

# INSIGHT

*HERTFORD METHODIST CHURCH  
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE*



*January - March 2024*



## **Welcome to Flight 2024.**

We have been cleared for take-off into the New Year.

Please make sure your Positive Attitude and Gratitude are secured and locked in the upright position.

All self-destruct devices; pity, anger, selfishness and resentment should be turned OFF. All negativity, hurt and discouragement should be put away.

Should you lose your Positive Attitude under pressure during this flight, please reach up and pull down a prayer. Prayers will automatically be activated by Faith. Once your own Faith is activated, you can assist other passengers who have little faith.

On this flight there will be NO BAGGAGE allowed.

Praying you a New Year filled with NEW HOPE & PEACE.

***Canon J. John***

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR MINISTER

Welcome 2024. Christmas has been packed away, and our thoughts are on how much colder it will get. My thoughts are already on preparing materials for the season of Lent, and yes, I know we have only just celebrated Jesus's birth. But as John, the gospel writer tells us that 'the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.' Not just for a few short weeks of the Christmas season. God, in Jesus, made his dwelling amongst us to remain with us for all time. We invite him into our every day this new year, into all the joys, challenges, excitement, and stresses that we might experience so that he can be our strength, comfort, encourager and sharer of our joys.

We are reminded that 'For God loved the world so much, that he sent his one and only Son so that *everyone* who believes in him might not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16). That means that God has come to right all that is wrong, all that destroys life, all that separates us from his love. A love that promises never to let us go.

So, as we journey through January and the year ahead, I pray that you will know God's loving presence with you wherever you find yourself. And in knowing his presence, you will discover just how much he loves you.

Yours in Christ  
**Marcia**



---

A grandfather and his little grandson were praying side by side in church. The little boy was muttering in a barely audible voice, so his grandfather said: "Don't mumble, I can't hear a word you're saying." "I'm not talking to you," replied the boy indignantly.

# BEREAVEMENT CAFÉ

## Drop in for tea, coffee and a chat



*An informal monthly drop-in for adults who want to meet, share experiences and chat with people who have also been through bereavement.*

*Hosted by friendly local people, set up by volunteers from Holy Trinity Church, Bengeo.*

### **2024 dates Second Thursday of every month:**

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April

**2.30pm – 4pm in The Oasis Café, Hertford Methodist Church, Ware Road, Hertford. SG13 7DZ**

For more information please contact us via Holy Trinity Church

[bereavementcafe@parishofbengeo.com](mailto:bereavementcafe@parishofbengeo.com)

**01992 413691**

Anyone who has experienced loss of someone close to them, no matter how long ago, is welcome to the Bereavement Café. It is free to attend and you are welcome to drop in at any time during the afternoon. The atmosphere is very relaxed and informal, just like a real café, with hot drinks and refreshments. It's a safe place to speak openly about our experiences, or simply just meet up for a coffee or a cup of tea.

There are a growing number of Bereavement Café's throughout West Essex and East Herts. If you'd like to stay up to date with the latest information and find other Bereavement Café events, please ask our host team at the Hertford café, or contact us using the email or phone number above.

## WATTON AT STONE METHODIST CHURCH – History

When Watton at Stone Methodist Church opened in 1891 there were already Methodists living in the village, and when the cornerstone was laid over 300 people attended. The first service was held in October 1891, two months later than planned, and as it rained that day they had to have tea in the barn next door.



The total cost of the building, £600, was met by the time it opened. There was a dedicated group of members, including Cecil Tranter Peck who was involved for over 50 years. By 1908 they decided to renovate the church. To fundraise they held a bazaar and raised £83.19.11 plus £30 in donations - in today's values that's around £10k! There were a number of farmers who were trustees, together with a clerk and blacksmith. The church continued its role throughout two world wars. During World War 2 a bomb landed close to the village and blew out all the stained glass windows except for the rose window. The war effort decreed they could only be replaced with plain glass and the roof needed tie bars from the church through to the hall.

In 1968 dry rot was found in the church floor. Around that time, there was consideration that a company could rent the site to build a shop with church accommodation above it. Nothing came of this, but as the minute book tells us there was much discussion on the dry rot problem as the church was short of funds. Services then moved into the hall and Ralph White, the farmer from Oaks Cross, together with his family and friends replaced the wood.

Around the early 80s a white mark was spotted on the roof. It was quickly examined and we were advised to remove it as quickly as possible to avoid it spreading. Sadly the dry rot had returned. John Ellis remembers taking a service with the tarpaulin flapping over him. Again, the church was low on funds, but by the time the bill arrived they had the money to pay it.

For many years there was an active and well supported Sunday School. In the early 80's they started Pathfinders, with three age-

ranges and at its peak there were over 100 children attending the clubs each week. One highlight was when two double decker Green Line buses were booked for a wonderful day out at Wicksteed Park. The church started a variety of clubs including Lunch Club, Coffee Morning, Craft Club and Knit & Knatter. Links were forged with the Scouts and Guides and every year a Carol Service was held for them. There were links too with the village school, taking assemblies and the school choir coming to sing to the lunch club at Christmas.

When John Butt was minister, he encouraged a vision to modernise the church and hall. Initially, we started to improve the facilities in the church, new entrance, removal of the pulpit, modern comfy chairs, redecoration and carpet. All this was achieved as the necessary funds were raised. The next step was to improve the hall, kitchen and toilet, another major fundraising effort, requiring over £200K. This took several years and the efforts of many people to raise the funds but 12 years ago, it was all completed.

It was wonderful to have the building used as part of the community. One idea was to use the building for day retreats and there was a very welcome donation to pay for a sound system and power point projector.

When Covid arrived the church had to close, but fellowship continued in different ways, through emailed weekly services and personal delivery to those not on email, plus regular phone calls. However, after Covid delays in obtaining permission to reopen the hall meant regular bookings moved to other halls which affected finances. The congregation were getting older and unable to carry out the many and varied tasks to maintain the church. So sadly, in November 2023 the church had to close.

We should not leave this short history without remembering the many people who have made a valuable contribution to the church's life and witness over the past 130 years. Too many to name, but for each and every one of them, we give thanks.

*Special thanks to **John Ellis** for this detailed history.*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

**HYMNS & CAKE** - our church's popular contribution to local 'Lent Events' for Christian Aid, will be on Palm Sunday (24<sup>th</sup> March) this year, 3pm – 4.30pm.



Which of your favourite hymns will **you** request?

*(It will come as no surprise that we'll also be asking for donations of cake – home-made or bought!).*



## CALLING ALL GARDENERS!

**Our annual PLANT SALE** in aid of Action for Children will be on **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 9.30am – 11.30am**



Please sow a few extra seeds and save any cuttings, divided perennials etc., in preparation!

## GOODBYE - Ron Skinner 1930 – 2023

We were greatly saddened to hear of Ron's death on 12<sup>th</sup> December.



Ron grew up in Sidcup, South London, and attended school at Eltham College. He trained as an engineer at Northampton College of Advanced Technology in London where he met Doris, his future wife. Both were employed initially by Associated Electrical Industries and, after they married, Ron joined Burman Tool Company (Doris's father's company), based in Rye Park, Hoddesdon, with a view to becoming manager/owner and they moved to Hertford.

Ron played the piano and organ as well as singing second tenor with Hertford Choral Society from 1996 to 2022 and with the Mimram singers, possibly from their beginning under David Scholar. He played the organ in our church and sang tenor in the choir, often taking solo parts when the choir was larger and was able to perform pieces such as Stainer's *Crucifixion* at Easter, and I remember him singing the lovely tenor solo in Harold Darke's setting of *In the bleak midwinter* at our Carol Service.

In the past Ron has been a Trustee, played piano for the Women's Fellowship, and was generally involved in the life of our church for many years. He has been in demand to play numerous church organs around this area and has helped us many times at short notice on Sundays and for weekday services.

Chief amongst Ron's hobbies was an interest in steam railways. In addition to Doris, he leaves behind four children, Janet, Peter, David, Ann, and twelve grandchildren.

On a lighter note, Ron was the only person I knew who could wiggle his ears! In a church show years ago I remember having great fun playing Mary Poppins with Ron playing Bert, the





chimney sweep, and adding Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious and Chim-chiminychim-chim-cheree to our musical repertoire.

The Thanksgiving Service for Ron's life on 10<sup>th</sup> January, led by Marcia, was a very special occasion. The church was full, Ron's favourite hymns sung with great enthusiasm, and the tributes from his family would have made him very proud. The service ended with Ron's all-time favourite organ music – Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor, played

by Derek Harrison, which gave our little church organ a thorough workout!

**Trish Goldsmith**

\*\*\*\*\*

**THE BIBLE STORY OF SAUL...**

...may not be very familiar. You may know that he was the first King of Israel, but most of us are more familiar with the story of his successor, David, the one who slew Goliath.



In March you have a rare opportunity to enjoy Handel's dramatic oratorio **Saul** here in Hertford, performed by Hertford Choral Society with professional soloists and a period orchestra. It's a fascinatingly dramatic and unusual work, full of the base human emotions of revenge, glory, love, lust and power. Young David, having beaten Goliath comes back to the court of Saul, his King and Master. Saul, who has loved and adored him suddenly turns very jealous. Saul's children are also involved in the story - one of his daughters loves David, the other hates him. Saul's son Jonathan is caught in the middle between loyalty to his father and to his friend, David. Come and hear the rest of the story in All Saints' Church on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 7.30pm! More details on the 'What's On' page...

## PRAYER FOR THE HOLY LAND

How can we call a land "Holy"  
when a festival site  
becomes a killing ground  
and a hospital  
becomes a grave?  
Christ, have mercy  
upon the land of your birth  
and all who know it as home.  
May the prophecy of Isaiah find fruition  
in this time and place:  
No more shall infants live but a few days  
or the lives of older people be cut short.  
No more shall weeping and distress  
echo across the plains.  
No more shall children be borne  
for calamity.  
Let houses be built and lived in.  
Let vineyards be planted and enjoyed.  
Let enemies come and eat together  
and the days of hurt and destruction  
be over.  
In Jesus' name we pray

**Amen**

(Isaiah 65 v.17-25)

*Sourced from the Methodist Church website.*

## THE BEAUTIFUL BLUE DANUBE

I'm sure we can all hum this familiar waltz tune by Johann Strauss II but last October Chris and I were lucky enough to celebrate my significant birthday by visiting the river itself for a week. Admittedly the water was not remotely blue but the sky above was often deep blue and the scenery along the section of the Danube covered by our modest cruise was certainly beautiful.

We boarded the MS William Wordsworth near Budapest in Hungary with about one hundred other passengers, cruised peacefully overnight and by the next morning we were visiting Esztergom



where the magnificent domed cathedral on the hilltop gave us our first view of Slovakia across the river.

Bratislava, prominent in the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and capital of newly created independent Slovakia since 1993, was our destination on Day 3. The old town is full of beautiful mediaeval buildings such as the National Theatre and the aptly named Blue Church. As with all our visits we were introduced to a local guide with excellent English and a wealth of fascinating facts to tell us about the history of the location.

Do you remember at school learning how Richard the Lionheart was imprisoned as he returned from the Crusades in 1192? Well our destination on Day 4 was the location of that very castle in Durnstein, Austria. Tradition has it that his minstrel, Blondel, toured Europe trying to find him by singing an English song under every castle he passed and it was here he heard the second verse sung from inside the fortress! A ransom was paid and Richard returned to England!

At this point in the cruise the river passes through the Wachau Valley where rolling hills are lined with terraces whose vineyards

produce grapes and apricots. Melk, on the opposite bank, is dominated by a wonderful gold and cream Abbey with a façade nearly 400 yards wide, plus many wine-shops and taverns.

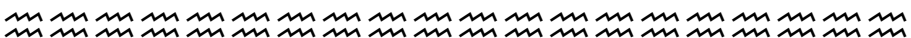
We took a coach trip to Salzburg on Day 5. This beautiful Austrian city, birthplace of Mozart in 1756, calls itself 'the world's stage' and indeed it is full of elegant museums, churches, and the spacious Mirabell Gardens. You may remember that it was the setting for the film 'The Sound of Music', snatches from which our guide sang at each appropriate location. Later we climbed up to the Fortress from where we could survey the whole city.

Our final day in Austria was spent in Vienna. We had cruised past on Day 4 but this time we were taken by coach into the heart of the city for a tour followed by time to explore further on foot. We decided to visit the Mozart Haus museum, full of fascinating objects and pictures. Back on the ship that evening we were entertained by an excellent professional string quartet to complete the day on a musical note.

When we first arrived on the Danube it had been explained that an unusually dry summer had led to the river level being lower than usual which had, in turn, made mooring cruise ships in some of the riverside towns and cities impossible. Thus it was that we had not visited Budapest until Day 7 when a coach tour showed us the twin cities of Buda and Pest and the eight bridges which link them, the panoramic views from the Fishermen's Bastion and the colossal Parliament Building. On arriving back on board MS William Wordsworth we were treated to a gala dinner and an amazing Hungarian Folklore Dance performance.

What a fascinating week it was!

**Jackie Lawn**



*Thank you Jackie, for a fascinating description of a lovely holiday. We would love to have more articles like this one, please! Do tell us about your travels - whether in the UK or abroad.*

## MEET OUR MUSICIANS

*We have an excellent team of organists and pianists who play for our services week by week, but as some are hidden away in the gallery we thought it would be interesting to find out more about them. We begin with **David Penrose**.*

Despite his surname indicating Cornish ancestry, David was born in Cardiff. His father was a piano tuner, so with instruments in the house it's no surprise that David learned to play from around the age of 7. His father played the harmonium at the local Methodist chapel, and by the time David was 11 he was occasionally playing to accompany the hymns. It was a mile's walk to the Methodist chapel, passing a Baptist chapel on the way, so as it was nearer, that was where David went to Sunday School. He was soon playing the piano there, and was then given an organ tutor book and encouraged to play. At school he also played the violin.



On leaving school he spent two years doing National Service with the RAF, mostly in Wiltshire but he also spent time on Cyprus around the time of the Suez Crisis. He was meant to be working with radar, but the equipment never arrived! During his time there most of his colleagues were allowed leave at Christmas, but he was told he had to stay or there would have been no-one to play for the Christmas Service!

After that he took up his scholarship and spent three years at Trinity College in London where he joined the Christian Union, which is where he met Helen, his future wife. After a year of teacher training at the Institute of Education in Bedford Square he got his first teaching post at a Grammar School in Swanage, where he stayed for five years. Now married, with their first daughter, and living in a flat with an outside metal staircase, he looked for a better position and hopefully more convenient accommodation. Having applied for a post in Kent but had no reply, he attended an interview in Hertford and was offered a job straightaway, which he accepted. When he got home

the letter from Kent had arrived, also offering him a job. Fortunately for Hertford he'd already accepted the post at Hertford Grammar School (now Richard Hale School) where he went on to teach music for 22 years.

David and Helen have lived in Hertford for 57 years, moved around Hertford, having lived in Ware Road, London Road, Fanshawe Street, Longwood Road and now Bengelo. They have two daughters and three grandchildren. Their daughter Jane works for Future Hope and Rebecca is a missionary with OMF in Thailand. On moving to Hertford they attended the Baptist Church and eventually David joined their team of organists.

David was a founder member of the Male Voice Group which started in 1980 at the Baptist Church. They became part of the Festival of Male Voice Praise and he conducted the London Festival for some 16 years.

After leaving Richard Hale school he became an examiner for his college, Trinity College of Music. He felt that God was leading as the College replied to an application two years earlier in the July he left the school. He regularly travelled the world to examine all levels of music. He felt greatly blessed by God as he met with Christians from a number of different countries, even stepping in to play for a service in Colombo as the organist had been taken ill that morning.

He says he doesn't have hobbies as such but is quite domesticated! He's enjoyed making jam and marmalade for a number of years, now ended, but still makes their own bread (by machine, he adds). He played cricket at school to a limited extent and still takes quite an interest in the game. He's always been fascinated by numbers so is happy doing number puzzles as we're told it helps the brain to keep alert - so that's his excuse for time wasting!

On being asked about his favourite composer Helen suggested "Whoever he's listening to at the time" but David suggested probably Handel – not least because of his name – David Frederick Handel Penrose! Thinking of a favourite hymn is always a challenge, but traditional hymns 'And can it be' (Singing the Faith – StF 345) and 'Thine be the glory' (StF 313) are definitely in his top five, alongside the modern hymn 'In Christ alone' (StF 351)

## WHAT'S ON...

**SOUNDBITES** Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts in All Saints' Church, Hertford. Soundbites, as its name suggests, combines a selection of soups, rolls, sandwiches, cakes and hot drinks available from 12:00 with a short (35-45 mins), unticketed, admission-free concert at 1:00 pm. The Spring Concert Series runs from 25th January and runs until 22nd March 2023.

More details on All Saints' Church website.

\*\*\*\*\*

**HANDEL – SAUL** on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 7.30pm in All Saints' Church. Hertford Choral Society and Eboracum Baroque Orchestra, conducted by Manvider Rattan.

Tickets £16 reserved, £12 unreserved £4 students from [www.ticketssource.co.uk](http://www.ticketssource.co.uk) (booking fee applies), from Hertford Tourist Information Centre (unreserved only) or from choir members.

\*\*\*\*\*



