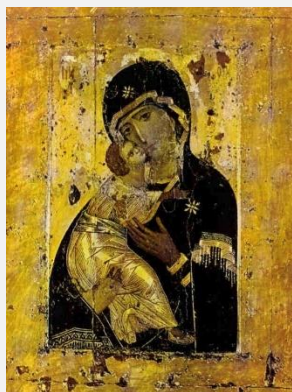


Issue 3:
April 2023



The Virgin of Kyiv
known by some as the
Virgin of Vladimir

This issue was shaped
by:

Rob Rutherford
Eluned Hallas
Louise Heffernan

Ideas for future
content to:
Candle@
abingdonparish.org.uk

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

Tel:
01235 520144
07395943957
E-mail:
administrator
@sthelens-
abingdon.org.uk

A candle in...

THE

WINDOW

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

Mary's Lament

Flesh of my flesh, yet never mine,
a gift, a joy and at the end,
deep sorrow as the sword that
pierced him pierced my own heart too.
From child to man I watched him grow,
changing, moving away,
yet always held in my heart.

Flesh of my flesh, born in time and
space, yet come to earth from far
beyond the spinning stars.
Lord of the universe, born
of water and spirit, God come
to dwell with us, within us,
God unknown, unfathomable,
but now a mystery unveiled in
this man, my son.

Flesh of my flesh, foretold by prophets,
born to be King, yet a man of
sorrows, suffering through love,
dying to redeem us.
Too good for this twisted world.
he shone light in dark places,
but men preferred the darkness
and fled from the truth
the light revealed.

Flesh of my flesh, crushed for a time
by the evil powers of this world,
betrayed, rejected, tortured,
dying for love of us.
Yet out of death came life,
out of darkness, light,
as the dead wood of the cross
blossomed with lilies, a promise of
new life.



Susan Gee

Easter: Wishful thinking, or Grounded Hope?

Gwen Bevington

I remember a counselling client who described a happy childhood in which fluffy white clouds floated across blue skies. I wondered what on the ground around had led her to avert her gaze upwards. I have similar wonders about Easter cards that display cute bunnies and (much as they give me joy) clumps of daffodils. What are we avoiding? Is this all just wishful thinking?

A good example of wishful thinking in the comparatively modern era was the Munich Agreement. Neville Chamberlain wished to believe that a gentlemen's agreement with Hitler would work. He went for optimism over reality; most people in the country hoped, against evidence, that he was right. I would have been the same. I'm not militaristic, nor very patriotic - yet I can't help seeing Easter reflected in those pivotal twentieth-century events: Palm Sunday as a Munich Agreement, Holy Week as a War and Easter Sunday as VE day from a British perspective. Did the crowds on Palm Sunday hope against hope that the coming of Jesus into the city would make everything all right? Did people close their eyes to the might of Rome, as to Hitler's expanding store of armaments? Did Jesus's disciples thrill to the prospect of Rome getting comeuppance? It's not an exact parallel; my parents and their generation just hoped for life to go on normally, while those round Jesus were eager for a glorious upsetting of the status quo. Good Friday, and September 1939, brought sinking hearts. Horror even. Knowing that all the vile things that had happened before were coming again.

Zeffirelli's 1977 film *Jesus of Nazareth* brought home to me the disciples' incredulity and bitter disappointment as they saw their leader trapped, humiliated and subjected to a brutal execution. 1939 likewise was a shock, if not a surprise. The declaration of war showed up the Munich Agreement as a sick delusion; Good Friday did the same for Palm Sunday, or at least for the triumphalist aspect of that day.

The "Harrowing of Hell" is not a doctrine so named in the New Testament – but several passages do seem to refer to what was later understood by the term. It's expressed in the Apostles' Creed as "He descended to the dead." As I look at it, Jesus, in meeting those who had died, encountered, was alongside and cancelled the power of all the evils he had not yet lived through himself. He had experienced a lot: betrayal, ostracism, crucifixion (for three)... There are also strong hints in the narratives that Jesus was sexually abused during the Passion. Nevertheless, there are some appalling experiences he missed out on – and in the Harrowing of Hell those omissions were made good.

I love Easter Sunday: the bells, the flowers, the crowds, the hymns, the anthems, even the sermons. In earlier years, I loved the Easter bonnets. Nevertheless, this is not just a feel-good day or season. It is a time of victory, but of victory won at a cost. It's based not on wishful thinking, but on hard-won acquaintance with reality. Everything has indeed come right; goodness has won and will win. Yet this all goes alongside a sober sense that much has been suffered and there are depths of pain involved that we cannot even contemplate. People threw "Peace parties" in 1945; yet few were not battle-scarred, few had escaped heavy loss. They hoped that VE day would usher in a new dawn. Christians believe it was Easter Sunday which changed the whole of reality forever. What does this mean for us? It must mean many things. For a start, being an Easter people means we are rooted in reality, including the grim realities. We don't need to paper over cracks, in fact we need not to do so. On the basis that all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well – we can find the courage to look reality in the face. We can care about truth more than anything else. We don't have to fear hard truths.

At Quarr Abbey on the Isle of Wight I once found some Catholic Easter cards. They're rather gory, so although I bought some, I haven't used any. But in the bleeding hearts I see the truth of God's love outpoured - unstinting, costly, unbelievably painful, totally engaged with actuality. Easter tells me that God's understanding of human experience is unblinking, clear-sighted and comes from God's having fully embraced who we are and what happens to us.

If you're reading this in Eastertide:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

What is spiritual direction?

Sue Sheppy



It is an ancient ministry, sometimes called Spiritual Counsel, Prayer Guidance or Soul Friendship. It is about taking the time to meet with another person to talk together about your spiritual journey, prayer life and search for God. Many people find that this pattern of reflective companionship can be a significant help.

What can I talk about?

The important thing is that this is a ‘sacred space’ into which we can bring anything but into which we do not have to bring anything. There are no expectations, and no judgement. It is a listening and accepting space.

- Sometimes you might have a sense of something happening in your life and needing to make sense of it in a spiritual context: ‘Where is God in this for me?’
- Sometimes you might have a particular spiritual issue you want to work through.
- Sometimes it is as simple as: ‘How can I pray?’
- Sometimes it is an individual’s awareness of God inviting them to ‘something more’, and needing help to work out what that is really all about.

So the answer to the question is: ‘Anything that impacts on your relationship with God.’

Who?

The person offering this ministry will be a person of prayer who makes the commitment to accept you as you are and where you are. The companion or guide’s role is to support the discernment of God’s activity in your life.

How?

People usually meet face to face, normally in the accompanier’s home, but other arrangements can be made if, for whatever reason, this is not possible.

How often?

It can vary from every few weeks to twice a year. The length of the meeting also varies according to individual need. However a very common pattern is to meet about once every six weeks for an hour or so.

Does it cost anything?

For some who offer this ministry, it is their livelihood and they need to be paid, while others can offer it free of charge.

How do I find someone?

This is a confidential and very individual relationship; it is important to pray about it, take your time and ask advice in order to find the right person.

- There may be someone whom you already know whom you would like to ask; if you do so you may well find that they offer this ministry and that others have asked them before you. But do not ask a friend or someone who is part of your day-to-day life, because this may diminish your freedom to explore.
- There is a list of spiritual directors - from various denominations and traditions - which you can obtain from the offices of the Diocese of Oxford (email: spidir@oxford.anglican.org). Any of the people in this list will be able to explore with you how spiritual accompaniment can work, and might work for you.

If you feel that perhaps you are being called to the ministry of spiritual direction, the next **Ecumenical Spiritual Direction Training** run by the Spiritual Direction (SpiDir) Network for Berks, Bucks and Oxon begins in September 2023 and finishes in May 2024. This will be an evening course online and its aim is to increase the skill and confidence of those who find they are already being turned to by others for help on their spiritual journey.

The course aims to:

- explore the relationship of spiritual direction in the light of our own life experience and of the experience of being alongside others
- explore Christian understanding of personal growth and fulfilment
- relate this experience to the Christian tradition of spiritual direction.

For further information please see the website: www.spidirnetwork.org.uk or contact Sue Sheppy for an informal chat: susan.sheppy@btinternet.com

What does Chatgpt think?

A question from one of our readers: Does free will exist?

Chatgpt: (after about 10 seconds or less)

The question of whether free will exists is a longstanding philosophical and scientific debate.

On one hand, some argue that free will is an essential part of human experience and necessary for moral responsibility. They contend that individuals have the power to make choices based on their own desires, beliefs, and intentions, and that these choices are not predetermined by any external factors.

On the other hand, others argue that free will is an illusion and that human behavior is ultimately determined by factors beyond our control, such as genetics, environment, and past experiences. They contend that even our choices are determined by these factors and that the feeling of free will is simply a result of our limited understanding of the complex processes that govern our behavior.

There is evidence from neuroscience that suggests that many of our decisions are made subconsciously, before we are even aware of them, which supports the idea that our behavior may be largely determined by factors beyond our conscious control. However, this does not necessarily mean that free will does not exist.

Ultimately, the question of whether free will exists may be difficult, if not impossible, to answer definitively. It may be that the concept of free will is a complex interplay of conscious and subconscious processes that we do not fully understand.

Introducing TrinityLearning's Experience Easter 2023

Nicola Williams



This year, Experience Easter is not just back in Trinity Church, it's also undergone an exciting redesign.

After offering our online Experience Easter for the last two years using videos created by volunteers, this year we felt it was time to return to live workshops in Trinity Church, but with a new look. Thanks to feedback from teachers and children who had used our online version we realised just how much they appreciated hearing the Easter story and experiencing the workshops as they'd been laid out online.

So, this year, rather than moving through the workshops in small groups, each class stays together and follows through the workshops in order. This has meant that we can leave more of the church looking as it usually would, which is hopefully less disruptive for the congregation and enables children and teachers to really appreciate the beauty and perhaps some of the symbolism of Trinity Church. As always, Experience Easter only happens because of the amazing support of our volunteers. This year, more than 30 volunteers have rolled plasticine, threaded beads, put together packs, built tableau, sung songs, led workshops and completed many other tasks to help deliver Experience Easter to around 450 children from eight local schools.



That's in addition to the 20 or so volunteers who contributed videos to the online version which we have continued to offer this year, and which is particularly popular with the schools further away in the Abingdon Partnership.

We have received record bookings for Experience Easter this year and would like to thank all our volunteers for continuing to support this amazing project.

We'll share some of the schools' feedback later in the year.





Holy Week & Easter in the Parish

Sunday 2 April – Palm Sunday

8:00 am	St H	Holy Communion (BCP) with Palm Blessing
9:30 am	St M	Palm Liturgy & Sung Mass
10:30 am	St H	Palm Liturgy, Procession & Sung Eucharist
11:15 am	St N	Palm Liturgy & Holy Communion

Holy Week – Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday

7:00pm	St M	Said Mass & address
8:00 pm	St H	Compline with address

Thursday 6 April – Maundy Thursday

12:30 pm	St M	Said Mass followed by shared lunch
7:30 pm	St N	Holy Communion
8:00 pm	St H	Sung Eucharist, Stripping of Altar and Vigil
8:00 pm	St M	Maundy Thursday Liturgy and Watch of the Passion

Friday 7 April – Good Friday

10:00 am	St M	Children's Liturgy
10:00 am	St N	Good Friday Liturgy
11:45 am	Church in Abingdon Walk of Witness - meet at the Library	
12 noon	CiA United Service in the Market Place	
2:00 pm	St H	Liturgy of Good Friday
2:00 pm	St M	Good Friday Liturgy

Holy Saturday/Easter Eve

8:00 pm	St H	Lighting of the New Fire, Vigil & Renewal of Baptismal Vows
8:00pm	St M	Lighting of the New Fire, Vigil & Renewal of Baptismal Vows

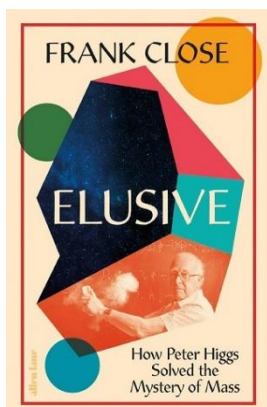
Sunday 9 April – Easter Day

8:00 am	St H	Holy Communion (BCP)
9:30 am	St M	Sung Mass
10:30 am	St H	Procession & Festival Eucharist of the Resurrection
11:15 am	St N	Holy Communion and Lighting of Paschal Candle



Unexpected Lessons

Rob Rutherford



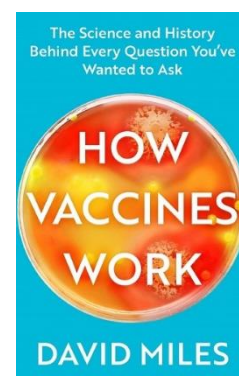
I went to an event at the Atom Society annual festival a couple of Saturdays ago. Frank Close was talking about his latest book 'Elusive' which both describes the discovery of the Higgs Boson (an 'elusive' particle) and also gives a pen portrait of Peter Higgs, who first suggested there might be such a particle and that it might be worth looking for it. Peter was and is an 'elusive' character who hates publicity.

Peter was quoted as saying that the fuss around the Higgs particle 'ruined his life'. On the day in 2013 when the Nobel Prize was awarded jointly to him and François Englert, he disappeared to his favourite fish bar without telling anyone where he was going. He does not possess a mobile phone and does not use email. He eventually found out.

Personalities in science are often as interesting as their theories or experiments but you don't tend to hear much about them. Isaac Newton was very interested in alchemy and Michael Faraday had a deep Christian faith but these facts don't tend to feature in your average text book.

Another interesting aspect of scientific history featured in the first half of the event. Dr David Miles is an infectious disease immunologist who has worked mostly on diseases of childhood in Africa and the vaccinations that protect against them. He now lives in London and tutors on the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's online MSc course. His talk was about the history of vaccination but it focussed on 'forgotten heroes' - men or women who were an important part of that history but whose stories have largely been forgotten. One person you will have heard of is Edward Jenner but the talk avoided the famous. Few people in the audience had heard of a slave living in America whose real name is not known but whose name 'Onesimus'* was given to him by his 'owner' Cotton Mather, a Puritan Minister in Boston with connections to the Royal Society in London. The year is 1706, the place Massachusetts and Cotton Mather was 'given' Onesimus the slave by his congregation as a present. It takes a few minutes to process this - how wrong can the church get?

All we know about Onesimus comes from the diaries of his 'owner'. One day Onesimus was asked whether he had ever had smallpox, a much-feared disease. 'Yes and No' was the curious answer. In Africa Onesimus had been scratched with infected pus from a victim of smallpox and the resulting illness was mild and protected him from the disease for the rest of his life. Apparently, this was common practice in parts of Africa. Cotton Mather was curious about this and made further researches into this technique which became known as 'variolation' and he became so convinced of its efficacy that he promoted it in the Boston area. The outcry that resulted from this sounds familiar in this social media age. Cotton Mather was subjected to a hate campaign, denounced and a bomb was thrown through his window. Eventually the facts spoke - when a smallpox outbreak hit Boston in 1721 the survival rate amongst those who had been variolated was about six times higher than in those that hadn't.



Mather wasn't a hero - he saw slavery as normal and he was also a part actor in the Salem witch trials - but perhaps Onesimus was.

Conclusions? Our view of history is incomplete and patchy.

Science is not always carried out by white men.

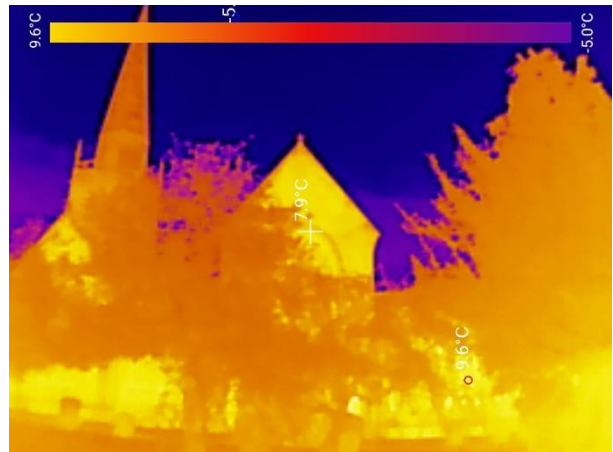
The church has got things very wrong in the past and probably will again.

*This name might ring a bell – it appears in the New Testament. It means 'useful' and was often given to slaves.

Seeing the churches in a new Light

Rob Rutherford

Without our being aware of it, everything around us is emitting infra-red light. The Churches are no exception. The warmer they are, the more they radiate. These pictures are for interest rather than scientific analysis but they might prompt a few questions.



April and May Events

Compiled by Louise Heffernan

Art Exhibition – Easter

For a period of four weeks around Easter this year, St Helen’s Church, South Aisle, will house an exhibition of four major art works by Revd Ian Griffiths, the minister of All Saints and Trinity churches in Abingdon. These are part of a sequence called The Word Beyond Words and explore a different approach to thinking about God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The exhibition will be in two parts: 27 March - 8 April 2023 (Wil and Hinri), 10 April - 22 April 2023 (Fawkes and Ed.) Everyone is invited to visit St Helen’s Church this Lent and Easter season, to encounter this artist’s meditative approach to the Gospel. The church is open between 10 am and 3 pm.



A FREE OPEN STUDIOS
EVENT AT HUNDREDS OF
OXFORDSHIRE VENUES

OXFORDSHIRE
art
WEEKS

www.artweeks.org

Abbey
Group
**St. Nicolas
Church**
Market Square
Abingdon
OX14 3HF

Sun 7 - Sat 13 May
10am - 5pm (Sun 2-5).

Art exhibition featuring work by: Claire Cross, Margaret Horton, Connie Addison, with guest glass artist Chris Eccles and ceramicist Mags Cuttle

Original paintings (including watercolours, mixed media, pastels, acrylics, pen and wash), glass art and gifts, pottery, prints, cards and housewares for sale. Wheelchair access

LET'S CELEBRATE

Chelsea gold medallist and NAFAS judge
Anna Steven

Will be creating themed flower arrangements
in celebration of the Coronation of King Charles III

Saturday 29th April 2.00 pm | St Michael and All Angels Church, Park Road, Abingdon
Refreshments Available Free Parking

Tickets £10, Available from the Bookstore
Bury Street, Abingdon
or on the door

Proceeds towards Church funds

Sponsored by
G.P. Messias & Son, Abingdon
Indigo
Chancellor
Abingdon

THE BIG HELP OUT at **St Helen's Church**
Mon 8th May
10am - 1pm

Can you help St. Helen's Church?
Come in and see

Flower arranging
Fundraising
stewards
Join the choir
Christmas Market
Bell ringing
Publicity
Help with events

On offer: Bacon butties, refreshments to buy, tours of the church, craft activities, a quiz

QUIZ

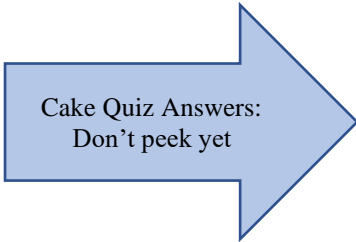
Come and Sing
Handel’s Messiah parts 2 and 3
Saturday 20th May in St Michael’s Church.
In aid of the Abingdon Passion Play

Do you know your cakes?

Angela Stimpson

There are no hot cross buns here but if you gave up cake for Lent you will probably be eating one of these this Easter. However, some may not necessarily be part of an afternoon tea.

1. North Oxfordshire cakes
2. Someone from the mountains taking a tumble
3. Could this be Satan's favourite
4. A German wood
5. Baked by sea creatures
6. Female cub scouts
7. Anyone for tennis?
8. Cross Offa's Dyke for these
9. A kilt wearing boy who never grew up
10. A griddle cake popular in the North East
11. Eve may have been tempted if she had lived in the South
West of England
12. You won't get this on Tinder!
13. Viennese luxury chocolate cake
14. Grown in fields and not many calories
15. A large cake popular in Victorian times, less than a guinea
16. Men always say women are no good at this
17. They might live at the bottom of your garden
18. A royal teatime treat
19. Sold by the man from Drury Lane
20. Tropical topsy turvy cake
21. Sounds like something the birds would like
22. The Queen's lunch
23. Vermillion fabric
24. Vertically challenged
25. E.M. Forster's book about moving in trepidation
26. The older you get the hotter it becomes
27. A healthy option, one of your five a day
28. Sounds like a savoury one
29. A mug would be too large
30. Dee is finished
31. A Caribbean redhead
32. Citrusy precipitation
33. Plenty of fat, no good for the diet
34. Might break your teeth on these
35. Made for mothers
36. It's unlikely you will find this one in the woods
37. It's official, it's a cake!
38. 17th century French woman who lived in Bath and liked a
cuppa
39. Lake District walkers' essential item
40. One slice of this and you will return



40.	Cut and Come Again Cake	20.	Pineapple Upside Down Cake
39.	Kendal Mint Cake	19.	Muffins
38.	Sally Lunn's Teacakes	18.	Queen Cakes
37.	Jaffa Cakes	17.	Fairy Cakes
36.	Chocolate Yule Log	16.	Parkin
35.	Simmel Cake	15.	Pound Cake
34.	Rock Cakes	14.	Oatcakes
33.	Lardy Cake	13.	Sachertorte
32.	Lemon Drizzle	12.	Date Cake
31.	Jamaican Ginger Cake	11.	Dorset Apple Cake
30.	Dundee Cake	10.	Singin' Hinny
29.	Cupcakes	9.	Scotch Pancakes
28.	Cheesecake	8.	Welsh Cakes
27.	Carrot Cake	7.	Wimbledon Cake
26.	Birthday Cake	6.	Brownies
25.	Angel Cake	5.	Fishcakes
24.	Shortcake	4.	Black Forest Gateau
23.	Red Velvet Cake	3.	Devil's Food Cake
22.	Victoria Sandwich	2.	Swiss Roll
21.	Seed Cake	1.	Banbury Cakes

Apologies for the rather scrambled answers to last month's puzzle. You managed to work it out though didn't you!

Nature Corner:

With thanks to David Bevington

Add your own biblical quote



Useful Weblinks:

Services: for the latest news see the Parish Website:

abingdonparish.org.uk

Page for Church of England links: services, daily readings etc

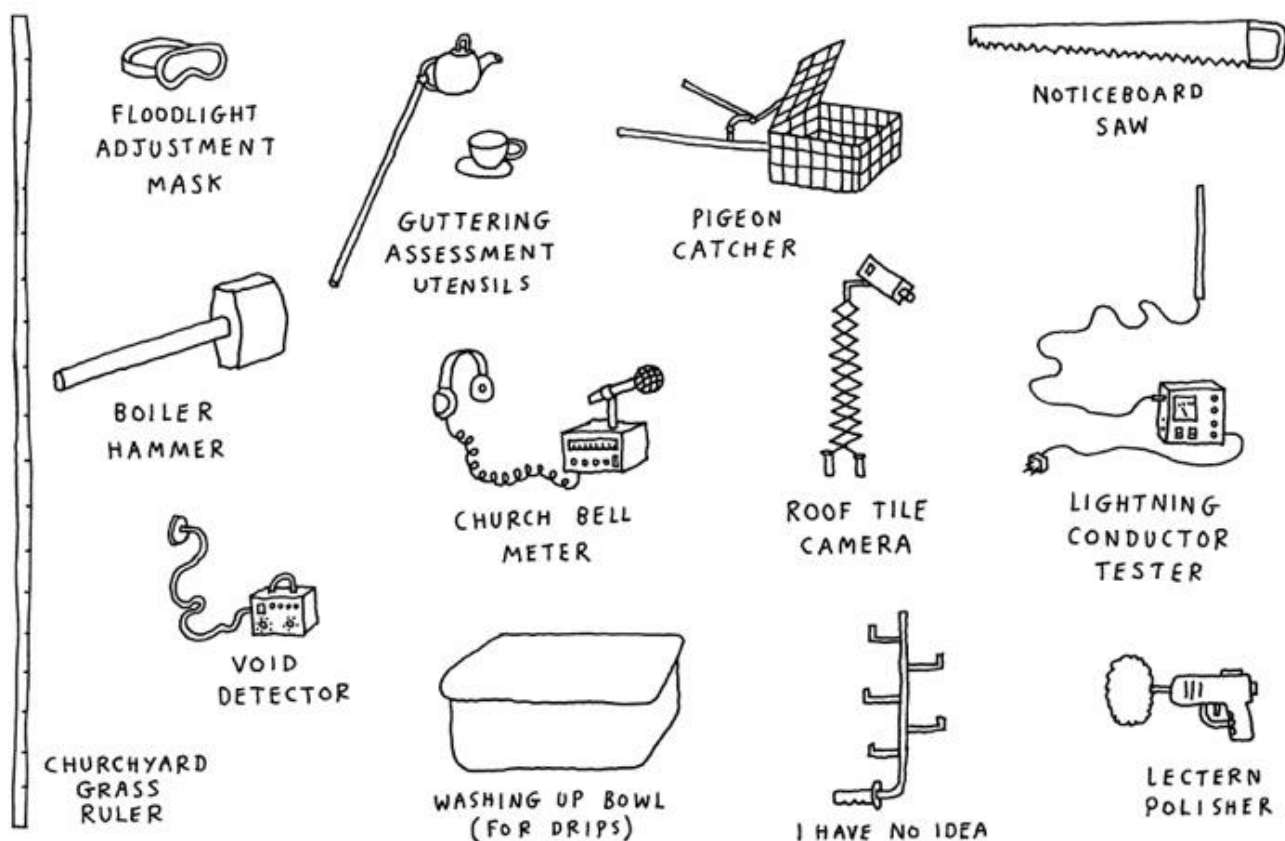
<https://www.churchofengland.org/>

FOOD BANK. The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support. Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm. The foodbank also operates from Preston Road Community Centre. Donations are welcome there too between 12.00 and 2.30pm on Wednesdays. You can also donate money by sending a cheque made out to *North Abingdon PCC Christ Church*, clearly marked 'for Food Bank' or via the Foodbank website <https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/> or the Parish office has details if you want to donate via online banking.

And finally, from Dave Walker of
Cartoon Church.

CHURCH MAINTENANCE

A BASIC TOOL KIT



CartoonChurch.com

Thanks to all contributors and to you, the readers.

The next issue will be published on May 7th: ideas and contributions to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk