redress this, making the case for RE to have greater prominence in schools, so that *'all of us have the knowledge and skills required to effectively engage with religion and acquire religious literacy, in order to communicate on a more informed basis and promote community cohesion within a more inclusive and holistic society'* (Fiona Bruce MP, leader of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education, 2016).

The Editors

Alexandra Green
Louise Heffernan
Silvia Joinson
David Pope
Carol Worthington
Andrew Coker

Copy for next issue to
Parish Office or via
email by 5th of
preceding month

E-mail:
StHelensWindow@gmail.com

Parish Office: St
Helen's Court,
Abingdon.
OX14 5BS

Tel: 01235 520144

The Window is available to
download from the
Churches' websites on the
back page

Carol Worthington is a retired school inspector and worships at St Helen's. Continued on page 2

The over-arching theme of The Window on Christianity is Faith, Hope and Love, (fides, spes, caritas) taken from St Paul's well-known words in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13. An image of the famous window in Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford, is on the front cover.

This window was made by the William Morris Company, a firm at the forefront of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the 19th century. Designed by Edward Burne-Jones, an artist associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Movement and credited with the rejuvenation of the stained glass making tradition in Victorian England.



A number of St Helen's choir and congregation members joined with a good crowd of people from Abingdon and beyond for a 'Come and Sing' workshop at the end of April with the well-known and popular composer Bob Chilcott. We learnt (from scratch for most of us) four of Bob's pieces – Because it was you, Thou knowest Lord and two pieces from Aesop's Fables. The singing was interspersed with anecdotes from Bob about his extensive musical career. The day finished with a mass performance of the pieces on the stage at the Amey Theatre. A very enjoyable day!

Answers to the May quiz 'Borrowed Animals'

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 rabbit punch | 13 night owl | 24 dog's breakfast | 34 turtle neck |
| 2 crocodile tears | 14 kangaroo court | dog's dinner | 35 wild goose chase |
| 3 snail's pace | 15 monkey wrench | pig's ear | 36 elephant in the room |
| 4 pigeon toed | 16 bull market | 25 Penguin books | 37 fly on the wall |
| 5 pig headed | 17 lion's share | 26 bulldog clips | 38 Panther |
| 6 worm hole | 18 panda car | 27 dog star | 39 snake hips |
| 7 donkey jacket | 19 round robin | 28 zebra crossing | 40 frogman |
| 8 butterfly | 20 fly weight | 29 doe eyed | 41 weasel words |
| 9 monkey tricks | 21 fish-eye lens | 30 chicken hearted | 42 dog leg |
| 10 crow's feet | 22 rat run | 31 hound-tooth check | 43 ox bow lake |
| 11 bear hug | 23 cat's cradle | 32 toad-in-the-hole | 44 cats' eyes |
| 12 clothes horse | | 33 cat burglar | 45 pony tail |

A History of the Bible: The Book and its Faiths

by John Barton *Review by John Wesson*

“For the gift of the Word” the Bible reader concludes on Sunday mornings, and we all reply “Thanks be to God”. Clearly the Bible has an important place in our Christian worship. But then in some churches the lesson reader declares “This is the Word of the Lord”. We used to use that in St Helen’s, but maybe some felt uneasy when the reading had described mass slaughter or told women to keep silent in church.

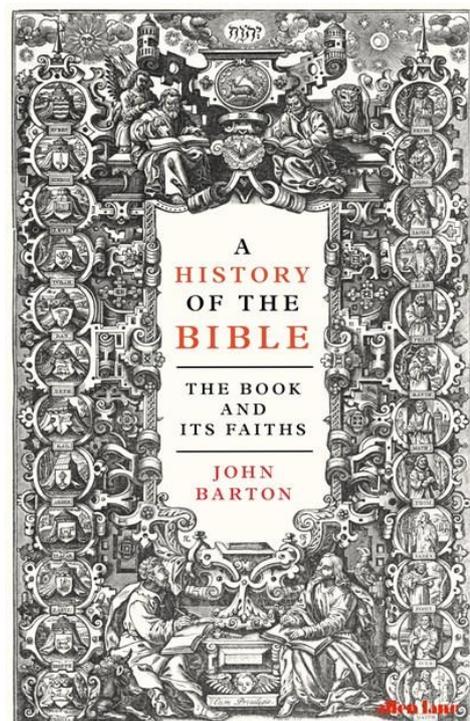
So how exactly do we think about the Bible? Is Christian believing the same thing as believing the Bible? When were the contents first written down? Who decided what to put in and what to leave out? Who put the chapter divisions and verse numbering in? How reliable are the facts in the narrative and history sections? In what sense do Christians today see the contents of the Bible as ‘inspired’? If you have ever wondered about the answers to these questions (and many others), here is the book to help you. Our own Professor John Barton, associate priest and Abingdon resident, in his latest work explores the Bible from its remote beginnings, explaining the intriguing process of its centuries of transmission, to the way we read and interpret it today. It’s a big book (490 pages of text) so it is a serious read - certainly not “The Bible for Dummies”! But don’t be put off from tackling it. We are given such a clear narrative and such plain arguments and examples, with technical jargon avoided or explained, that we are well able to get hold of the whole fascinating picture.

Of course there is room for a variety of views on many of the topics discussed here. At one point the author describes “a series of guesses - not, admittedly, a rare thing in biblical studies”! But he leads us through the issues clearly and honestly, frequently offering his own opinions from a lifetime’s study. Discussing the dating of the New Testament books he comments “In the end one can only try to weigh the evidence, aware all the time of one’s own bias, and hope to be as objective as possible”. One main takeaway message is the call to be sensitive to the many types of books the Bible embraces - story, poetry, laws, letters, etc - and to treat them with respect for their differences. This chimes well with a recent comment of Rowan Williams: “As soon as you think you know what the Bible is, you turn the page and it turns into something different”. But nonetheless Williams emphasises “The Bible is the territory in which Christians expect to hear God speaking”.

John Barton has written a hugely helpful book which will be valued by many readers, not least for helping them to see how our Jewish friends approach what we call the ‘Old Testament’ - hence the sub-title ‘The Book and Its Faiths’. Whatever our starting point, this book will take us on a journey that challenges, provokes and teaches us new insights.

John Barton’s book is published by Allen Lane and priced at £25

The Guardian book review concludes:
 Fundamentalists will not be queuing up to buy A History of the Bible: the Book and its Faiths. But for believers of a more open disposition, and non-believing lovers of great literature, reading it will be a revelation and a delight.



Rethinking Mission: Remembering History

Tony Richmond

“Wow! The whole of Barbados could fit into this place.”

That was the first thought of the Revd Dr Michael Clarke as he stepped into Liverpool’s cavernous cathedral. We all laughed.

He went on: “But then I thought – it was Barbados that BUILT Liverpool.”

Our laughter ebbed as the implications of his words sank in. Liverpool grew rich through the slave trade.

Dr Clarke is Principal of Codrington Theological College, Barbados, where most clergy in the Anglican Province of the West Indies are trained. He was speaking at a USPG* conference “Rethinking Mission: Remembering History” in March, at which 120 people met to reflect on the historical legacy affecting our relationship with churches in other parts of the world. What could churches offer to mission thinking today, bearing in mind Britain’s colonial history and the church’s involvement in the transatlantic slave trade?

It was not a time of dreary breast-beating by British Christians trying to feel guilty. On the contrary, it was as USPG gatherings always are, a time of joyful encounter, exciting insights, new ideas and moving worship.

Dr Clarke said the West Indian church was bogged down in anachronistic liturgies and attitudes. Victorian hymnals reminded folk of days when Black people had to sit at the back of the church, were not considered fit to understand the faith and were not encouraged to take part “lest religion be diminished by their ignorance and poverty” (and blackness). At Codrington today, where in plantation days slaves were branded with the letters “SPG”*, Dr Clarke now encourages the emergence of a people’s church, with carnival, drumming and dreadlocks providing a new moral and spiritual authority – “ebony grace”.

The Revd Dr David Eshun from Ghana, now Dean of Chapel at Whitelands College, University of Roehampton, also spoke of the slave mentality, and of the first Ghanaian trained and ordained in England, who on his return home, refused to speak his own home language but ministered only in English. Dr Eshun warned that unless Africa could rid itself of corruption and develop pride in its own identity, a hundred years from now the entire continent would be under new colonial masters from China.

Another speaker, the Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Chaplain to the Queen and to the Speaker of the House of Commons, quoted Deuteronomy: “Remember, remember, remember.” Here in the UK we needed to remember history and apply the lessons. “Why are so many Black men in jail? So many Black kids excluded from school?” She had been going to the same SpecSavers in Hackney for years, and every time she complained to the manager that all 20 photos on display show White people wearing glasses, “yet 7 out of 10 customers are Black. What kind of welcome is that? And what images of welcome do we offer in our church, our liturgies, our music, our attitudes?”

“Remember, remember, remember.” The next day Lyn and I visited the Slavery Museum on Liverpool’s dockside, a brilliant and sobering reminder of why we need to remember.

* USPG, United Society – Partners in the Gospel (formerly SPG, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) – is a major Anglican mission agency. Founded in 1701 it works in partnership with churches worldwide in God’s mission to enliven faith, strengthen relationships, unlock potential and champion justice. www.uspg.org.uk

Trinity Learning

Mary Anderson

‘I have come that they may have life, life in all its fullness.’ (John 10:10)

Some of you may be familiar with the silly, beguiling ‘Baby Shark’ song, with its hand-and arm-movements mimicking baby shark, Mummy Shark, DADDY SHARK and GRANDPA SHARK all coming to get you - look it up on YouTube! It is one of the pupils’ favourites when a group of us TrinityLearning singers go to Kingfisher, the very special school in Radley Road, Abingdon.



Fun at Kingfisher School

The first time I joined in I was bowled over by the dedication, empathy and tenderness of the staff. I felt humbled by the young people, many of whom are non-verbal, but whose life experiences are rich and deep. They greet us with enthusiasm and participate with gusto. Few words are exchanged, but facial expressions and body language say it all.

Singing at Kingfisher is just one of the many spiritually-uplifting activities that TrinityLearning offers to local schools. Rosemary Perrow, who has been leading TrinityLearning for ten years, expresses the vision thus: ‘We help to relieve the pressures on stressed school communities through specially-tailored activities,

including practical help for school leaders and workshops for pupils and staff. Our projects build confidence and inner peace, making space for the spirit in busy lives.’

In late March, I had the privilege of participating in Experience Easter at Trinity Church. Year 3 or 4 pupils from eight local primary schools took turns to come and hear the Passion story told against the backdrop of six tableaux, each with a theme chosen to help the children relate Jesus’s experiences to their own lives:

- Palm Sunday – Hopes & dreams
- Maundy Thursday – Serving others
- The Last Supper – Remembering good things
- The Garden of Gethsemane – Fear
- Good Friday – Suffering
- Easter Day – Life after death.

There was a remarkable stillness and peace about the event: teachers and pupils alike welcomed the opportunity to experience ‘an island of calm in a busy world’.

Thanks to their supporters, TrinityLearning can provide all their services free to local state schools. Their 70 volunteers come from ten Abingdon churches and six denominations, making this gift a powerful statement of God’s love in action. TrinityLearning’s work enables both children and adults in the community to come face to face with the vibrancy of Christian faith in a community setting. This is Christian mission on our doorstep.



Children’s responses to Experience Easter

TrinityLearning has recently chosen to be supported by St Helen’s. If you would like to get involved in TrinityLearning’s work, please contact Rosemary: trinitylearning@gmail.com or phone 01235 520282.

What's on in the Parish

Devotional

Sunday 2 June

Faith Forum

+TRADITIO+

Personal testimonies of faith seeking understanding

Bishop Henry Scriven on John Stott
9.15 – 10.00 Parish Hall at St Helen's
Breakfast from 9.00 am

Thursday 6 June

Moving into Stillness

Circle dancing to music from Taizé
9.45 – 10.45 - St Michael's and All Angels

Tuesday 11, 25 June

Desiring Life

14.30 The Lounge, Parish Centre
at St Helen's
From 'The meaning in the Miracles'
By Jeffrey John
11 June Chapter 5 - The Feeding of the Five
Thousand and the feeding of the Four
thousand.
25 June Chapter 8 - The Raising of Jairus's
Daughter, and the Healing of the Woman with
a Haemorrhage.
Buy a copy of the book and turn up.
Further information from Susan Scott
01235 5229660: email
susan.scott21@btinternet.com

Sunday 16 June

Trinity Sunday

Please note that the only Communion Service
on that day is the Parish Communion at St
Michael's Church at 10.00

Tuesday 25 June

Silent Reflections

19.30 - St Michael and All Angels'

Prayerful activities in the sanctuary with
option of coming together to share your
journey at the end of the session.

Social

Thursday 6,13,20,27 June

Circle Dancing

11.00-12.00- St Michael's and All Angels
Traditional folk dancing and modern steps in a
circle to a variety of music. No prior
experience or partner needed. Contact Mary
520608

Friday 7,14,21,28 June

Friday Morning Sale

11.00-13.00 St Nicolas' Church Yard
Produce, baked goods, plants and handicrafts

Wednesday 19 June

St Helen's@lunch

12.00 Annie's on the Island, Abingdon
No need to book, just turn up. Contact Susan
Scott 522960 if you need or can offer a lift.

Wednesday 26 June

Lunch Club

12.30 St Michael's Church Room
Booking essential £5.50
Contact Jane Duce 522591 to book.

Musical

Saturday 29 June 7pm

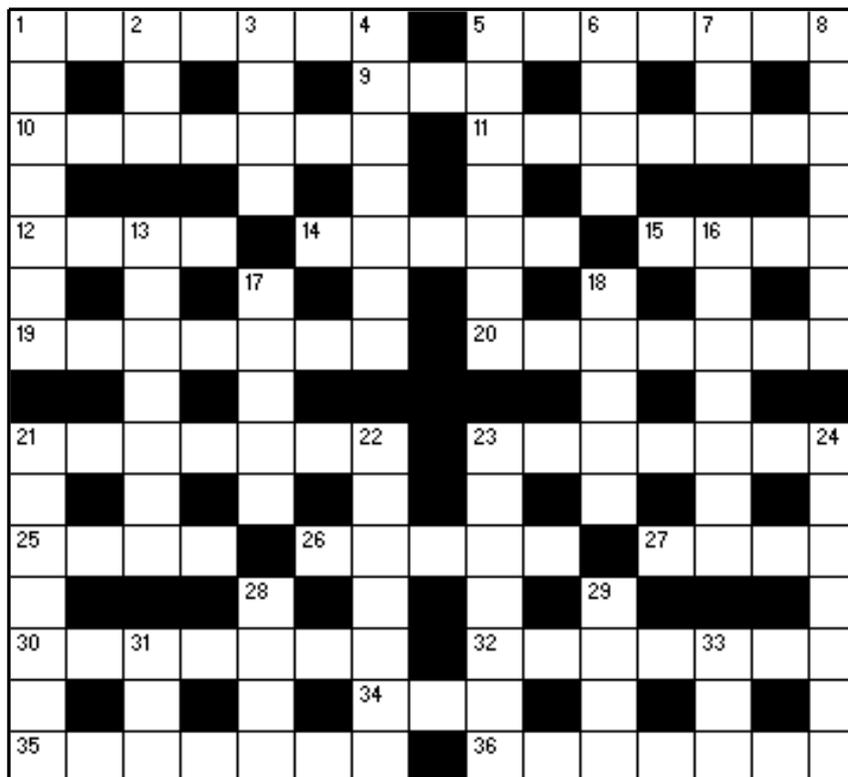
Concert at St Michael's Church

Wantage Academy Brass with Oxfordshire
Youth Brass

Fundraising for Abingdon Bridge and Tariro –
Hope for Youth in Zimbabwe

If you would like anything included in this Diary, please
contact the editors through the email on the front page.

 June Crossword - *I vow to thee* by Eccles



The *asterisked clues relate to the title in some way and do not have a definition.

ACROSS

- 1 * I followed Caesar perhaps to Austria (7)
 5 Dull prisoner on the wing (7)
 9 They run schools in the open country (3)
 10 Sea creature may emanate change (7)
 11 He runs for a period in empty back room (7)
 12 Soldiers that upset Mary (4)
 14 * Capital Yemenis hold dear (5)
 15 Festivity forms part of legal assembly (4)
 19 Attempted to keep very quiet but fell over (7)
 20 Tang for instance is horrid after endless pigment (7)
 21 Flyer in trouble without the assistance of United Nations (7)
 23 These hills are nearly the home of sisters in Yorkshire (7)
 25 "I once was ___ but now am found" (4)
 26 I'm chasing dirty eastender for this fabric (5)
 27 Penny beer for Jim to carry on (4)
 30 Aims under canvas (7)
 32 Commercial chose to be taken up (7)
 34 Finish seen on the bowling green (3)
 35 Very small director recorded at the meeting (7)
 36 * Space with good earth (7)

DOWN

- 1 Lose breath chasing sheep that is rife (7)
 2 "No ___ is an island" (3)
 3 Back school observation (4)
 4 Treadle smashed up and rang the 23 down (7)
 5 Put his shirt on for a walk in the outskirts of Gravesend (7)
 6 Chap from Lytham St Annes loses one bird (4)
 7 Record fell (3)
 8 * Some follow nasty culture (7)
 13 Bowler hopes to get the lasses (7)
 16 * Capone left Oz (7)
 17 * Starts to see people arrive in Norway (5)
 18 Card who stole some tarts (5)
 21 * Bugle I'm adapting (7)
 22 Upside-down pudding is hairy (7)
 23 Newly-wed keeps silver back for the troops (7)
 24 Gave way and bore fruit (7)
 28 Reef bird (4)
 29 Lad good with melody (4)
 31 In the direction of northern fashion (3)
 33 Eat messy meal (3)
-

Services in June 2019

Divine Service at St Helen's Church, West St Helen's St

Holy Communion 1662	08.00	Sundays in June except 16th (July at St Nicolas').
Morning Praise	09.15	Second Sunday with the opportunity to give thanks for new babies.
Sung Eucharist	10.30	Every Sunday except 16 June, Trinity Sunday. See the box to the right for details.
Morning Prayer	09.10	Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays)
Evening Prayer	17.10	Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays)
Junior Church	10.30	Sunday – starts in Church except for 16 June.
Wednesday Church	10.30	Every Wednesday. Holy Communion in Church followed by refreshments.

Sunday Evening Services 17.30 at St Helen's Church

2 June	Vespers
9 June	Taizé
16 June	Choral evensong
23 June	Service of Healing and Wholeness
30 June	No evening service

Divine Service at St Michael and All Angels', Park Road

Family Mass	09.30	First Sunday of the month, with Thanksgiving and Welcome
Sung Mass	09.30	Every Sunday except 16 June, Trinity Sunday. See the box to the right for details.
Thursday Mass	12.30	Every Thursday followed by a light lunch
Tues Said Mass	19.30	Every Tuesday except the last one.
Silent Reflections	19.30	The final Tuesday evening of the month

**Parish Communion for Trinity
Sunday: Sunday 16 June**
St Michael's Church
10am

Divine Service at St Nicolas' Church, Market Place

Morning Prayer	11.15	(Matins) 1 st Sunday in the month
Holy Communion	11.15	2 nd and 4 th Sundays with Junior Church
Third Sunday Service		See box to the right for Trinity Sunday.
Family Communion	11.15	5 th Sundays in the month
Junior Church	11.15	2 nd and 4 th Sundays

The services and events listed here are correct at the time of going to press – please consult the weekly Pewsheets or Newsletter if in doubt, or see the online version of The Window on the websites below.

To arrange baptisms, weddings and funerals contact the Parish Office.
Clergy are available in the Parish Office between 19.00 - 20.00 on Wednesdays.
Please call the office to book an appointment.

Team Rector: The Revd Dr Charles Miller

Team Vicar: The Revd Paul Smith

Associate Priests: The Revd Mary Williamson
The Revd Jennifer Brown

Directors of Music: Dr Peter Foster (St H), Glynne Butt, Graham Howell (St M)

Parish Administrator: Mrs Jenny Balshaw

Parish Office: St Helen's Court, Abingdon, OX14 5BS
01235 520144

Normal opening hours 10.00 to 13.00 weekdays, except Thursdays – closed

E-mail: administrator@sthelens-abingdon.org.uk

www.abingdon-st-helens.org.uk www.stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk www.stnicolasabingdon.org.uk
