

MARCH 2026 - MAY 2026

DENHAM PARISH NEWS



Denham
Parish Church

Young And Old Together

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Cover: One family, three generations - Marion, Madison and Elonie.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to this Spring edition of Denham Parish News – we hope you find it helpful, interesting and encouraging. As part of the ‘sandwich generation’, with ageing parents needing more physical help and our first grandchild on the way, this edition rings a special bell with me. Our front cover is a beautiful expression of love across the generations.

Thank you to everyone who shared their thoughts around what makes/made your grandparents special and what top tips you wished you’d known as a young parent (p.8). What struck me was how many wished they’d really realised how fast children grow up and the value in taking the time to ‘just be’ with them. Maybe that’s a special joy of grandparenthood - getting a second chance to play, listen and make those memories. A childhood memory I have is Sunday church and a family walk in the afternoon. St Mary’s churchyard is beautiful in the spring and summer with a wide variety of flowers and plants. Maybe use the guide (p.16) and take your time as a family to enjoy the peace and quiet and see how many flowers you can find in the coming weeks.

If you missed the chance to send in your ‘top tips’, Jenny is looking for ideas from parents of young children and from older parents/grandparents, of faith disciplines, habits or rhythms that you built into your family routine, which your children enjoyed and found helpful - and of resources (music, prayer apps, courses, books, images etc) you have found valuable. For more information and contact details see p.12.

Spring also means we are celebrating EASTER, with special services to look forward to (p.32). We have also recently launched our **‘ALL IN’** services, the first Sunday of every month (not just Easter!) 10.30am at St Mary’s (p.6), do come and join in!

If you would like a good book to read over Easter, I wonder if you might choose *Who Moved the Stone?* - Janet’s review has certainly intrigued me (p.24). May this Easter offer you a chance to reflect on Jesus, and to spend time together with your loved ones.



Blessings,

Cathy Macqueen

magazine@denhamparish.church

WHEN WAS YOUR LAST MOT?

MESSAGE FROM CHRISTOPH LINDNER, RECTOR

Dear friends,

A few weeks ago my car needed an MOT. I wasn't overly optimistic that it would pass straight away. It is nearly 23 years old and I bought it last year for very little money. But it's fun to drive, has a great stereo (with a CD player! Remember those?) and was an ingenious design in its day. (Since you're asking: It's an Audi A2). Sure enough, it failed its MOT and at the time of writing it's not quite back on the road again.

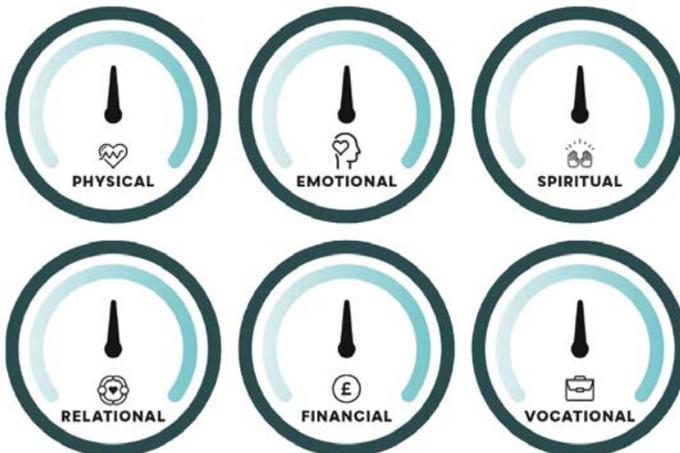
The MOT ("Ministry of Transport") test was first introduced in 1960 to improve road safety by checking basic things like brakes, lights and steering. These days it also checks for exhaust emissions.

Most of us think that MOTs are a good idea and keep us and others safe. As we get older we may be offered



a health MOT to spot issues before they become a problem - prevention is better than cure.

But how about other aspects of our lives? During Covid our church went on "The Wellbeing Journey" - over the course of six weeks we explored how healthy we are in key areas of our lives - physical, emotional, spiritual, relational, financial, vocational. Most of us found that, while we were doing ok in some areas, others needed attention.



So, don't wait until the tank is empty, make an honest assessment and then get help if necessary. Maybe your marriage feels strained - sit down together and try to get to the bottom of it and if you can't see a way out of it, get help! Maybe your mental health has been declining - talk to someone you trust! Recently I did a session on mental health with the Denham Air Cadets and it made me realise once more how many pressures young people have to cope with. I was also encouraged by their awareness of how important it is to look after their mental health.

About four times a year I meet with a spiritual director, someone who has been round the block longer than I and often speaks wisdom into my life. Someone with whom I can talk about the messiness of life and the questions I have, who understands the pressures and challenges of being a vicar. Preparing for our meetings sometimes feels a bit like going to the doctor - I don't particularly want to talk about these difficult topics. But it's always worth it!

I don't know many people who like going to the doctor! We want to be strong and sort ourselves out! Jesus had something to say about people who think they are alright and don't need any help:

"It's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call those who think they are alright, but those who know they are not."

(Matthew 9.12-13, my paraphrase).

If you'd like to do a spiritual MOT, we'd love to help you do that! Just get in touch.

May we seek and find help to take steps into greater wellbeing this year.

P.S. If you'd like to do a wellbeing self-assessment, you can go to wellbeingjourney.org and follow the link to "Your Wellbeing Check-Up".



Christoph

Introducing the 'All In Service'

First Sunday each month, 10.30am

by Edda Lindner



For a long time, the first 10.30am service of the month at St Mary's has been a "Family Service", but the label "Family Service" can be confusing and unintentionally exclude people - singles, or people with no children or grandchildren. Or people assume, that this is a service for families with (younger) children and therefore the content is designed with a younger age group in mind.

On all other Sundays, the 10.30am service is a rich tapestry of "blended worship" - robed choir, hymns and a couple of contemporary songs. For at least 30 minutes, children are in the adjacent vestry for their own, child-focused time of bible story, prayer and activities.

Splitting our church community into age groups has its place - we all like being with people who are at a similar stage. That is true for children, too. However, we felt for some time that we are missing an opportunity for a wider expression and variety of ALL AGES AND STAGES worshipping together in a safe and stimulating environment. Because age-specific groups aren't necessarily the only and best way to help a Christian community to grow in love and

service! We need times when we are ALL together.

So, in November, we launched our first '**ALL IN service**', where we all stay IN and are together for the 60-75 minutes. We want EVERYONE to feel **INcluded**, regardless of their age or abilities. The vision is, that everyone can be **INvolved** in ways that are natural to the gifts and preferences they have. These preferences are often not related to our age, but more with the way we perceive the world. Some of us like to process things more internally (introverted), whereas others draw a lot of energy from the world around us (extroverted). At every **ALL IN** we are trying to take these different preferences into account. There is opportunity for quiet contemplation and creative activities. Each **ALL IN** has a theme and bible

story and we use our different senses and a broad approach to learning styles to respond creatively to the theme. The themes so far have been: **Light, Advent (Waiting), Epiphany (Perseverance), Love (Jesus' first miracle).**

It is our prayer that we are **ALL INspired** for the week ahead with some practical application that equips us in our love of God and people.

Because of its more interactive nature, the **ALL IN** can only be experienced **"IN the room"** at St Mary's Church. This service is not streamed on our YouTube channel. And yes, because this service is meant to help everyone to grow and maybe try out things that we have not dared to do before, it is an extra "protection", knowing that we are only in the room and never on camera! However, one **ALL IN** element is a short video with announcements, which is available online after the service. We also use a variety of media to engage different learning styles and ages.

Each **ALL IN** is a celebration too! We celebrate everyone who had a birthday in the previous month. We sing a special version of "Happy Birthday" and there is a homemade cupcake for everyone who had a birthday, regardless of their age! If you want to be celebrated - do come to **ALL IN**.

For those who enjoy being busy with their hands, one of the response opportunities to choose from after the talk, is a creative activity. But this might not be you, so there is space to meditate on a piece of art or to pray with someone or to light a candle.

In a nutshell, **ALL IN** is meant to be a safe and creative space to have all generations alongside each other, connecting with God and each other with all our senses and using our gifts. This is very much the heart of Christian community, its "DNA", and our hope is to model something that will shape our overall culture as a church more and more.

Come and see for yourself - you will be very welcome!

"Young men and young women, old men and children, let them all praise the name of the Lord. For his name is very great; his glory towers over the earth and heaven!"
Psalm 148:12-13 (NLT)

Birthday cupcakes for those who are in the room and who had a birthday the previous month.



Everyone is enjoying the **ALL IN** video announcements.

ALL IN gives younger people an opportunity to serve and grow their skills - here: sound apprentice



Thank you for sharing your words of wisdom and insight...

What made/makes your grandparents special?

“ For me it was the feeling that I was understood and safe, that there was always time for me and letting me 'Help' with whatever my grandmother was doing, which I am sure required a lot of patience, but I never knew that. **Jo** ”

“ My maternal Grandfather gave me a love of figures which have stood me in good stead throughout my long life. **Robin** ”

“ They don't know the rules so they let us do what we want. **Holly** ”

“ She looks after us every week when Mummy is at work. **Holly & Adeline** ”

“ She brings us presents. **Matilda** ”

“ 'Mamie Manjo' (born 21.8.1934, Martinique), now a great, great, great grandmother – there is no silence with her, she sings all the time like a 'rossignol' (nightingale). **Denise** ”

“ Watching Thunderbirds with my Granddad, he loved it just as much as me! **Clive** ”

“ Going on the Whit walks with my Mum and Nana. Everyone in white - other than my new Clarkes red sandals. **Clive** ”

Editor: 'Whit walks in Manchester took place on Whit Sunday and/or Whit Monday around Pentecost. Everyone wore white and walked with banners and brass bands!



“ They pass on the family stories, recipes and games. They often walk slower, much better suited to our child sized legs. They are like a human version of a comfortable blanket, to be enjoyed and cherished. **Angela** ”

“ They were Scottish so we always had to travel a long distance up to see them. We didn't see them very often which made going to see them very special. **Heather** ”

“ My Grandma's constant smile and incredible determined ability to see the best in every one of us and in so doing, to bring out the best in each of us. **Rachael** ”

“ They have always been there for me, praying and supporting me in each tough decision and joyful blessing. I love them more dearly than I can ever express. **Amelie** ”

“ Their affectionate selflessness. There is never any motive behind their actions but love and their influence has been one of the most powerful blessings and joys in my life! **Seth** ”

Top tips:

What I wish I had known (or done) when I was a young parent

“ I wish I had understood the real value of spending time with my children, including them as much as possible in everyday things, not just being busy with the 'job' of being a mother. That learning from grandparents/older generation about children is very important and that in turn, I taught my children the same. **Jo** ”

“ Keep a notebook handy and jot down any funny sayings that they come out with – it's very easy to forget them but lovely to look back on later! **Cathy** ”

“ Take more time 'being' and less time 'doing' – for as Gretchen Rubin said 'the days are long, but the years are short' **Angela** ”

“ You can only do your best with the knowledge and skills you have at the time. **Carolyn** ”

“ Insist that my children came to church when I started going. Though I would have had opposition from my then husband. **Heather** ”

“ Spend quality time with your children, building memories and family traditions. Pray with them and for them. **Cathy** ”

“ I wish I had realised how fast the years fly by and how quickly the children would be too big to sit on my lap or fall asleep in my arms. I would have played more and laughed more, and worried less. **Rachael** ”

“ Discipline with love and consistency. Be in agreement with your husband about the way in which this is done. It is important for the child to know that their parents love each other and that they are safe and secure in their home. **Jean** ”

“ Open your home to other children so that they can experience Christian love and affirmation which may be missing in their own home. **Jean** ”

“ Pray for your children and for their future life partners. **Jean** ”

“ Keep an open house for friends and family. **Margaret** ”

“ I wish I had learnt how to use a sewing machine. My Mamie Manjo is still making some beautiful traditional outfits at age 92! **Denise** ”

'A truly rich man is one whose children run into his arms when his hands are empty' (Anon) *Bursting at the Seams*.
Killy John and Alie Stibbe,
Monarch Books.



MULTI-GENERATIONAL

JENNY TEBBOTH
ASSOCIATE MINISTER



FAITH

When Moses led that group of slaves out of Egypt, before they had even crossed the Red Sea, he instructed them three times that they were to remember the story of their rescue and pass it on to their children. Three times. By keeping Passover and re-telling the story, they preserved the memory of God's rescue; and by preserving the memory they preserved their identity. Their identity was formed well before the city of Jerusalem or the temple was built and has lasted long after the temple was destroyed and the people scattered from Jerusalem.

The reason for this is that the story was told in homes and families, day by day, week by week and year by year; fathers, mothers and grandparents passing on the story to their children through the annual cycle of festivals and the weekly celebration of Sabbath; through meals and blessings, conversations, songs and journeys, prayers and rituals woven into everyday life. By this means the children learned the answer to the questions: Who am I? Why am I here? And, how then shall I live? Vital questions for all of us.

This biblical way of living, learning and practicing faith together across generations is a model which does away with the idea that we can leave teaching the faith to 'the experts.' All of us are in the business of teaching and learning faith whether in our own family or at church.

It does away with the separation of spiritual and secular; God is interested in the whole of our life – from school friends to holidays; nothing is outside his care and all of it can be holy.

It undermines the idea that my faith is personal to me and I will look after myself in my own way. The reality is much messier and more beautiful as we 'do life together' through thick and thin under God's guidance and love.

A report given to the General Synod of the Church of England 2019 said; 'Research shows that parents have the largest influence on their children in matters of faith and that foundations for faith are often laid in childhood.' In recent years, schools and churches have been the places where parents hope

their children will be taught about Christianity. But God's design for parents, grandparents, and guardians to be the primary faith trainers of the next generation holds true. No one has more influence on a child's spiritual life than the people they live with. That can feel truly exciting... and possibly, a little overwhelming.

The report continues, 'Christian families do not always find it easy to model living and sharing faith together. Barriers to living faith together included family time being devoted to other things; not knowing what to do and a lack of confidence in discussing matters of faith or establishing patterns of prayer.' That is where the church can help!

The most powerful influence on the religious lives of American teenagers and young adults is the religious lives of their parents. Not their peers, not the media, not their youth group leaders or clergy, not their religious school teachers, not Sunday School, not mission trips, not service projects, not summer camp... It's parents.

Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk (2021) *Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass their Religion on to the Next Generation.*

I am currently collecting ideas from parents of young children and from older parents/grandparents, of faith disciplines, habits or rhythms that

you built into your family routine, which your children enjoyed and found helpful - and of resources (music, prayer apps, courses, books, images etc) you have found valuable.

I am making a resource intended primarily for the families of children who come to us for baptism which will give them practical guidance on how to raise their children in the Christian faith; how to introduce them to the bible and to pray. I would love it to be full of practical examples road-tested by other families.

**Please send ideas to me:
jenny@denhamparish.church
before Easter!**

As well as encouraging parents to create a faith-filled home, and grand-parents to love their grand-children and model their faith; we would love our church to be a multigenerational faith community or household of God - encouraging each other to discover the gifts God has given us and grow into them and in service and leadership. That is in part, what the **All In** service is about.

We have much to learn from the children - especially from the way they relate to God. Here is a prayer of a child quoted in '*Growing Together in Faith*' by Emma Parker and Sarah Strand.

'Thank-you God for the joy-ness you have. Come in.'

Amen to that!

FAMILY REGISTER OF DENHAM PARISH CHURCH

BAPTISMS

30.11.25 Cinnamon Christopher
07.12.25 Ellie Harris

FUNERALS

10.11.25 Peter Syrett (98)
17.11.25 Eva-Marie Ganley (95)
01.12.25 William Davey (81)
09.12.25 Linda Robinson (73)
12.12.25 Mary Wightman (84)
22.12.25 Mary Culverhouse (95)
22.12.25 Marion Francis (93)
17.01.26 Opal Doreen Bennett-Edwards (99)
22.01.26 Gillian Godfrey (76)



Mary Culverhouse

WEDDINGS

24.01.26 Brett Lawrence & Frances O'Connor



Brett & Frances

GOD IN THE LIFE OF GEORGE CAROBENE AS TOLD TO CHRISTOPH

I never used to be very patient. I was a London taxi driver and you'd go into Town and you'd get cut up and road rage would kick in. But since having my children baptised, coming to the church in Denham and getting hooked into exploring my own faith, I carried on and went to the Alpha course. Something happened there. I had a vision on the penultimate meeting. Christoph said a prayer whilst we sat and reflected – something I've never done in my life before, and I had tears streaming from my eyes. I saw a bright light and a vision of Jesus, and I felt a warm, calm feeling. From then on, I definitely knew there was Someone who has been whispering in my ear for years and I haven't been listening to them. A little while after that I had a minor stroke. I think it was a correction – like Proverbs 3:11 says *'Trust in the Lord... My child, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke.'*

Before the stroke, what Jesus has done for me is I went back to work and was getting calmer – I didn't automatically react in the way I used to. If someone cut me up, I'd let them in! Since then, I have been on a massive journey, I've been examining my life. What I've learnt is if you wait and are patient it



really helps. You then have time to appreciate where you are. God made us a fantastic planet and now I take time to look – every day is an education. I see something and I think 'He made that well, no wonder He was well pleased!'

When I moved to High Wycombe, I didn't know anyone. I tried a few churches but Denham is a hard act to follow! And then all of a sudden, Azita is moving to St Francis of Assisi in High Wycombe – just at the end of my road! My patience paid off! I go there now and that's my new Church.

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding'
Proverbs 3:5

You can find the full youtube interview at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7bE_IRCWwM

Wildflowers

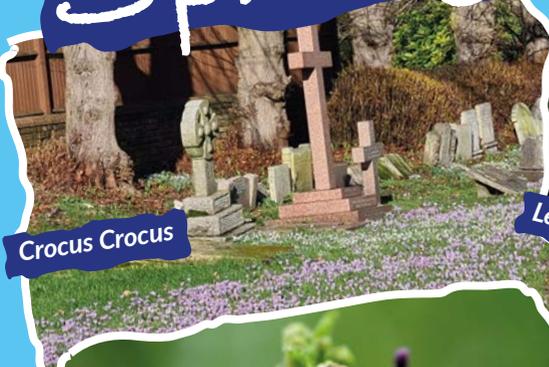
in St Mary's Churchyard, Denham

As the days lengthen and we move into spring and summer, you are invited to wander down to St Mary's churchyard, enjoy the peace and quiet, and see if you can spot any of the following plant species.



Snowdrop
Galanthus nivalis

Spring



Crocus
Crocus



Lesser celandine
Ficaria verna



Common vetch
Vicia sativa –
a member of the pea (legume) family!



English bluebell
Hyacinthoides non-scripta



Cow parsley
Anthriscus sylvestris



Cuckooflower
Cardamine pratensis –
also known as Lady's-smock



White dead nettle
Lamium album

Summer

June onwards



Selfheal
Prunella vulgaris



Tufted vetch
Vicia cracca



Yarrow
Achillea millefolium



Oxeye daisy
Leucanthemum vulgare

ROSE Garden

And of course, our wonderful array of roses in the old churchyard!

For extra help
Check out free plant identification Apps (others are available!)
PlantNet, iNaturalist



Do you like gardening?

Would you like to help keep the churchyard looking beautiful?

The churchyard is looked after by a group of volunteers who meet regularly throughout the year and welcome anyone who would like to join in. Please bring your own gardening gloves and tools (attendance is at your own risk). Tea and Coffee provided.

Contact Dexter at Dexterbrown125@gmail.com for more information.



What's Happening

AT DENHAM PARISH CHURCH?

St Mary's Church

After Easter Sunday, the church will be closed for about 6 weeks for repair work.

9am service will be at St Mary's Vestry

10.30am will be at St Mark's, UB9 5HT

www.denhamparish.church



Little TODDLER GROUP

Wednesday mornings in term time
St Mark's Church Hall
Contact: Kathy Paine
kathypaine16@gmail.com

CAFÉ CHURCH

Time to chat | Food for thought
Coffee and cake
Favourite hymns and prayers
St Mark's Church Hall
1st March, 3rd May
Contact: Christoph Lindner
rector@denhamparish.church

DESTINY

For young people
aged 10 and older
St Mark's Church Hall
Contact: Tim or Charlotte
destiny@denhamparish.church

Small Groups

Grow in faith and friendship
www.denhamparish.church/lifegroups

Save the Date!

Denham Village Fayre

Bank Holiday Monday 25th May 2026

If you are able to help run this amazing community event, we'd love to hear from you!

Key areas where help is needed:

Marshall Volunteer: Assist with car parking, directing arrivals into the general car park and disabled parking area. Driving buggies from parking area to the Fayre and back!
Work as part of a team for 2-3 hrs during the Fayre.

Clear Up Volunteer: Join the team from 4-6pm to help clear up at the end of the Fayre.

Baking homemade cakes:
Homemade always tastes better!

Pre-loved clean, soft toys:
For the Teddy Tombola

All monies raised go to support keeping our churchyard looking beautiful, vital works on St Mary's church building and local charities.

Contact: denhamfayreinfo@gmail.com

Volunteer Hotline: 07599 934173

For updates, follow 'Denham Village Fayre' on Facebook.





Bible Detectives

What does the Bible Say About Assisted Dying?

by Christoph Lindner

Woody Allen once said, “I’m not afraid of dying; I just don’t want to be there when it happens.” But death is a certainty (together with taxes, according to Benjamin Franklin) and we will all have to face it.

So assisted dying surely is a good thing?

We all would like to experience a gentle, and largely painless death. There is nothing wrong with that longing.

When we are grappling with controversial issues, it’s often helpful to scrutinise the words we choose to make our case.

The “Assisted Dying Bill” has been making its way through parliament over the last years (it hasn’t been written into UK law yet). But critics point out that it’s not simply about assisting people when their time of death is approaching - we have hospitals and

hospices, which are already doing this. That’s why organisations such as CARE call it “assisted suicide”. It is about supplying lethal drugs so that the recipient can actively end their own lives. The bill isn’t about simply withdrawing treatment, either - every patient is already entitled to refuse medical treatment which will extend life.

But surely, advocates of “assisted dying / suicide” have the best interests of loved ones at heart?

Yes. Often, they have seen family members suffer, or they are afraid that they may face a similar situation. The three values they often base their support on are dignity, avoiding suffering and autonomy. All good aims in and of themselves, but when they become “ultimate goods”, they reduce a rounded view of what it means to be human and to live in community.

Tell me more...

Many are afraid of dying without **dignity**. But as Christians we do not believe that our dignity is determined by what we can or cannot do.

We are made in the image of God and invested with 'built-in' dignity – young and old, healthy and sick, Nobel prize winners, Olympic athletes and those with significant physical and mental impairments. Some years ago, I read an article that argued it would be a kindness to terminate pregnancies of children with Cystic Fibrosis – and as someone with CF I felt the author had just negated my dignity as a beloved child of God! G.K. Chesterton once wrote: "People are equal in the same way pennies are equal. Some are bright, others are dull; some are worn smooth, others are sharp and fresh. But all are equal in value for each penny bears the image of the King of Kings."

We all know people who experienced significant **suffering** before they died – sometimes for months or even years. Reducing suffering is so important. Cecily Saunders, the founder of the modern hospice movement was motivated by her strong Christian faith and her desire to reduce the suffering she saw as a nurse. She changed the way we look after the dying. She taught us that time is a matter of depth, not length and that the last days can be the richest, they can often be a time of reconciliation. Medical doctor and ethicist John Wyatt has said that the Bible draws a distinction between removing suffering and removing the sufferer.

Finally, **autonomy**. Many want to feel in control at a time when they are afraid of losing it. *They* want to make the decision when it is time to die. Freedom and liberty are very good things. But there are limits. Life is a gift from God. We are created and sustained by God. Every breath is a gift from him. The Bible calls us temples of God's Spirit. When we claim the right to end our lives at a time of our choosing, we step over a line that God has given to protect us. In fact, there is mounting evidence that in countries where assisted suicide is legal, many people choose this route not because of unbearable suffering, but because they don't want to be a burden to society or to their families: 47% of people in Oregon gave this as their main reason.

So, is your advice that we are just resigned to suffering?

Not at all, there is immense dignity in old age and in those who go through suffering. We have so much to learn from them. We are called to support them and that can be costly. As Christians we believe in a God who in Jesus suffered for us on the cross, who is with us in our suffering and who gives us eternal hope beyond death.

How can you and I carry each other's burdens (see Galatians 6.2)?

I have been greatly helped by the CARE booklet about this topic – care.org.uk

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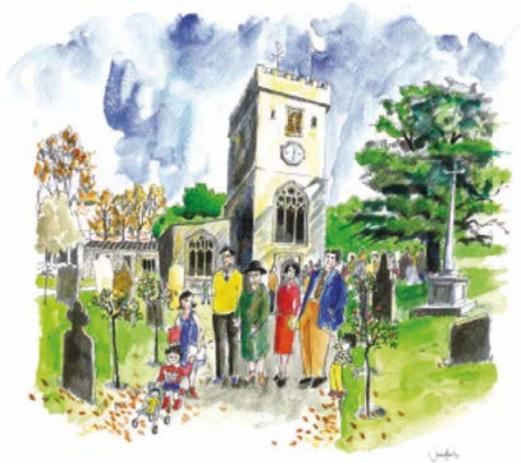
Mon/Tue/Thurs/Fri: 9.30 - 12pm
Wed: Office closed

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www.tinyurl.com/youtube-denham

Find us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/denhamparish.church



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Easter

By Duncan Macqueen

Dawn will have its way
Silence laden night
Breaks forth into day

Was forever is
God has won the fight
He forever lives

Darkness cannot stain
Chaos cannot smite
Yahweh always reigns

Light commanded bursts
Fear gives way in fright
Creatures are immersed

Now the greatest task
Liberations fight
Evil is unmasked

Sin's tight talons fail
Cross has nailed their spite
Sinless son impaled

Lambs blood daubs our door
Slain to free our flight
Hope has reached the poor

Though the tomb seems black
Empty is its site
Dawn is coming back

Let the cockerel crow
Let the eyes be bright
Let the neighbours know

Jesus Christ's alive
Glorious is the sight
Bring it in! High-five!

THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION

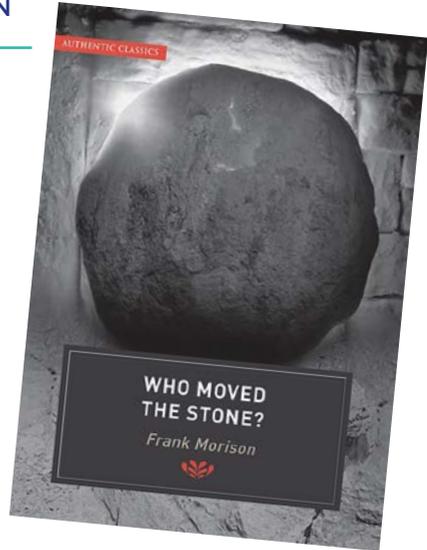
WHO MOVED THE STONE? BY FRANK MORISON

REVIEWED BY JANET ALLEN

Although a few years ago now, I can still clearly remember one afternoon when my 8-year-old daughter had a friend from her primary school class over for tea. I can't remember what started the conversation, but what I do remember was her friend very bluntly and with great conviction, dismissing the foundation of Christianity by stating that, "nobody can come back from the dead and that it was a silly thing for Christians to believe". I was a relatively new Christian at the time and was thrown by the statement. I felt I had no convincing response, beyond, that Jesus is God and can do anything.

But I also knew that this conviction struck a chord with me. It was a major piece of my own faith jigsaw that still needed to fall into place. I deeply believed in the Christian value system, but couldn't quite get on board with the resurrection. Around that time, the book, "Who moved the stone", by Frank Morison, was recommended to me by a friend who was much further along her Christian journey than me. It was just what I needed to nudge my own faith journey along. I found the arguments in the book both convincing and compelling.

Frank Morison wrote *Who Moved the Stone?* because he originally set out to disprove the resurrection of Jesus.



He was a sceptic who accepted Jesus as a historical figure and moral teacher but rejected the idea of the resurrection as a later myth or religious invention. His intention was to write a rational, historical explanation showing what "really" happened to the body of Jesus. However, as he examined the Gospel accounts using legal and historical methods, he found that the evidence kept pointing in the opposite direction to what he expected. Instead of weakening the case for the resurrection, his analysis convinced him that the resurrection was the most cogent and credible explanation of the facts. The book is all the more powerful because it is written from the position of someone whose scepticism was overturned by a close examination of the evidence.

Frank Morison was a **journalist and writer**, with a strong interest in legal and historical analysis. He was not a theologian or a clergyman.

His professional background was in journalism, which is why *Who Moved the Stone?* is written in such an investigative, courtroom-style.

He:

- Weighs the evidence
- Tests alternative explanations
- Looks for internal consistency
- Asks, what best fits the known facts.

The specifics that Morison analyses are:

The empty tomb

Morison treats this as the central fact that must be explained. The authorities could have ended Christianity instantly by producing the body, yet they did not. The tomb was known, guarded, and publicly accessible. An empty tomb is historically difficult to deny.

The Roman guard

He argues that trained Roman soldiers would not have abandoned their post or allowed a body to be stolen without severe consequences. This makes the idea of the disciples stealing the body highly improbable.

The women witnesses

Morison sees this as a mark of authenticity. Sadly, in that culture, women's testimony carried little legal weight, so inventing them as the primary witnesses would make no sense if the story was fabricated. Their presence suggests honest reporting.

The transformation of the disciples

He notes that the disciples were fearful, disillusioned, and scattered after the crucifixion. They were in no state of mind to invent or hallucinate a resurrection. That 10 of the 12 disciples had the courage later to die for their faith, demands an explanation.

The grave clothes

The Gospel detail that the grave clothes were left behind in an orderly way argues against a hurried theft. It suggests a calm, deliberate event rather than robbery or panic.

Alternative theories

He carefully examines and then dismisses:

- The body was stolen
- Jesus did not really die
- The women went to the wrong tomb
- The disciples fabricated the story
- The resurrection was a later legend.

Each fails to account for all the evidence together.

The growth of the early Church

The resurrection was preached immediately and centrally. Morison argues this would be impossible if the resurrection were known to be false, or was a legend invented later.

The nature of the appearances

The resurrection appearances were varied, repeated, and involved groups, not just individuals, making hallucination unlikely.



He argues that these alternative explanations collapse under scrutiny and that only the resurrection best explains:

- The empty tomb
- The transformation of the disciples from fear to courage
- The rapid growth of the early church
- The centrality of resurrection preaching from the very beginning.

When I first read the book, over 25 years ago, the argument that had the most impact on me was the transformation of the disciples. Their sudden change from frightened followers to bold proclaimers willing to suffer and die is one of Morison's strongest arguments that something extraordinary must have happened. Otherwise, is it really credible that 10 disciples would have given their lives for a story that they had invented. People may die for beliefs they think are true, but rarely for what they know to be false. For me, the final jigsaw piece of my faith slotted into place.

My other takeaways from this episode are the benefits of closely examining our own stumbling blocks to deeper faith. Once we can articulate what they are, we can begin to grapple honestly with the arguments for and against, and to dig into the wealth of excellent

apologetic writing that can help our faith journey go deeper.

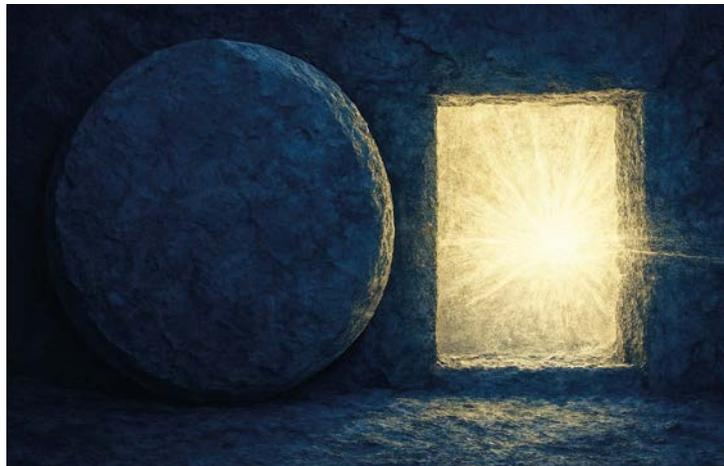
A positive lesson from that eight-year-old is that there is no need to feel embarrassed about aspects of the Christian faith we find difficult. We can be bold with our questions, and they may lead to convincing answers. Of course, they may not — but that is the nature of the mystery of faith.

In the words of Richard Feynman, “I’d rather have questions that can’t be answered than answers that can’t be questioned.” I would suggest that God might feel the same: he invites us to love him with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind.

Who Moved the Stone?

Frank Morison (2006)

Available from www.eden.co.uk (£10.59)





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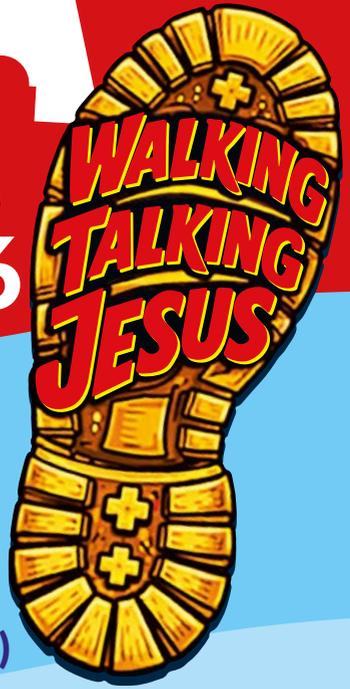
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10am Easter Egg Hunt

10.30am Family Service



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