

Welwyn Garden City, Harpenden and Wheathampstead United Reformed Churches Magazine



April & May 2024

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you.

This magazine will come out just as we are celebrating Easter, which we could describe as the high point of the Christian year. We will have travelled through Lent and journeyed with Jesus towards Jerusalem and the culmination of his earthly ministry. We will have witnessed the events of Holy Week, and ridden the rollercoaster of emotions that those highs and lows brought. At the end of all that we will have come to Good Friday with the darkness of the cross and the emptiness of the following day when all felt lost.

And it is then, and only then, that we will emerge, gloriously and spectacularly, into Easter morning, and we discover that everything has changed. No longer are we lost. No longer do we need to feel abandoned. No longer are we enveloped in darkness. For now, we are bathed in the light of the resurrection, because Jesus is alive! As Stuart Townend puts it so eloquently in his wonderful Easter hymn,

*See what a morning, gloriously bright
with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
folded the graveclothes, tomb filled with light
as the angels announce Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan,
wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
fulfilled in Christ the man,
for he lives; Christ is risen from the dead.*

Easter is a time for rejoicing. It is a time for celebration. For at Easter, we discover God's answer to the hurts and struggles of humanity, because Easter fills us with hope. It is not that the hurt, the pain, or the struggle that we wrestle with throughout our lives mean nothing, rather it is that these troubles of life are not the end, they are not the culmination of what, or who, we are. For in the Easter story, in the

resurrection, and ultimately, in God, we discover that there is far more yet to come, and that more is filled with hope, with joy, and with life. This is what Easter means for us. This is why we can, and why we should, celebrate!

So, let us go forth as Easter people and seek to proclaim the good news of the resurrection as we share the love, peace, and joy of our God. As Brian Wren writes,

*Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.*

May the joy of the risen Christ be with you.

In His name,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'T. Wren', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Secretary's Notes

It is hard to believe I am sitting down to write my notes for the April/May magazine. Where have the first three months of 2024 gone?

They have been a busy three months for us all filled with meetings to attend, Annual Returns to complete, Year Books to produce and alongside these tasks sadly WGC URC have held three Funerals and said their final farewells to Rosemary C Margaret B and Don B all longstanding members. It is our custom to include an Obituary in the magazine for friends who have passed away but as we now have a joint Magazine and we have three Obituaries to include we will publish them together in a booklet for distributing to our WGC Congregation. I also heard last week Fred R., another of our elderly longstanding members sadly passed away in the Lister Hospital.

To add to the business Easter came upon us Early this year so apologies for this months magazine being a week later than it should be.

It has however given me the opportunity to thank Martyn for the Tenebrae Service he led at WGC on Maundy Thursday. New to many of us but very moving. Congratulations to the four ladies from Wheathampstead who braved the foul weather and joined us for the service.

Following the moving and well attended Service at the Cross in WGC Town Centre on Good Friday by WGC Churches Together we welcomed those who attended back to WGC URC for Tea/Coffee and Hot Cross Buns which were welcome on such a chilly morning and around 120 people attended.

I really appreciated everyone's help on Saturday morning to decorate the Church for Easter Communion and a special thank you to Helen C for the amazing welcoming display in the vestibule.

Mike Findley led our Easter Service and Communion and after the service we enjoyed Coffee and Simnel Cake.

Matthew carried the dressed Cross out to the front of the church to be seen by the local community to portray Christ's Resurrection bringing us new life and

renewed hope and a reminder to us that we must encourage others by our words and deeds to believe in the resurrection.

Moving On to up and coming

11th May Quiz Night 7.30pm Tickets £5

Please start thinking about who you can invite to join your Team

Please bring your own nibbles, beer or wine

Tea and Coffee will be provided

Teams of 6/8 people are ideal but Allison will help you join with others if you can't make up a team

Allison will have tickets for sale soon.

Contact Allison for tickets and further information

25th May Pop up Spring Fair 10-1pm

All profits for our Big Build Fund

If you would like to help on a stall / Run a stall of your own/ Organise the Raffle/or have any new ideas for us please get in touch with Joyce or Allison.

No Bric -a- Brac but Pre loved small items are welcome plants and anything else you think or we could sell easily.

Looking forward to all your suggestions

Joyce

Wheathampstead News

The Easter season began way back in February with an Ashes service at St Helen's and the following week we started the Churches Together Lent Course which has just finished after 5 weeks. All about 'God has no Favourites' Neither male nor female, slave nor free, Jew nor gentile, The best picture of God, What is a Christian? Needless to say all challenging subjects but answering the questions we were set brought out some lively discussions with our group consisting of representative of all dominations in the village.

The World Day of Prayer service had lots of lovely music/hymns and stories from Palestinian Christian Women and we said special prayers remembering the situation there today. We collected £90 for the work of the organisation for its projects in many countries throughout the world which it contributes to.

Easter cards have been delivered to every house in the parish with messages about the Easter services in all three churches starting with Palm Sunday.

We look forward to our Procession of Witness on Good Friday and then congregating in the churchyard for a service where a dramatic reading of the events on Good Friday takes place and the Harpenden Salvation Army play for the hymns sung. Always hoping for good weather! Coffee, and hot cross buns afterwards with craft activities for the children.

The Community Gym continues to do very well. The Chapel Hub was awarded the first prize at the Wheathampstead Preservation Society AGM and received the Preservation Award Certificate. The Community Kitchen won the Community Award so that was an exciting night for us all.

Happy Easter Season to you all.

Jackie and Jane

Harpenden Gift Day

On Sunday 19th May we will be having our AGM which happens to coincide with our Church's Anniversary (202 years!) and as we have done in previous years we will be having a special Gift Day in order to increase our much needed church funds instead of our normal monthly communion charity collection.

This year we have just had our Quinquennial Inspection of our three properties, the Church, the Manse and Willow Way, which has highlighted a number of repairs and remedial work projects which require to be undertaken to make the necessary improvements to our properties and bring them back up to the required standard.

This will come at a considerable cost and together with our forecast operating losses for 2024 our finances will be under considerable strain hence the need to look at other ways of increasing our income.

In the past our Gift Days have proved to be very successful in raising much needed extra funds over and above our normal giving and hopefull will go some way in assisting in what is a very challenging financial year for the Church.

More details will be given out nearer the time.

The Treasurer
Harpenden URC

Friday Nights for families at WGCURC

We continued our programme of fortnightly events for families on Friday evenings, with two more sessions of BibleHeroes about stories from Daniel, including the Fiery Furnace and the Lions' Den, and two more games evenings at the end of each month. I particularly enjoyed the spooky faces and sound effects elicited during the drama of the Writing on the Wall! February's gamesnight fell in half-term, which resulted in our largest session yet, with 14 youngsters and lots of parents all enjoying themselves including a couple more of the families whom we usually see through Saturday Families Church.

Big thanks to our leaders, Allison and Claire and Janet and John. Here are some likely characters trying to balance on a small piece of newspaper....





This picture was produced after FamilyWorship on March 10th when the families worked together to represent Jesus calling disciples and telling them to let their nets down again for the miraculous catch – although they had been fishing all night and caught nothing. The craftstick at the bottom enables the boat to move..... good suggestion, Alex!

God Bless, Wendy

Games Night Dates



April 26th

May 24th

June 28th

July 26th

6pm – 8pm



In or out depending on the weather!



The Gift that keeps giving

I'm writing this on the day after Mothering Sunday having received flowers and cards at a family gathering. The subject of receiving 'gifts' reminded me of the bible texts about King Solomon.

In 1 Kings we read of the dream of Solomon in which God says to him *'Ask whatever you want me to give to you.'* What an offer! Some may well have asked for wealth, health and happiness, but Solomon, recognising his lack of experience for the task ahead of him, asked for *'A discerning heart'* –or in other words **Wisdom**. Consequently, God recognising his humility, gave Solomon more than he dreamed of and gave him not only wisdom but wealth and honour. In Proverbs 3: 14-35 we are told that *'Wisdom is worth more than silver; it makes you richer than gold; it is more valuable than precious jewels'*

When we receive gifts they are a reminder to us of the giver and we give thanks. Following Jesus' crucifixion the disciples were likewise, reminded of his promises to them. They were told to *tarry a while in Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.'* What did they expect? What kind of power? What would be expected of them? Would they become highly renowned, wealthy, great leaders? Or were they remembering the warnings that Christ gave them about rejection and suffering?

While they waited they we can be sure that would be very afraid of a backlash from the authorities and the people. They would meet together in secret and discuss what may happen next. And what did happen was even more than their wildest imaginings could have predicted – more than they dreamed of.

At Pentecost we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples - and through them ***the gifts of the Spirit*** throughout the Church on Earth. Unlike the flowers that fade and the chocs that are eaten the gifts of the Spirit are unfailing.

Vivienne Kendall (WUC)



Wheathampstead United Church

Invite you to join them for their Songs of Praise
service

Sunday 21st April

at

3pm

Led by Rev Martyn Neads



The title 'QUIZ NIGHT' is written in large, white, 3D block letters. The letters are surrounded by a shower of colorful confetti in shades of red, blue, yellow, and purple, creating a festive and celebratory atmosphere.

QUIZ NIGHT

11th May @ 7.30pm

WGC URC

Tickets £5

Please bring your own nibbles, beer or wine

Tea and Coffee will be provided

Teams of 6/8 people are ideal but Allison will help
you join with
others if you can't make up a team

Contact Allison for tickets and further information

allisongiles@hotmail.com

01707 333326

Donations for raffle prizes gratefully received

Synod

Did you know our church is one of 130 grouped together in the URC Thames North Synod? which includes some churches in London, Herts, Beds and Essex and one or two in Berkshire. The Synod has a small team of paid people to support us all and some committees which depend on volunteers. Synod convenes two or three meetings every year for representatives of all the churches to meet together for mutual encouragement and inspiration, attended by some of the ministers and lots of Church Elders and other volunteer representatives. And in March I got invited to attend, and tell them a little bit about our church involvement with families and children and young people. There were four of us being interviewed by the Synod Childrens and Youth Enabler, Lorraine, representative of 10 paid workers employed by different churches within the synod. I gave them an overview of my role, and told them about Saturday Families Church, and how we had built up participation by meeting people through our toddler and babygroups. It was quite a contrast to the work of the two youth leaders whose large London churches are able to run mid-week childrens and youthgroups, and to the childrensworker who is employed to help run a Sunday morning club for 8 to 10 junior aged children - the grandchildren of the 15-strong congregation of much older people, plus their schoolfriends. The organisers were hoping to encourage more churches to apply for grants to fund posts like ours. And several people asked me questions over lunch so hopefully it helped.

We met in the Lumen Church near King's Cross, which has been developed to include a café space fronting the road, and has wonderful stained glass and a lofty tower which lifted the worship. Some churches were present on zoom, including our own Philip Read, and then Matthew turned up in person for the afternoon session.

During the day there were various committee reports, and updates on the work of different aspects of discipleship and church life, and there was a passionate presentation and debate about the retirement age of ministers – currently mandated by age 68. So a resolution was put forward to the URC national assembly requesting a process to allow ministers to continue working as long as they desire and are able, in review with their congregations.

In 2022 the research organisation Theos conducted a survey and in-depth study of URC churches and has written a report to answer the question, 'What does it look like when URC churches flourish?' The report title is 'URC: A paradoxical church at a crossroads' and it's available for just the postage from the URC on-line bookshop. So we had some time in small groups to discuss some of the findings in the report, and our Synod will be using the findings to help shape the future of the support they provide for churches.

There was also a lively presentation by Roo from JPIT (the Joint Public Issues Team) about the need to encourage people to vote in the general election and local elections. It seems many people are disengaged, and some disenfranchised because they don't know how to vote or think it won't make any difference. But EVERY vote counts! So we are all encouraged to vote ourselves and encourage our friends and family members.



God bless, Wendy (WGC URC)

ELECTIONS

I don't think that I'm spreading fake news if I say that there will be a general election this year, although technically the date could just slip into 2025. However, there are local elections coming up, and polling day will be Thursday, 2 May.

I have no wish to tell you how you should vote, but I would urge everyone to exercise their right to vote, because there are many places where this basic right is denied. I do believe that you don't have much cause to moan if you didn't vote. Your vote should be secret, and there are many couples who still take the trouble to vote, but half suspecting that their votes will cancel each other's out.

At a recent United Reformed Church (URC) Thames North Synod gathering, a representative from 'head office' at Church House spoke strongly about how

individual Churches can help, not only their congregations, but other users of the premises too.

His talk was 'Get Ready to Vote', and I have displayed a poster in a prominent position in the Vestibule which I hope will be seen by everyone crossing our threshold.

Get registered – the majority of us will already be on the electoral roll, but if recently arrived in the area, action is needed. You can register online or with a paper form. There is one of those QR codes on the poster. It takes five minutes to fill in the form, but can take six weeks to be registered, so the advice is don't wait.

Get Voter ID – This will be the first general election where you will need to show photographic proof of identity, such as a passport, photocard driving licence, blue badge, or concessionary travel pass, even if expired, as long as it still looks like you.

If you have none of these, you can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate. The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is here to help Churches engage with elections and with councillors and MPs.

A useful link is jpit.uk/elections

The URC has become an ambassador of the Citizens UK Voter Registration Champions Scheme, undertaking to encourage our local communities to register to vote, to ensure they have appropriate ID, and to either go out to vote on the day or register for a postal vote.

Some will argue that the Church should not get involved in politics, but part of our calling as Christians is to engage with politics, because decisions made by the people that we vote for affect us all and the issues we care about from poverty to refugees and climate change.

Please do not be afraid to ask any of the Elders in your particular Church for help if needed; we may not know the answer immediately, but we will all do our very best to assist you in whatever way we can.

Philip Read – WGC URC – 01707 329484

CHURCH FAMILY CORNER

There are two April 1st birthdays to mention, so ladies first! Mary D. and Melvyn D. Next up are the twins, Howard and Xander, who will be 10 years old on 9th! (Where have the years gone?) The boys are followed by Derek G. on 12th, Margaret T. on 15th, Skye N. who will be 17 on 20th, Sanjay J. on 21st, Graham D. on 23rd, Arthur T. on 26th and Pat D. 29th.

Moving on to May, we start with Margaret K. on 1st, then Luke A. who will become a teenager on 5th, Chloe C. who will be 18 on 9th, Nathan C. on 10th, Madge N. on 12th, Joyce D. on 16th, Nano W. on 20th and Marianne S. on 25th,

We send our birthday congratulations and best wishes to all these friends and hope they each enjoy a happy day.

If you are feeling left out and would like us to mention your birthday, anniversary or any other news, then please find me on a Sunday morning or contact Allison in the church office on 01707 333326 or email: officewgcurc@gmail.com.

We have 5 Wedding Anniversaries to celebrate in this edition,:-

*Joyce & Bruce Nicolson's 53rd on 12th April.

*Irene & Roger Simpson's 70th on 17th April.

*Helen & Allen Kaye's 48th also on 17th April.

*Janet & John Mortimer's 43rd on 18th April.

*Chris & Kirsy Alderson's 61st on 25th May.

We send congratulations to all these friends and hope they enjoy their special day when it comes round.

We are delighted to hear of the safe arrival of baby Thomas Philip John, born on 11th March to Beth and Mike Humphreys and a brother for Lily. We enjoyed seeing baby Thomas in church for the first time with his big sister when he was only 2 weeks old.

We were all very sorry to hear of the deaths of three of our long-standing members recently, Margaret Brisby, Don Bull and Fred Robinson. We send our heartfelt condolences to both their families at this very sad time.

We are still praying for Scott, Jenny, Xander and Howard as Scott continues being cared for in the Lister hospital. He is now on the 11th floor in the Respiratory Unit. There is lots of rehab to go but his doctors are very pleased with his progress. They told him he was a miracle so keep praying!

Please also keep Roger & Irene Simpson in your prayers as Roger continues to convalesce in a Care Home and also Norma Collie at home.

Please remember to pass on any other concerns to our minister, Martyn, an Elder or Pastoral Friend so that no one gets forgotten.

We thank God for all the Blessings we receive as members of our Church Family here in Welwyn Garden City.

Thank you on behalf of our Pastoral Teams

Ann Meers

BOOK REVIEW

Here are reviews of 4 excellent (and very different books) I have read since Christmas – all recommended!

Lessons in Chemistry (Bonnie Garmus)

A fabulous book, beautifully written, which made me cry! Set in 1950s USA, in the days when women were expected to be at home, it tells of how women had to be tough to work in science, and how Elizabeth Zott found a way to tell women they could achieve so much more.

The Gates of Athens (Conn Igguldon)

This tells the story of Xerxes' Persian invasion of Greece and the Athenian-led defence from Marathon to the build-up to Salamis - a story I learned at school but told through fascinating characters, with the world's oldest democracy at the heart of the story.

Trust (Hernan Diaz)

Winner of the 2023 Pulitzer Prize and long-listed for the Booker Prize, this story about an American financier and his wife investing during the 1920s, is told by 4 different people – slightly confusing at first but well worth sticking with to the end.

The Silence of the Girls (Pat Barker)

This is the Trojan Wars told by one of the women affected by the Greek invasion and fighting – all the heroes are seen from her perspective and it really shows war from the victims' view. It really shows how little change there has been over the centuries!

Sarah Connor (Harpenden)

Gnocchi with mushrooms, spinach, bacon and poached egg

I subscribe to two cooking magazines, [Good Food](#) and [Olive](#), and every month I fold down the pages of recipes I like the look of and then happily put the magazines on my bookshelf and forget all about them. When I look through them again, there are always recipes I've marked which are a bit different to my normal tastes, and I'm fairly certain I will never make them. This is one of those recipes, and this week I decided I was just going to go for it. If I didn't like it, I could just not make it again. But I did like it. A lot.

This is so simple, fresh tasting and actually rather pretty. The original recipe is vegetarian and I was tempted to leave it as such, but I couldn't resist adding bacon. I'm sure, though, that it would be yummy without, so make this veggie if you want to.

Gnocchi with mushrooms, spinach, bacon and poached egg

Adapted from Olive October 2011

Serves 2

Ingredients:

a little olive oil, for frying

15g butter

3 slices back bacon, sliced

250g chestnut mushrooms, sliced

1 garlic clove, crushed

100g baby spinach

black pepper, to season

250g gnocchi (I used bought fresh, 3-4 minutes cooking time)

2 large, very fresh eggs

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over a medium-high heat and add the bacon. Fry until cooked through and then add the black pepper, mushrooms, garlic and butter. Fry until the mushrooms have softened, then turn the heat to low and wilt the spinach in while you cook the gnocchi and eggs.

Fill two large pans with boiling water and add a pinch of salt to each. In one pan, pour in the gnocchi. In the other pan, poach the eggs. I used gnocchi which took 3-4 minutes to cook, which was just the right amount of time for the eggs.

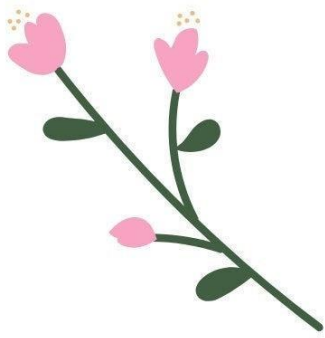
My method for poaching eggs (which I learnt from my nan) is to use a slotted spoon and stir the water in the pan quite quickly until it creates a sort of whirlpool. Quickly break an egg into the middle of whirlpool. It should cling together and begin to cook immediately, at which point you can push it gently to the side and create the whirlpool again. Alternatively, poach them one at a time.

Once the gnocchi is cooked, drain it and toss it in the pan with the bacon, mushrooms and spinach. Divide between two plates and add a poached egg to the top of each. Serve immediately.

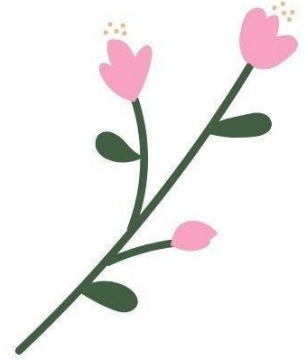
Becky



KIDS CORNER



Spring Word Search



BLOSSOM

BLOOM

FLOWERS

RAIN

SHOWERS

EASTER

SPRING BREAK

GRASS

HATCH

BIRDS

SUNSHINE

SEASON

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

N L M O R D Y S M B M O O L B

N I A R M E L E S E E A W O G

U O Y E L O S E A S O N M S S

L M L I O D N E K L A Y R P H

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U Y W E M S H O W E R S E D R

C H E F A M C L Y O G D R E S

X L R O V Z R C O J B R I N O

F I S E A R A K S L E I O E L

B L O S S O M C B J W B M O B

Easter Quiz

1. What colour robe/cloak was placed on Jesus?

- a.Red
- b.Black
- c.White
- d.Purple

2. Who rolled away the stone at Jesus' grave?

- a.God
- b.James and John
- c.An Angel
- d.A Soldier

3. Who brought burial spices for Jesus' body?

- a.Joseph
- b.Peter
- c.Nicodemus
- d.Martha

4. Which of the following did not occur at the point of Christ's death?

- a. The veil in the temple was ripped in half
- b. There was an earthquake
- c. The graves were opened and the saints arose
- d. There was a thunderstorm

5. What did the soldiers offer Jesus to drink while on the cross?

- a.Water
- b.Vinegar
- c.Wine
- d.Lemon juice

6. How long was Jesus in the grave before His resurrection?

- a.Three days and three nights
- b.Four days and four nights
- c.Three days and two nights
- d.Three days and four nights

7. Who of the following was the first person to see Jesus after his resurrection?

- a.Peter
- b.Joseph of Arimathea
- c.Mary Magdalene
- d.Roman Soldier

8. What did Jesus give to Judas to show that he would betray him?

- a.A cup of wine
- b.A silver coin
- c.A piece of bread
- d.A piece of roasted lamb

9. Who gave Jesus over to be crucified?

- a.Caesar
- b.Caiaphas
- c.Pilate
- d.Herod

10. How many days was Jesus on earth after his resurrection?

- a.8
- b.10
- c.20
- d.40

11. With what was Jesus' side pierced?

- a.Sword
- b.Spear
- c.Knife
- d.Thorn

12. When Jesus' side was pierced, what flowed out?

- a.Water
- b.Blood
- c.Water and blood
- d.Nothing

13. In what was Jesus' body wrapped?

- a.Linen
- b.Gauze
- c.Animal skins
- d.Purple cloth

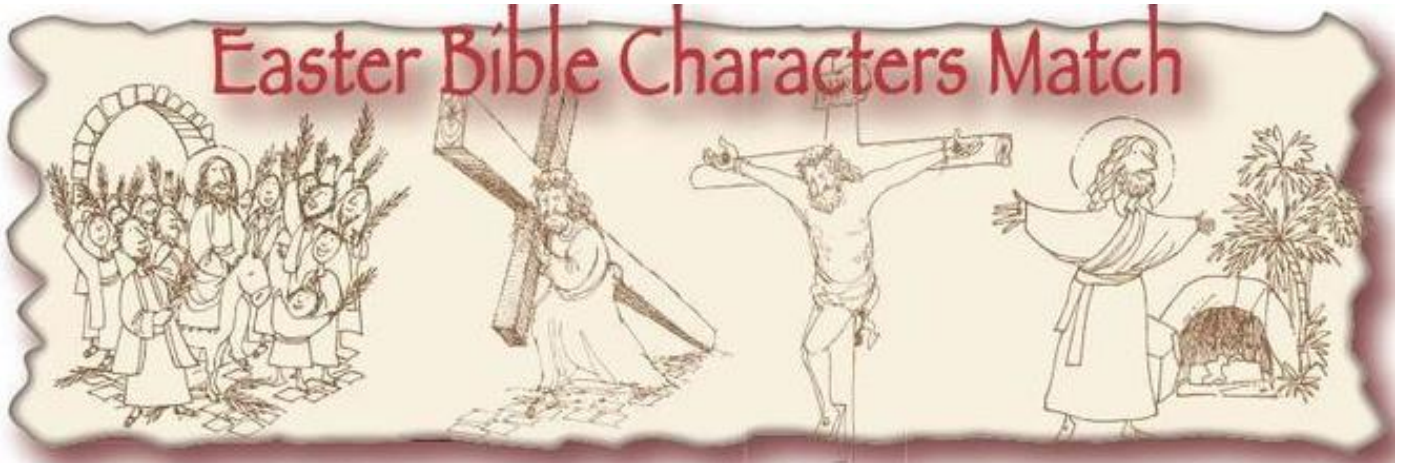
14. Who was the king at the time of Jesus' crucifixion?

- a.Tiberius Caesar
- b.Pontius Pilate
- c.King Herod
- d.Romulus

15. The message on the cross was written in which language?

- a.Greek
- b.Hebrew
- c.Latin
- d.All of the above

Easter Bible Characters Match



Match the Bible characters associated with the Easter story with the clues to their identities. Answers on page two.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. This was the first person Jesus appeared to after his resurrection | ___ Caiaphas /High Priest |
| 2. Jesus was delivered to this man the morning after his arrest | ___ Malchus |
| 3. When Jesus was being accused, this person claimed to have suffered dreams because of him | ___ Thoma |
| 4. This person was told to carry Jesus' cross | ___ Pontius Pilate |
| 5. This person was present at the crucifixion, and after witnessing the earthquake, knew that Jesus was the son of God, and glorified God | ___ Pilate's Wife |
| 6. This person begged Pilate for Jesus' body | ___ The Centurion |
| 7. Jesus wanted to know why this person was sleeping in the garden | ___ Nicodemus |
| 8. This person ripped his clothing when he heard what he believed was blasphemy from Jesus | ___ Mary Magdalene |
| 9. Jesus sent Peter and this person to prepare the Passover for the Last Supper | ___ Herod |
| 10. This ruler was excited to meet Jesus because they had heard many things and wanted to see miracles | ___ Joseph of Arimathaea |
| 11. After the resurrection, this person put his hand in Jesus' side | ___ Cleopas |
| 12. After his resurrection, Jesus met this man and his friend while walking on the road to Emmaus | ___ Peter/Simon Pet |
| 13. At Jesus' arrest, Peter cut this person's ear off | ___ Simon the Cyrenian |
| 14. This person brought about 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes to Jesus' body | ___ Barabbas |
| 15. This murderer was released in Jesus' place | ___ John |

Please can I have any articles for the next magazine by the 18th May 2024.
Please send by email or contact me by phone for WGC URC & Wheathampstead articles. For Harpenden URC articles please contact Sarah Connor Many thanks,
Allison Giles

I hope you have enjoyed reading this magazine. If you have, please consider sending us an article, I'm sure we would enjoy what you have to say. If you would like to contribute and are not really sure what, please contact one of the people above, who I'm sure could give you some suggestions.

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