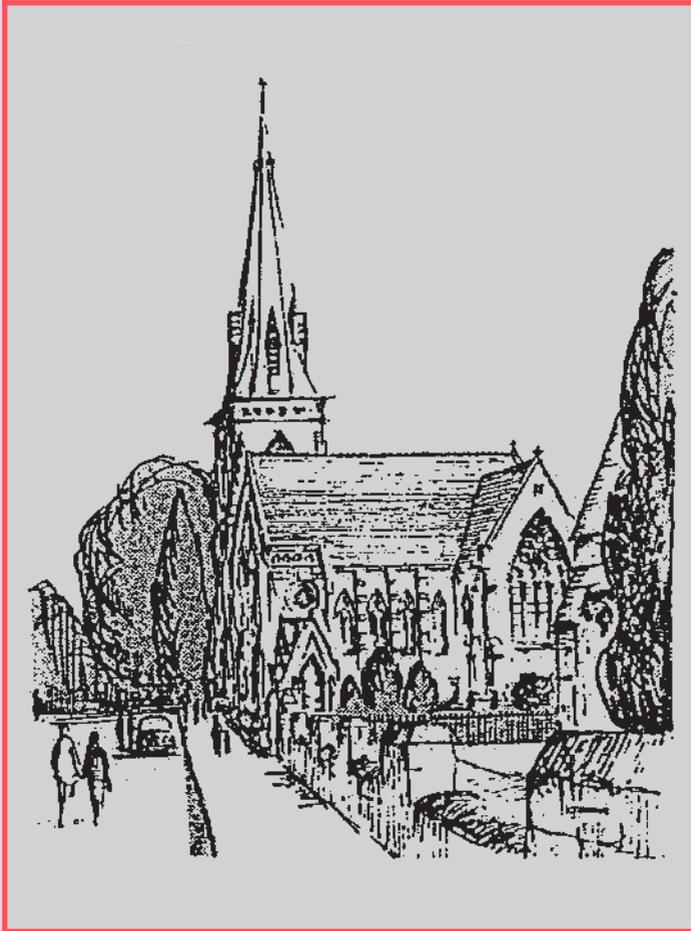


TRINITY TRIANGLE

NOVEMBER 2021



'Serving God, serving each other, serving community'

TRINITY CHURCH

Methodist/United Reformed/Church in Abingdon

Conduit Road, Abingdon



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A THOUGHT FOR REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY



*Give praise to God for his gift of life.
Give thanks to God for those who
gave their lives.*



*Give praise to God for his gift of peace.
Pray for peace among all
God's children*

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MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

As I write, bright sunshine fills the room and the skies are clear and blue. The leaves on the trees are turning and autumnal colours begin to surround us. On days like these it is easy to give thanks to God, to sing his praise and to marvel at the regular changing of the seasons. There is something very reassuring about it which is remarkably welcome in weeks when we hear of MPs being murdered and teenage boys charged with the same. The contrast seems so stark and we can wonder what the world is coming to. Indeed, with the COP26 Summit just days away, we can wonder and hope that the leaders of the nations will not just talk but act on the climate emergency.

Yet with everything that is in the news, with every concern we have, with every desire to do something about it and effect change, day follows night, season follows season, and God is in the midst of it all. In the days of Isaiah, the Lord God said, 'Look, I am doing a new thing, do you not perceive it?' (Isaiah 43:19). Perhaps it is a question we must still ask of ourselves and of each other - where do we see God at work today?

In contrast to the horrible attacks and murders, I found myself watching two programs on the television, 'Ambulance' and 'Saving lives at sea'. Both of these programs restore hope in humanity when we see people at work, be that paid or volunteering. To me they showed humanity at its best, caring for others, saving lives and often entering into situations that many would avoid at all costs. To see humanity at its best, is to glimpse something of how God intended us to live. Not as isolated beings, but in communities that care. Communities that care enough to raise the alarm for those in difficulty on the water, communities that care enough to do all they can to get support for those who need it. Communities that celebrate the good and stand alongside when things get tough.

Where do we see God today? Sometimes in the delights of the natural world around us. Sometimes in how those he has made, including us, treat each other as if we knew deep down that every person is a child of God and so holds a divine spark within them which we respect and hallow.

As I write, the clocks have not changed and I know darker and longer nights are on their way. Then, when I pause to see where God is, my spirits lift as if on a bright sunny day, for as Wesley said, 'The best of all is God is with us.'

Every blessing

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be the initials 'JAM'.

TO AUTUMN

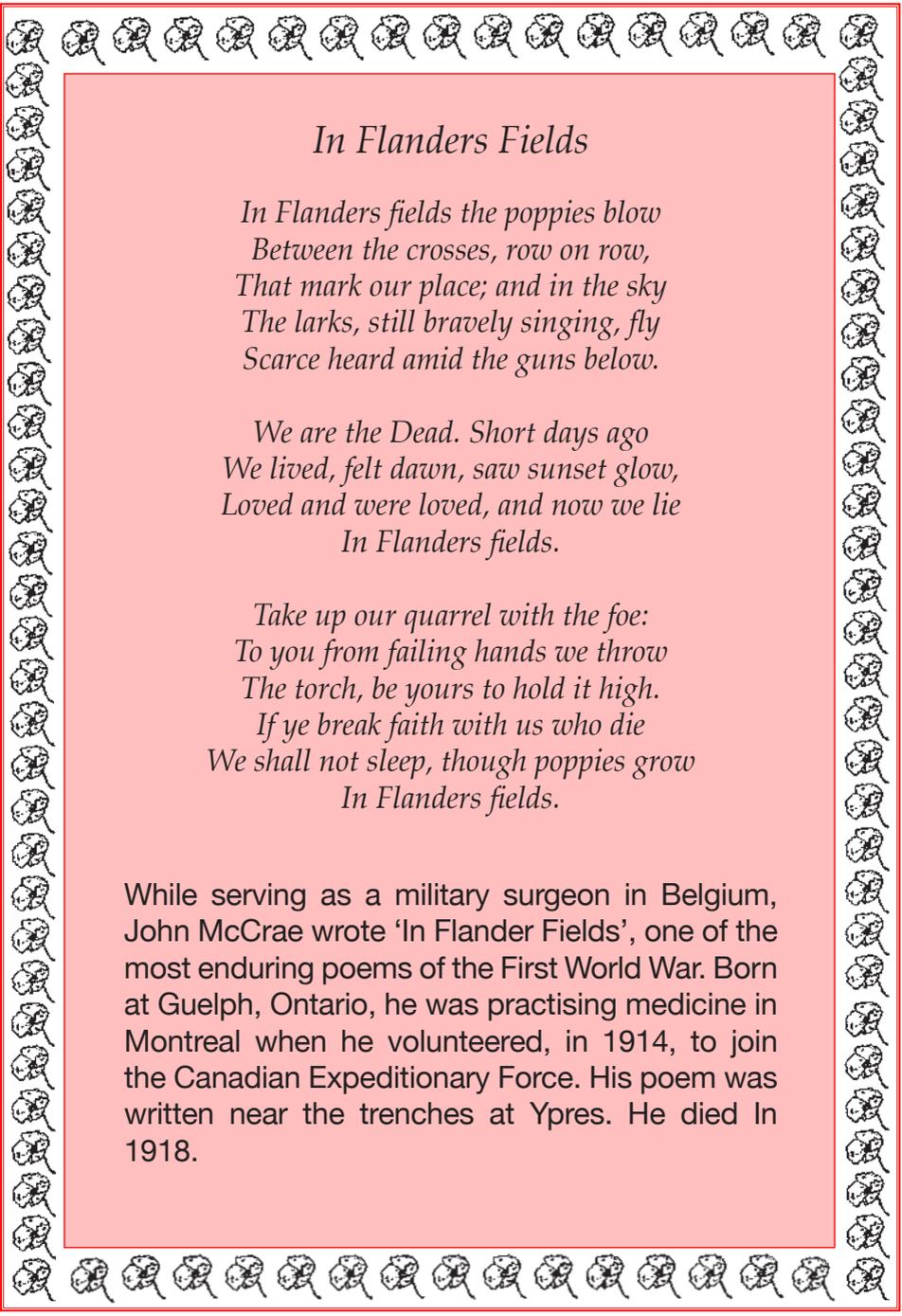
*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core.*

John Keats



The Thursday Group & the Friendship Group met in the Conduit Centre on October 14th and managed to fill over 30 Shoe Boxes for the Christmas Shoe Box Appeal.





In Flanders Fields

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch, be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

While serving as a military surgeon in Belgium, John McCrae wrote 'In Flander Fields', one of the most enduring poems of the First World War. Born at Guelph, Ontario, he was practising medicine in Montreal when he volunteered, in 1914, to join the Canadian Expeditionary Force. His poem was written near the trenches at Ypres. He died In 1918.

CALENDAR NOVEMBER

Sat 6th	7.00pm	Christian Aid Autumn Quiz & Seasonal Puddings! At All Saints'.
Sun 7th	10.30am	Morning Worship
Mon 8th	2.00pm	Evergreen Club: Seasonal Cookery Demonstration by Caroline Atkin
Thurs 11th	7,30pm	Thursday Group: Ian and his recent Sabbatical.
Sun 14th	10.30am	Morning Worship led by Helen Carter
Sun 21st	10.30am	Morning Worship with Communion led by Ian
Sun 28th	10.30am	Morning Worship led by Carol Sturt

DECEMBER

Sun 5th 10.30am Advent Sunday - Gift Service

**Deadline for December/January 2021/22 Triangle is
Friday 19th November 2021**

Please send contributions to Cynthia (cynbartlett@yahoo.co.uk)
and Val Dalby (vadalby17@gmail.com) or via the Office

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR CHRISTMAS COLLECTION OF GIFTS FOR THE NEEDY

Sunday, December 5th is our Gift Service when we ask you to bring along your gift (unwrapped).

A recommendation will have been put to the church meeting on 17th November that our gifts this year will go to the Abingdon Foodbank.

As well as providing essential foodstuffs to families in need, the Foodbank also needs items for personal and domestic washing and cleaning.

The Foodbank asks in particular for: washing up liquid and laundry detergent; and personal toiletries, including shampoo, shower gel, soap, razors and shaving foam, and deodorant.

Thank you.

Eve and Malcolm

**Colin Thompson's
Golden Jubilee Address
Wheatley United Reformed Church
Saturday 2 October 2021**

My first words must be my huge debt of gratitude to all those who have supported me in ministry over the past fifty years: my father, who died just six years after it began; my remarkable mother, who happily is still with us; and all of you who in the ecclesiastical and academic worlds which I have variously inhabited. So I pay tribute, to the many who are no longer with us, and to those who remain, without whom I could not have made it this far: to those from Trinity Church Abingdon, who bore my youthful enthusiasms with such good grace; to students, staff and fellow-Chaplains at the University of Sussex, who helped me to see the world differently; to my Oxford students and colleagues, most of all at St Catherine's, whose wit and wisdom have kept me on my toes; and to members and friends here at Wheatley URC for your constant encouragement and friendship. Like everyone who is supposed to have reached years of discretion and maturity I wonder where they have gone and what, if anything, has been achieved. But when I think of all the people with whom it has been my privilege to interact, I realise what a life rich in blessings it has been.

In the statement I made fifty years ago I said a lot about church unity. A year later Congregationalists and Presbyterians came together to form the United Reformed Church, or, as some of my contemporaries in Oxford called it, the United Deformed - not without its point, since all Churches are fallible and Reformed with a capital R is a historical reference to the Churches of the Reformation. Subsequent hopes for wider unions have largely failed. But at the local level relations between different Christian traditions have grown closer, while inter-faith relations have progressed. I also spoke about the need to have our feet firmly on the ground, the necessary corollary of a faith with incarnation at its heart. I used an image which still resonates, at least with

me: that Christians live in occupied territory but walk with the Resistance. They see too much of evil across the world and cannot let that pass unchallenged. They understand that Christ's call to resistance is most clearly heard where human suffering is keenest and hunger and poverty most ingrained, and also where the arrogance of the powerful is most in evidence. The Church's task remains that of helping to repair individuals and communities which have been damaged, and over the last half-century that has become if anything more urgent.

I spoke then, too, about the need for intellectual honesty and for engagement with the big issues of the day; about the need for open minds, not the parroting of dogmas barely understood; for searching spirits, not ones with all the answers; and for the challenges posed by scientific discoveries to become a proper part of our theological thinking. All these things I still stand by. Since then, the growth of fundamentalisms both religious and political has shown us how attractive a simplistic, black-and-white view of the world is and how devastatingly destructive it can be. John Huxtable, one of our senior ministers when I was ordained, called fundamentalism the great heresy of the twentieth century. To counter its appeal, we should not simply dismiss its exponents as ignorant and stupid. They need to be persuaded that there is a better way of being a faithful Christian, even if it is harder; that the opposite of faith is certainty, not doubt; that the pilgrim road is also the way of the Cross, which embraces darkness and despair as well as light and joy.

But as I look back to that day, I was silent about other things which have since come to prominence. Climate change and green theology, for example: how do we understand our relationship to the rest of creation, and what is a proper Christian response? Likewise, questions of gender and sexuality. We were just beginning to learn how excluded many women felt from the predominantly masculine language used about God and humans. I spoke a lot then about man and mankind, meaning everyone: I wouldn't do that now. We have also passed through a revolution in our attitudes towards human sexuality; not without anger, hurt and division, and by no means

everywhere. We have had to wrestle with these issues here and it was painful. But we grew through the process. People's minds aren't changed by shouting at them, but they can learn to live with difference creatively and well. Our differences are given to enrich us, not to divide us. As we receive what others have to give us, we become more complete than we could ever have been in isolation.

When important matters like these come to the fore, it becomes clear that we need to read Scripture with new eyes. Things we hadn't noticed before acquire a fresh prominence: the feminine imagery used of God in both Testaments and later Christian tradition: the four Gentile women who appear, against every convention of the genre, among the human ancestors of Jesus Christ in the genealogy with which Matthew begins his Gospel. And when it comes to the Bible, another liberating thing for me has been the attention given to its literary features. It bothered me as a theological student that I couldn't use the analytical tools for the study of texts which I learnt to handle in my first degree, so when scholars began writing about a literary approach to the Bible, I felt vindicated. The way the Bible tells its stories, the language and imagery it uses, its dialogue with other parts of the corpus, can help to rescue us from treating it as if it were a source of proof-texts which, once found, give a definitive answer to whatever question has been asked. There are many different voices within the Bible, some of them arguing against each other, others breathing fire and brimstone; some thundering against social and political evils, others speaking in gentler tones of mercy and compassion; some full of faith, others trapped in a spiral of despair from which they can find no way out. You might say all human life is there, the good, the bad and the ugly. It has been used and abused through the ages to justify the most appalling human behaviour, and it has inspired and energised countless individuals to join the Resistance. It shows us religion at its worst and its best. So it must always be read and interpreted thoughtfully, prayerfully and sensitively, paying due attention to context and always in the light of the foundational principles of the Christian way, for

which a convenient shorthand is faith and hope and love.

Because I have been asking myself what I have learnt over the intervening years, I end with a few things which have become clearer to me than they then were. Doctrine is a guide, not a tyrant. It's where you end up if you try to join up all the dots, not where you begin. You begin when you know your need of God and find the way of Jesus Christ attractive, compelling even. Christian worship seeks to enact the drama of salvation, most of all in the sacrament of the Lord's Table, in which what happened once on Calvary becomes present to the world as it is now and asks questions of it. The words worship uses need the language of poetry; its spaces the beauties of art; its spirit, the sound of music to lift us up. Evangelism is not manipulating people's thoughts and emotions to make them conform to your ideas. It is providing an environment in which faith and hope and the redemptive power of love can set people free from whatever belittles them and drags them down, so that they may truly flourish.

All of this inspires and nourishes discipleship. It is frustrating to many of us that we can't make the world a better place more quickly, heal its hurts, tear down its walls of division. But small acts of kindness and compassion by people in local congregations, whether offered to those among whom they live, or to those they have never seen but whose cries have been heard, are the good and faithful work of the Resistance. For who knows what fruit tiny seeds planted in good earth may yield? And that is how I have come to see ministry after all these years, mine and that of all Christian people: sowing and tending the land, rather than harvesting, grime under the fingernails, hoping and praying that at least some of the seeds will produce their own crop in due season, for others yet to come to sow, who have heard and responded to a call which first came to fisherfolk going about their business on the shores of a lake: 'Follow me'.

Revd. Colin Thompson was ordained at Trinity - his first pastorate - on 19th June 1971



The Church in Abingdon



Abingdon Community Fridge

(Hadland Road Community Centre, OX14 3YH) The opening hours have changed slightly, as follows:

❖ Mondays 5 - 6 pm ❖ Thursdays 1 - 2 pm ❖ Saturdays 10.30 - 11.30 am
The Fridge is for everyone and is free .

<https://www.facebook.com/abingdoncommunityfridge>



Cafe@35 Cafe is now open with full service resumed, so we will be needing homemade cakes. If you would be prepared to join our loyal band of cake makers to make a cake every one or two months, on a day of your choice, I would love to hear from you. Please contact Rosemary Brown on 01235 529261 or at rosemary.annbrown70@gmail.com.

Volunteers are also needed in the cafe, for catering and washing up. The cafe is open six days a week from 10.30 am to 2 pm serving light lunches and refreshments. 35 Ock Street

is a CiA-supported meeting place and has volunteers from many of the churches in Abingdon. For more information, please contact Stephen Bodey on 01235 527828.

Music for a Sunday afternoon

St Michael's will be hosting Sunday afternoon concerts over the next couple of months. We do hope you will come along to support us and to help us in raising money for church funds - although the main reason for coming is, of course, to enjoy some good music .

Abingdon Passion Play

The Abingdon Passion Play Committee is a small interdenominational group whose aim is to continue the production of an Abingdon Passion Play, with the next one fixed provisionally for June 2024. We are in urgent need of new members from local churches within the Church in Abingdon who are helpful, enthusiastic and full of suggestions, as well as a Publicity Officer. If you would like to find out more or would like to be involved, please contact Jane Cadogan at jane.cadogan@btinternet.com. We are planning an AGM in November 2021 and hope to begin fundraising in January 2022.

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