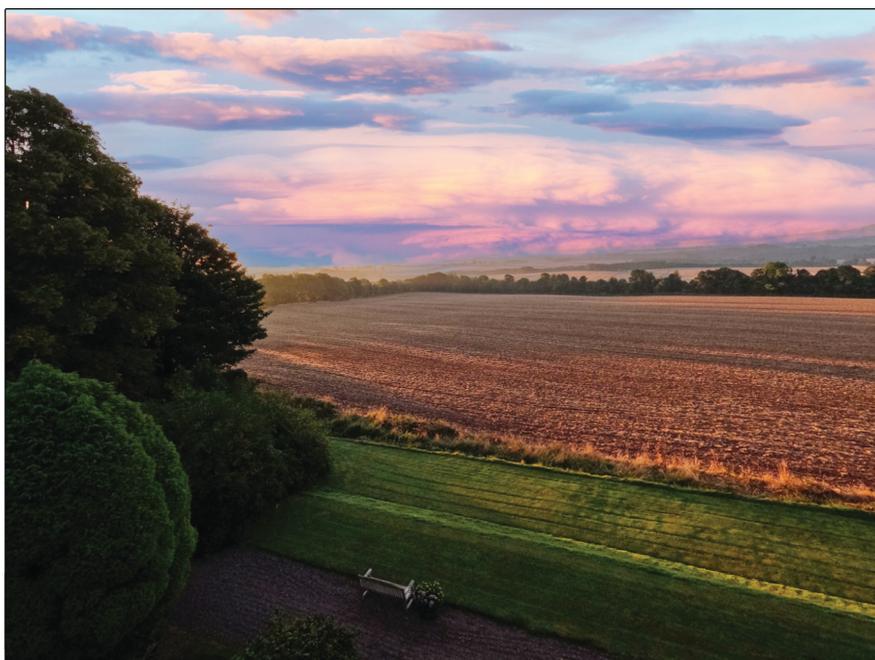


Donations

APRIL 2025

**GREETINGS FROM
LUDLOW
METHODIST
CHURCH**

SUNSET OVER NORTHUMBERLAND



Easter

Christ is Risen! – He is Risen indeed!

How glorious is the victory over sin and death is our God!

In 325AD the Council of Nicaea established that Easter would be held on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the vernal equinox. From that point forward, the Easter date depended on the ecclesiastical approximation of March 21 for the vernal equinox.

The above means that Easter Sunday can be on any date from March 22nd to April 25th, because the first full moon after the vernal equinox is different each year. Are you still with me? It gets easier from now on.

As Christians we celebrate Easter Sunday as the date when Jesus rose from the dead. We don't know the exact date only that his resurrection occurred between March 22nd and April 25th.

Since 325AD we must have hit the exact date (without knowing) on more than one occasion, could it be the exact date is also this year!

Most Christians aren't worried about the exact date, the first full moon or the vernal equinox. They just know Jesus died on Good Friday to take away their sins and rose again on Easter Sunday. Hallelujah!

Christ is risen: He is risen indeed!

And we are forgiven, redeemed, and loved.

A very happy Easter to you all.

Denise



Prayer for April 2025

Living Lord Jesus, We, your Easter People of today, thank You for the Easter People of the Gospel accounts.

For the women, who loved You so much that they went to the tomb, early in the morning, while it was still dark. Thank you especially for Mary, who wept, then rejoiced, then ran to tell the others, "I have seen the Lord!"

Thank you for Thomas, who doubted, then devoted his life to You, his Lord and his God; for the disciples who ate breakfast on the beach with You; for Peter, who was forgiven and re-commissioned by You.

Thank You for them and Your witnesses through all generations. Thank you for Your true and living written Word, proclaiming You, our true and living Lord, who lived and died and rose again to offer us forgiveness and life.

Thank you, Lord that because You live, we have hope and assurance, whatever challenges the world might bring.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Hallelujah!

By Daphne Kitching

EASTER, the most joyful day of the year

Easter is the most joyful day of the year for Christians. Christ has died for our sins. We are forgiven. Christ has risen! We are redeemed! We can look forward to an eternity in His joy! Hallelujah!

The Good News of Jesus Christ is a message so simple that you can explain it to someone in a few minutes. It is so profound that for the rest of their lives they will still be 'growing' in their Christian walk with God.

Why does the date move around so much? Because the date of Passover moves around, and according to the biblical account, Easter is tied to the Passover. Passover celebrates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, and it lasts for seven days, from the middle of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which equates to late March or early April.

Sir Isaac Newton was one of the first to use the Hebrew lunar calendar to come up with firm dates for the first Good Friday: Friday 7th April 30 AD or Friday 3rd April, 33 AD with Easter Day falling two days later. Modern scholars continue to think these two Fridays to be the most likely.

Most people will tell you that Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox, which is broadly true. But the precise calculations are complicated and involve something called an 'ecclesiastical full moon', which is not the same as the moon in the sky. The earliest possible date for Easter in the West is 22nd March, which last fell in 1818. The latest is 25th April, which last happened in 1943.

Why the name, 'Easter'? In almost every European language, the festival's name comes from 'Pesach', the Hebrew word for Passover. The Germanic word 'Easter', however, seems to come from *Eostre*, a Saxon fertility goddess mentioned by the Venerable Bede. He thought that the Saxons worshipped her in 'Eostur month,' but may have confused her with the classical dawn goddesses like *Eos* and *Aurora*, whose names mean 'shining in the east'. So, Easter might have meant simply 'beginning month' – a good time for starting up again after a long winter.

Finally, why Easter eggs? On one hand, they are an ancient symbol of birth in most European cultures. On the other hand, hens start laying regularly again each Spring. Since eggs were forbidden during Lent, it's easy to see how decorating and eating them became a practical way to celebrate Easter.

23rd April: St George and Hiccup and the dragon

Have you seen the film *How to Train your Dragon*? It's set in a Viking village under attack from dragons, who steal livestock and burn down houses. Hiccup, the village Chief's son, invents a machine to capture dragons. However, when he catches one of the most dangerous dragons, he cannot kill it, when he sees that the dragon is just as frightened as he is. Through this friendship, the people and dragons eventually learn to live in harmony.

This month we celebrate St George, the patron saint of England. He is famous for slaying a dragon, a tradition which became popular in the Middle Ages. Whether he killed an actual dragon is open to question! However, we do know that the original George was a Roman soldier at the time of Emperor Diocletian. He refused to renounce his faith, as commanded by the Emperor, resulting in his death on 23 April 303 AD.

The contrast is clear: St George slayed the evil dragon, while Hiccup refused to kill one. However, they also have something important in common. Both acted according to their conscience, defying the popular understanding of those around them and not worrying about the personal cost to themselves. St George was martyred for standing up for his faith in Jesus before a pagan emperor, while Hiccup risked rejection by his father and village because of his compassion.

Today, we are still called to stand for Christ against wrongs and injustice in daily life, whatever the personal cost. However, we also need to be ready to look our enemies in the eye and meet their hostility with love and compassion. This is why we also remember this month that Jesus died and rose again, so that we might have God's power to do this in our lives.

'Seize Intact and Hold Until Relieved'

Part 2 - The Plan

As the planning for the invasion of Europe continued, it became obvious that the left flank of the invasion, Sword Beach, would be vulnerable from attack on its own left flank, and would need protection in that area. Paratroopers from the 6th Airborne Division could land and destroy the bridges across the River Dives, a major waterway running almost due south to north along the Allied left flank. This would help slow down any German reinforcements approaching from the east.

There was a second major waterway, a canal and a river, running parallel with each other and again running almost due south to north and entering the channel at Ouistreham. They had two bridges crossing the canal and river, at Ranville and Bénouville. If these were



to be destroyed the paratroopers operating to the east of them could not be reinforced and would be isolated and vulnerable. It became obvious that these two bridges had to be captured intact.

Dropping paratroopers around the bridges would not work, it would take them too long to reform and would give the enemy the chance to destroy the bridges that were already prepared for demolition.

Another way had to be found to take the bridges intact. The only conclusion was to use gliders; their silent approach would provide an element of surprise. The feeling was that a glider attack had every chance of success, the problem would be in holding the bridges intact against a more numerically superior foe. The Airborne Division could make their way to assist with the defence once their own missions had been completed. But it would be touch and go. John Howard's comapnay was the obvious choice.

Normally four platoons strong, they would be reinforced with a further two platoons from B Company, and 30 Royal Engineers. The Engineers task would be to clear the bridges of demolitions once they had been seized.

John was not given the details of the mission until May 2. He could



not pass on the details to his men until late May, by then everyone involved in the invasion would be sealed in their pre-invasion camps and no-one would be allowed out to breach security. His orders were 'to seize intact the bridges over the River Orne and canal at Bénouville and Ranville, and hold them until relief'. Men of the 5th Para Brigade, due to

drop at 0500hrs, would provide that relief, although they couldn't be expected before 0230hrs.

Images: 1. The original bascule bridge captured by the Ox and Bucks, now part of the Pegasus Bridge museum. 2. The modern replacement, installed in 1994, also a bascule bridge.

Source: Stephen E, *Pegasus Bridge*

Next Month: Part 3, Action

Ron Gittings

Geoff's next quiz

Geoff Farmery's next quiz will be held on Friday 25th April, starting at 7pm in Wesley's Cafe. Come along and see if you can win one of his absolutely stupendous, fantastically expensive prizes!! There may even be some easier questions this time, maybe, perhaps, hopefully!

Today's 'To Do' List:

Chat with God
Be Grateful
Be Kind
Find the good
Say 'Thank you'
Smile

Stephen Dalton

The Worker's Lament:

"We, the unwilling,
led by the unknowing,
are doing the impossible
for the ungrateful.

We have done so much,
for so long, with so little,
we are now qualified
to do anything with nothing."

More from the Hollins' Household:

Mary: George went fly fishing the other day

Pip: How many flies did he catch?

Mary: They weren't biting

Pip: Of course they weren't - flies don't bite; except for Horseflies. He should have tried Jane's farm, plenty of flies there

Mary: Ah but they're Mayflies

Pip: Mayflies?

Mary: Yes, they may fly but they may stay still.

Smiles

1. You're not fat - just easier to see.
2. Money can't buy you happiness, but it keeps you in touch with the children.
3. Everytime you clean something, you just make something else dirty.
4. The word 'swims' upside down is still 'swims'.
5. If you replace the letter 'W' with 'T', in 'What, Where and When' - you receive the answer to each of them.
6. What happens when you are half scared to death - twice?
7. When you visit a theatre, which armrest is yours?
8. If people evolved from monkeys, why are monkeys still around?
9. Who knew what time it was when the first clock was created?

Who makes this lot up? Probably pensioners with not a lot to do!

Women's History Month Paving the Way for Female Preachers

At a time when women were largely excluded from public religious leadership, Mary Bosanquet-Fletcher emerged as a formidable figure whose influence would help shape the development of Methodism.

Born on 12 September 1739 to a wealthy family in Leytonstone, Essex, her journey from privileged daughter to Methodist pioneer demonstrates remarkable conviction and courage that challenged the conventions of her time.

Mary's first encounter with Methodism came through an unlikely source – a Methodist servant in her family's household. By sixteen, she had made the extraordinary decision to reject her comfortable lifestyle, choosing instead a path of modest living and charitable work that would define her legacy. Mary's decision to embrace Methodism created friction with her family, who disapproved of her choices. Yet, she remained steadfast, forging important connections with other Methodist women, particularly Sarah Crosby, a prominent class leader who became her close associate in ministry.

In 1763, Mary demonstrated the practical application of her faith by transforming her family home in Leytonstone into an orphanage and school called The Cedars. This establishment became more than just an educational institution – it provided free healthcare and served as a centre for prayer meetings and Bible studies. Later, she expanded her educational mission by establishing another school in Yorkshire called Cross Hill.

Perhaps Mary's most significant contribution to Methodism was her pioneering role as a female preacher. Her letter to John Wesley in 1771, presenting thoughtful theological arguments defending women's right to preach, represents a watershed moment in Methodist history. She explained to him that there are times when God seems to call women to preach in "extraordinary circumstances".

Wesley agreed with her, which opened the door for him to start allowing women who had an "extraordinary call" to become lay preachers, just as she did.

Mary's theological reasoning and evident calling had a profound impact on John Wesley himself. The founder of Methodism came to endorse her preaching activities, along with those of other women, marking a significant shift towards greater inclusion of women in Methodist ministry. This endorsement helped establish a precedent that would gradually expand opportunities for women in religious leadership. (Married to Rev John Fletcher of Madeley.)

Methodist News

Final report of Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice published

The Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice (ACRJ) has published its sixth and final report. It was charged with monitoring, and supporting the implementation of the 47 recommendations of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce.

The report calls for the church to address the "gaping wound of racial injustice that afflicts it" and to "reach out and welcome all comers".

It says that a strategy for bringing about change has not yet been adopted at all the front lines of the Church. The Commission identifies four priorities as key to further progress:

- Nurturing a **worship culture** in the Church of England that reflects the rich mix of backgrounds present within the Church today.
- The need for a robust structure of **governance** to ensure racial justice becomes a normal part of practice.
- The need for an effective **complaints system**.
- That the **barriers to full participation** for all within the C of E are addressed.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell said: "The proposed priorities are achievable, and I and my fellow Bishops are committed to ensuring that we drive forward the change and progress needed to eradicate racial injustice within the Church, and march into the light of God."

Eddie Stobart

Fans of well-known lorry firm Eddie Stobart may be aware that founder Eddie died in November aged 95, but few probably were unaware that he ran his company on Christian values.

Eddie Stobart's faith in God shaped his life and business. He later humbly stated that if he had known his firm would become nationally famous he wouldn't have named it after himself.

He was also the first to label each truck with woman's names, which led to a national pastime of spotting the name on each one as you passed it on the motorway.

He met his wife, Nora, at a Christian meeting in Carlisle and they married in 1951. Their shared trust in Jesus Christ guided their family life and inspired their community work.

After retiring in the 1970s, Eddie continued living in Carlisle, where he and Nora were active in their local church, and his son Edward ran the business until his own death in 2011.

Keith Danby, chairman of the Christian charity Safe Families for Children, told Premier News: 'His very core was to see people come to faith. Everybody knew he was a Christian man of God... He was a committed member of Christian Mission Gideons International.'

Eddie also built Lowmoor Evangelic Church in Wigton, Carlisle, and was involved with a Christian distribution company in Carlisle that sold Bibles and Christian literature around the world.

'His faith never waned,' Danby concluded.

Lindsay Beavon

Green Pages

A round-up of environmental
and climate-change news

April 2025

Ban of bee-killing pesticide



The UK government has upheld the ban of a neonicotinoid pesticide, which is highly toxic to bees, refusing an application for their emergency use in England. The pesticide is used on sugar beet to tackle a disease spread by aphids and has previously been allowed as an emergency measure to protect crops despite a ban on its use in the EU and the UK.

The RSPB, and other environmental organisations, has been calling for a total ban to be enforced and alternative nature-friendly measures to be used instead. This move is a vital step in efforts to protect UK wildlife and it comes after continued campaigning by environmental charities, including a sector-wide effort from the Pesticide Collaboration.

RSPB Director of Policy and Advocacy, Kevin Austin, explains: "*The Government made the only sensible choice. The science is clear that this bee-killing pesticide has no place in our countryside if we are to secure our future food security. It is now absolutely vital that farmers are properly supported to access viable nature-friendly alternatives; our ability to produce food depends on pollinators, and we cannot leave our precious wildlife in freefall any longer.*"

Around 70% of the UK is farmed, which means that reversing nature's decline will not be possible without the incredible work of farmers. We know what it will take to secure the future of our wildlife and our food security, and farmers must be supported in their efforts to farm with nature in mind.

RSPB

Net Zero Progress in Shropshire

Shropshire Council risks tearing up its climate commitments as it continues to push for the construction of the proposed North West Relief Road (NWRR). A recalculation of the carbon emissions associated with the road, shows that the project will undermine the council's 2030 net zero targets.

Building the NWRR contradicts the meaning of 'emergency' in the climate crisis. In recommending the NWRR be approved by the planning committee, the planning officer sought to downplay its impact by stating that although the additional emissions would burst through Shropshire's carbon budget, compared to global emissions it would be a relatively small amount. The Council could shift its net zero target to 2050, he said. The proposed NWRR scheme remains controversial ahead of May's elections, with different candidates in favour or opposing it.

The UK Climate Change Committee says *"investment in roads should be contingent on analysis justifying how they contribute to the UK's pathway to Net Zero"* – not to investment in the economy.

Shropshire Council's own modelling shows the road would have a limited effect on congestion in the town centre. Meanwhile, traffic will increase on other roads servicing the new route. There is well established evidence that new roads create more traffic and fail to deliver the economic benefits claimed (e.g. CPRE, 2017).

Shropshire Council has not fully investigated the potential to reduce congestion by supporting walking, cycling and public transport. The Big Town Plan Master Plan for Shrewsbury has outlined exactly how these alternative measures could work but Shropshire Council has not included this in its traffic modelling.

The original planning application for this road received a record-breaking 5,400 objections, with only 220 people supporting it. Shrewsbury Town Council opposes the project. The SCA position, that Shropshire can't meet its climate commitments if the road is built, remains unchanged.

Shropshire Climate Action

Golden Valley Pilgrimage Route

The Golden Valley Pilgrimage Route has been recognised as Herefordshire's unsung hero at the 'Visit Herefordshire Tourism Awards'. Herefordshire often overlooked as a tourism destination despite having many hidden gems.

This ancient pilgrimage path, which winds through some of South West Herefordshire's most picturesque landscapes and connects several historic churches and sacred sites between the Cathedral in Hereford to the edge of the Black Mountains, bordering Wales, has been steadily gaining popularity among spiritual travellers and hiking enthusiasts alike.

The Golden Valley Pilgrim Way is a stunning 6/7 day circular pilgrimage route along beautiful and ancient paths that begins and ends at Hereford Cathedral. The trail links the Wye Valley with the Golden Valley and the flower meadows and foothills of the Black Mountains.

Once you leave the city and the Cathedral behind, this is a rich and silent land, good for the body as well as the soul. Approximately 60 miles long you will come across apple orchards, sacred sites, ruined castles, holy wells and Arthurian legends as well as hidden farms that produce local ciders and ice cream. There is a real contrast between gentle wooded river valleys and stunning views of mountain landscapes with one or two spots for wild swimming.

You can even stay overnight in medieval churches. Nine churches along the route are currently offering 'night sanctuary', plus the Cloisters of Hereford Cathedral. This may be the first time that pilgrims have been able to stay in Anglican cathedral precincts since medieval times. You can stay inside seven of the churches, at the other two accommodation is provided in the church hall or a bell tent. All but one are situated in villages with fine country pubs where you can eat local produce.

A beautifully illustrated pilgrim credential (passport), can be stamped in each church. There is also a shorter 2/3 day pilgrimage route, and an 82 mile cycling route.



River Clun Protection

The River Clun and its catchment have changed significantly over the past 70 years. People who live there can remember tickling trout in the '50s and '60s and there were freshwater crayfish and pearl mussels up and down the catchment. There was a rich biodiversity of river invertebrates, butterflies, otters etc, and a clear river bed. There was much less sediment and turbidity as uplands and land adjacent to waterways remained unploughed. More water was retained in uplands and wider undisturbed areas of peat.

The presence of pearl mussels meant Clun was designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), meaning that regulations prevent building development, so that no new nutrients from sewage treatment can be discharged into the river.

The Onny pipeline proposal by Severn Trent is an example of the pressure put on the area because of the declining state of the river. This proposal will pump sewage effluent from new developments in Bishops Castle along a pipeline into the Onny to avoid the regulations in the Clun; in other words, exporting the problem downriver. There is significant local opposition to this.

The River Clun Monitoring Group was set up in 2022 to monitor the river quality and raise awareness of how water quality impacts all our lives. About 30 volunteers make monthly measurements of temperature, water flow, height and presence of solids, alongside seasonal and weather-related changes. They also measure ammonia from sewage, agricultural inputs and fertilisers; nitrate from soil and manure; phosphate from sewage, fertilisers, washing machines, agricultural waste; turbidity, which is a measure of suspended and dissolved matter in the river; and invertebrates which tells us about the longer-term health of the river.

Alison Weeks

The Green Pages of the Ludlow Methodist Church monthly magazine are brought to you by the Care for Creation Group. For more information please contact Elizabeth Wright.

The ordeal is over; the scars remain

“Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it.” (John 20: 25)

How patient Jesus was, in giving ‘Doubting Thomas’ a second chance! Earlier, the risen Christ had said to His disciples, “Peace be with you!” (verse 19). And it is only because of those scarred hands that His peace is made available.

There have been many religious leaders in history – but only one had scars as the proof of what He had achieved. It is also evident that - after Christ’s bodily resurrection - the scars were never obliterated. “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe” (verse 27).

The ordeal was over – but the scars remain – for ever. At the end of time - in the future New Creation – our Lord Jesus Christ will still have those scars, when He is affirmed as ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world’ (Revelation 3:8). The apostle Peter himself echoed the timelessness of the Cross of Calvary (1 Peter 1:20). The Cross and Resurrection form the centrepiece of our entire human story.

The scarred hands... It is vital that one and all should receive the lesson that Thomas learned that day: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (verse 29)

For it would not be long before the bodily presence of the Lord would be removed from human sight. From then on, it would be the preaching of the apostolic witnesses that would take Christ’s message to the ends of the world. Thomas himself was going to be despatched to India! Later would see Augustine to Canterbury, Francis sent to Assisi, Patrick to Ireland and Livingstone to Africa.

Today sees the mission of the risen Jesus criss-crossing all over the world – creating the biggest and fastest-growing body of belief ever known.

Be a living exponent of this Easter Gospel yourself. Use it, proclaim it, know it and live it. Then you can identify along with believing Thomas!

Primitive Methodism

When searching on a high bookshelf in our house I came across the 'Primitive Methodist Hymnal (with Supplement and Tunes)'. The hymnal dates from June 1889 with over 1000 hymns, and a Supplement of over 300 hymns dated 1912, commissioned by the Conference which met in Tunstall in 1910. This was my maternal grandparents' book. George Booth, 1840-1926, was the editor, a pharmacist and eminent doctor, from Chesterfield, mayor of Chesterfield in 1887, and a JP. His father was a Primitive Methodist minister who died when George was 14.

I did a computer search and came across a review of the hymn book on 'Good Reads' written by Bionic Jean! So for those of our congregation who may not know anything of Primitive Methodism I share (some of) what she says:

"Primitive Methodist was an unfamiliar term to me. Apparently it refers to a society of Methodists who had split from the Wesleyan Methodist church. They saw themselves as "simple" or "relating to an original stage". They had a plainer design of chapels and their worship was more low church. Primitive Methodists sought to practise a purer form of Christianity, closer to the earliest Methodists. "Primitive Methodism" was formed in 1811 and united with the Methodist Church in 1932." (joined with Wesleyan and United Methodists to form the Methodist Church in 1932.)

"Primitive Methodist preachers and communities differed from the Wesleyan Methodists. Although the Wesleyans tended towards respectability, the Primitive Methodists were poor and revivalist. Their preachers were plainly dressed and poorly paid. They were also less educated and more plain-speaking. The Wesleyan services, they felt, were "embellished with literary allusions and delivered in high-flown language".

"Interestingly, another way in which they differed from Wesleyan Methodists was in their support for so-called "Camp Meetings". These were day-long, open air meetings, involving public praying, preaching and ritual religious meals. "

Both Geoff and I are from chapels which were 'Prims' before the merger. On 'My Primitive Methodist' website I found a reference to my home chapel, Lower Wych, on the Cheshire/Flintshire border. Richard Ward's Journal for Sunday 11th August 1839

says: "We held a camp meeting at Lower Wych. The congregation was very large, respectable, and in general serious and attentive; the preaching and praying services were powerful. The lovefeast in its movements exceeded our expectations. One professed to find the Lord... many were quickened." Then on 30th August: "I visited and preached at Lower Wych to a large congregation. The work is going on well, and the society is growing in grace." The first chapel was built there in 1840 and a later addition in 1923, (which I believe my grandfather was very involved with). The original chapel became the school room. It is now a private house.

Part of the Wikipedia entry on Primitive Methodists says, "Primitive Methodist workers played an important role in the formative phase of the [Trade Union](#) movement in England. They were always the most [working class](#) of the main Methodist bodies in Great Britain. They also used women at an early date as ministers ("itinerants") and preachers, a notable development in [women's emancipation](#)."

Elizabeth Wright

Penny killed off in the USA, but saved in the UK

President Trump has ordered the US Treasury to stop minting one cent pennies.

But Downing Street is standing firm: our 1p and 2p coins are not being phased out in Britain. In fact, no British coin has been scrapped since 1984, when the halfpenny was taken out of circulation.

But there are *some* changes at the Treasury: no new coins are being minted this year, for the first time in decades. This is because our use of cash continues to decline, making the 27 billion coins currently in circulation within the UK quite sufficient for now.

In the UK, about 1.5 million people still use mostly cash, according to a 2023 survey by UK Finance.

PUTTING BACK THE SMILES



A smile always brightens up the day. I'm sure we have all been told 'to smile, it can't be that bad' even as we feel our world, as we know it, is coming to an end. And most people feel much better for smiling at others. But what about those whose worlds really have changed forever?

Christian Aid and its partner, Smile Again Africa Development Organisation (SAADO), work together to support people at Wedweil Refugee Centre, in South Sudan (Ludlow Tower December 2024). The Centre is a lifeline for families who have had to leave behind life as



Shede with one of her granddaughters

they knew it, along with all their possessions. SAADO gives each member of registered households the equivalent of £19. As of December last year SAADO had supported more than 4,500 households, prioritising those with vulnerabilities. With careful planning and support, families can save some of the allowance to establish new sources of income, starting to rebuild their lives. When Shede and her family lived in Darfur, Sudan, she worked in a restaurant and on an organic farm. In her new stricken circumstances, it was a daily challenge just to feed herself, her daughters and her two granddaughters, Saida and Marren.

Her first priority was to buy supplies so that she could cook nutritious meals for them all. Shede carefully balanced her cash and food rations deciding how

much to spend on immediate needs and how much to put aside so that they could begin to replace their lost belongings rebuilding the household with items like cooking pots and utensils as she prepared to earn her living once again. She looked forward to slowly building a brighter future for them all.

Shede's story reminds us that even the most determined, brave and resilient may need a helping hand, given the most extreme of circumstances. I take my hat off to such families; as we panic over our next electricity bill, we should spare a thought for people like Shede.

There must be millions like her, with an electricity supply which is intermittent at best and without the personal resources to make the changes needed just so that they can live in a home of their own free of uncertainty.

Here is a project where Christian Aid and its local partner balance the need to help people in the middle of unimaginable horror and destitution and the recognition that we are privileged to be able to contribute to their work. Perhaps we can put the smile back on Shede's face.

Please support us at the two Lent lunches in St Laurence's:

21 March hosted by St Laurence's
4 April hosted by the Methodists

Thank you.

Claire 07906 894227

St Laurence's Church
Friday 21 March
Friday 4 April
12noon - 1.30pm

We believe in life before death

By holding a Lent Lunch for Christian Aid you'll be raising money for vulnerable people like Michael across the world.

'In sweet music is such art': the Basilica of St Mark in Venice

In 828 the relics of St Mark the evangelist were seized from their resting place in Alexandria and brought by two adventurers to Venice. The Basilica of St Mark was built to house these relics, and it was this link between the saint and Venice that determined so much of the city's history through the Middle Ages.

Venetians would go to war under the banner of the winged lion, the symbol of St Mark, and through the centuries Venice established its independence, its own system of aristocratic government and commercial supremacy in the Mediterranean. The Basilica of St Mark is a vivid testimony to the grandeur of Venice and this amazing history. James Morris has described the church as descended from Byzantium: "a barbaric building, like a great Mongolian pleasure pavilion or a fortress in Turkestan."

We celebrate St Mark this year on 29th April, (usually 25th) but apart from his Gospel, we know little about the saint's life. He is mentioned by St Peter and St Paul as 'son' and missionary companion. There are many traditions about St Mark: he might be the young man in Gethsemane in chapter 14 of the Gospel, and it is thought that he was martyred in the reign of Trajan. What we do have of St Mark is his Gospel, generally accepted as the earliest of the four to be written. Mark has no infancy narratives and no preparation for the life and ministry of Jesus. Instead, his Gospel begins with the strange, exotic character of St John the Baptist emerging from the wilderness to proclaim the Good News of the Son of God.

In the same way the Basilica of St Mark emerges from the lagoon as strange and as exotic as the Baptist in the Gospel. E V Lucas in 'A Wanderer in Venice' invites the visitor to this church to "let the walls and the floor and the pillars and the ceiling do their own magical work." And the visitor might be lucky enough to hear some of the music of Venetian composers sounding through the basilica. In the 16th century Adrian Willaert wrote music that enhanced the domes and mosaics and ceilings with works for two organs and two choirs sounding out from different parts of the building.

Giovanni Gabrieli, who died in 1612, built upon that tradition. His set of motets, 'Sacrae Symphoniae', were written for the special acoustics of this marbled basilica. He developed the antiphonal sounds of Willaert with glorious, harmonic colours, a boldness of modulation, and a variety of dynamics and timbres. We hear all of that in the motet 'In Ecclesiis,' which is regarded as his masterpiece. The choirs, brass and organ are divided into five groups that would have sounded out around the basilica: 'In churches bless the Lord, in every place bless the Lord, for God is my salvation and my glory. Alleluia.'

As we celebrate St Mark on his feast day, we can think of these threefold proclamations of his Good News: his Gospel, which, in its earthy realism, calls the disciple to follow Jesus wherever He goes; this Basilica that calls us to explore its mystery and marvels; and the music of Gabrieli that calls us to echo God's praises in our own lives.

