

Jan - Feb
2026

Somerset & Mowbray Roads, New Barnet, Herts., EN5 1RH

Sunshine and Showers

Do you find reading the Bible hard? Most people do if we're honest. One of the reasons is that the Bible is full of paradoxes - ideas and beliefs we hold in our minds which contradict each other, and seemingly can't both be true, but somehow are.



Photo credit: Ben Collins on Unsplash

Like a weather forecast for sunshine and showers. Two types of weather, both valid, even when they don't go together. It's a bit like there's a conversation going on inside our heads, and the two people don't agree.

Psychologists call this tension "cognitive dissonance", and it feels uncomfortable. When we try to wrestle with this tension, we sometimes over-simplify and pretend one side of the paradox isn't there. That's a bit like ignoring the showers part of the forecast, and going out with sunglasses and no coat. You get drenched. Sometimes we dodge the discomfort by avoiding the Bible altogether, and that's not good either, because we miss out on all that it has to offer us.

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Trusting God by:

Walking the way of Jesus
Putting faith into practice
Valuing all people equally

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The best way is to fully embrace both parts of the paradox. Rather than searching for simplistic answers, we should seek the truth that comes somewhere in the space between them. It's elusive, strange – but beautiful. *Just like the rainbow that appears when the sun comes out after rain.*



Photo credit: Jeremy Bishop on Unsplash

At St John's Church we will be starting a course of studies, with our friends from Holy Trinity Church, looking at paradoxes in the Bible. The sessions will take place on Monday afternoons from 3-4:30pm starting on January 26th. All are welcome.

During the course we will be exploring what the Bible really is.

Did the words that we read come straight from God? Or are the words those of humans, edited by other humans?

We will be asking if the Bible is word-perfect, or has errors, mistakes and inconsistencies.


We will be thinking about whether the events described in the Bible actually happened, or if they are fictional stories written to make a point; asking if the Bible gives clear-cut, unambiguous guidance - is it a manual for living, or is it too complex to be useful?

We will also explore if the Bible limits us, with rules about things we should or should not do, or does it liberate us to fulfil our potential?

And in the final session we will think about the Bible's shelf life. Was it ever meant to be meaningful over two thousand years later?

There will be three sessions before Easter and three more to follow after Easter. The authors of the course hope that you may find the Bible more beautiful, even if it isn't any more simple.

adapted from the introduction to
Sunshine and showers: the Bible's beautiful strangeness

StJohn's
United Reformed Church Holy Trinity Church
Lyonsdown

Bible studies on Bible Paradoxes



Sunshine
and
showers | **The Bible's
beautiful
strangeness**

Joint group with Holy Trinity Church

Mondays 3pm-4.30pm

26 Jan, 2 Feb and 9 Feb

3 sessions this term, & 3 more after Easter

**At St John's United Reformed
Church**

**Corner of Somerset Rd & Mowbray Rd,
EN5 1RH**

The Bible is full of paradoxes. Different aspects of it can seem contradictory, and yet true. The course explores six of these paradoxes.

Stamps and Inkjet recycling

Stamps: If you receive any letters/cards with stamps over Christmas and New Year, please continue to pass any used/unused stamps to me, or put them in the collection boxes. These are sent to either the RNIB or Oxfam. Thank you for your support.

Recycled inkjets: Please continue to pass these to me, or put them in the collection boxes. All money raised from recycling inkjets goes directly to the RSPB, via Recycle 4 Charity. To date, over the past few years, the total raised for the RSPB is over **£650**.

If you wish to donate any old **Foreign/ UK coins and/or notes**, please pass them to me, as all money raised from these will also go directly to the RSPB.

Thank you all, so much, once again, for your support.

Malcolm Bond



St John's Fellowship

- some memories

IN THE CONSTITUTION of the Fellowship it states 'The purpose of the Fellowship shall be to promote social and similar gatherings for members and friends of St. John's Church, New Barnet'.

The chance to meet once a month to hear a speaker give a talk and have some refreshment for a small fee seemed to be a very positive thing to encourage in the church. For many years there had been a Women's Fellowship, which occasionally opened its doors to men if there was a speaker likely to interest them. Towards the end of 1982 it was decided to make the organisation open to men and women, and the new St John's Fellowship held its first meeting in January 1983. The idea was not only to provide an interesting monthly meeting, but to give an opportunity for members to chat to one another and get to know newcomers more easily than was possible after Sunday worship.

A committee was formed to run the Fellowship consisting of the President, usually the church minister, a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and up to six additional committee members. For the first two years Mr Rob Goodman was the Chairman: the roll call of church members who served on the committee are too many to list but their hard work in putting together a regular programme of talks and outings was always appreciated.



St John's Fellowship meeting in the Small Hall in 2009

Looking back at old programmes it is interesting to see the wide variety of subjects covered at meetings. Church members often contributed illustrated talks such as 'Landscape Gardening' by Heather Elsdon, 'How to look at the News' by Roz Douglas, 'Practical First Aid' by Marjorie and Joe O'Connor, 'Views of the Canary Islands' by Mike Peryer and 'Culture, Food and Views of Japan' by Derek Morley-Slinn.



Ron Mobbs, who ran the Fellowship for many years, with Sue Taylor at a garden party in Muswell Hill

The committee felt that charities should be invited to tell its members about their work, so there were speakers from such groups as *The Mission to Seafarers*, *Water Aid*, *The work of the Woodland Trust*, *Noah's Ark Children's Hospice* and *Jesus Hospital Charity Almshouses*.

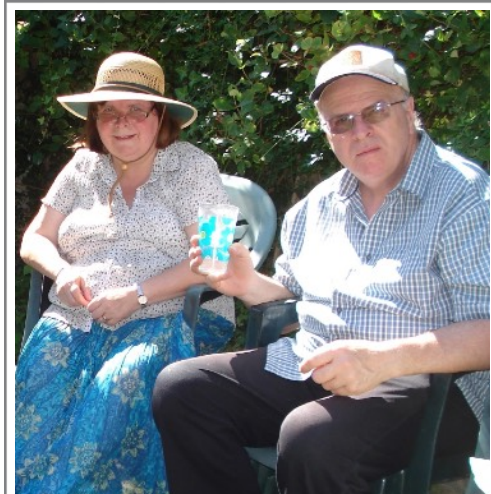
Our church ministers also entertained members with talks. Revd Michael Diffey told us about his ministry experience in *40 Years - Almost!*; Revd Philip Stewart gave us *Confessions of an Amateur Parson*; Revd Filip Keller filled our church hall for his talk *Freedom and Occupation*; and Revd Julian Templeton told us about his journey *From NZ Pastoral to UK Pastorate*.

The Fellowship enjoyed a number of talks on unusual subjects - or at least unusual titles - such as *Peking to Paris in a Pink Rolls Royce* given by Sir John Stuttard, *National Anthems – Cultural Perspectives* by Revd Julian Templeton, and *A Silk Purse from a Pig's Nose* by Robin Webb. The above list of talks is only a small sample of the hundreds given over the years.

Normally in June the committee organised an outing or a Summer lunch. Some of the outings included places like Kew Gardens or a cruise on the River Lee. We visited Jordan's Cereal manufacturers in Biggleswade and on one occasion enjoyed a concert at the St Albans Organ Museum. Every December, after the AGM, a party was held with food and entertainment.

The Fellowship always ran on a low budget, only charging its members a small admission fee, however it always gave a good donation to the church for hall hire.

Any group like the Fellowship needs a strong team to lead it and over the forty three years it has run the church has been lucky to find people prepared to put in the hours attending meetings and planning the events to make it work. Looking to the future it is hoped that new people with enthusiasm will step forward and help to run this worthwhile group.



Marjorie O'Connor, who took over from Ron and did so much for the Fellowship, with husband Joe

David Paul

Shaun Wallace talks about forgotten black history



AT THE END OF NOVEMBER, Tony Alderman led our Sunday service and invited as guest speaker Shaun Wallace, who formerly attended Lumen URC, talking to us about his project on black history and how he had discovered three extraordinary black Londoners who inspired him to create a GCSE education app.

All three men made impacts on British history, but their achievements had previously been unrecognized and largely unrecorded.



Cecil Belfield Clarke was a doctor and civil rights activist who came to Britain from Barbados in 1914 with a scholarship to study medicine at Cambridge University. He settled in London and was a GP who kept his practice open in the Elephant and Castle in London even while bombs were falling during the Blitz in the Second World War.

He lived in Barnet and he was a founder member of the League of Coloured Peoples in 1931 campaigning against civil rights abuses in the UK.

He discovered Clark's Rule (spelt wrongly by other doctors who did not recognise Dr Clarke's achievement) which is used in medicine throughout the world. Clark's Rule is a formula for calculating appropriate medicine dosages for children based on their weight.

In 2023 a blue plaque was unveiled commemorating his life and work for forty five years in Elephant and Castle with his name spelt correctly at last.

<https://www.lsbu.ac.uk/about-us/news/black-british-civil-rights-trailblazer-honoured-with-blue-plaque-on-lsbu-building>



Ivor Cummings was born in Hartlepool to a father from Sierra Leone and a British mother. In 1941 he was the first black official appointed to the Colonial Office and was the most senior black civil servant in the UK in the 1940's and 50's.

On behalf of the UK Government, he welcomed the Caribbean people who arrived on the Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks in June 1948 and found them accommodation in South London. He campaigned on a number of causes including abolishing the colour bar in British Boxing. 🖐️

Patrick Nelson was a muse for Duncan Grant, a member of the influential Bloomsbury set of artists. He was the only black person painted by them.

All three men were part of or descended from a highly educated group of Caribbean and African migrants who came here to the UK before the Second World War and whose contribution to British life has largely been forgotten, with most people wrongly believing that black migration to Britain only started in the late 1940's with the arrival of the Empire Windrush.

Shaun Wallace obtained a grant to research these important lives, and he shared his findings with us in a very interesting and thought-provoking talk.

If you're reading this online you can see the full talk by clicking on this link: [A talk by Shaun Wallace](#)



Roz Douglas

Community Garden

On an unseasonably warm and dry November day, nine Incredible Edible Barnet volunteers gathered to tidy the community garden, start the process of creating mould from fallen leaves from our local parks that the council had dropped off earlier in the week, and celebrate the end of the gardening season by making and sharing soup.



Ingredients for the day included people with Bulgarian, Chinese, English, Russian and Sri Lankan heritage and a variety of root vegetables, herbs and spices.



As we enjoyed the souper soup and homemade bread we shared soup memories, learned about the invention of the soup spoon and played "Alphabet Soup" – a game where you have to name a soup for each letter of the alphabet.

Asparagus, Borscht, Carrot and Coriander, Dhall, Kimchijjigae, Gazpacho, Tarator, Ramen, Red Lentil, Scotch Broth, Tomato, Vichyssoise and Zucchini were just some of the ones we came up with – and we know that there are many more.

Soup is easy to make, nutritious, cheap, reduces food waste as you can use up leftovers and freeze and reheat it.

Making and consuming it is a great way to bring people together around a meal that has been enjoyed for thousands of years by people across the world.

Our thanks go to St John's United Reformed Church for their support and to Mother Nature for providing us with the opportunity to come together as social gardeners and the food that we need to thrive.

Dave McCormick



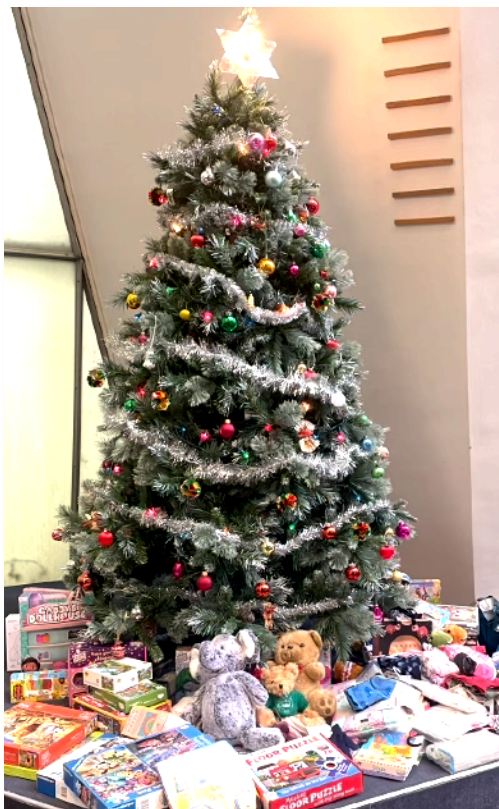


MAINLY MUSIC

In November we celebrated our 7th birthday at Mainly Music, as our group began in 2019. We had birthday cake with the Mainly Music elephant logo on it, and the team continue to find these Thursday mornings both enjoyable and rewarding. Valerie attended training in October and said she found it very encouraging.

Also in November, we had to say a very sad farewell to Sue Taylor as she prepared to move back to Australia. Sue has been such a faithful member of the Mainly Music team, sometimes welcoming our families at the door and always doing the washing up. We miss her but are glad she is now near her family there.

Mainly Music will resume on 8th January and meet every Thursday until Easter, apart from the Half Term break in February. The sessions were well attended throughout the autumn term, including the final two which had a Christmas theme. Valerie told the Christmas story with the characters from a child-friendly crib scene and familiar Christmas songs for all to sing. Each child was given an appropriate Christmas story book and each carer also received a small gift.



Our Christmas Tree with presents donated to New Citizens Gateway

CHRISTMAS JOY

On Saturday 13th December several families joined us for an afternoon of Christmas Joy. Alison Bond told the story of the nativity from a version based on the familiar children's story, "We're going on a Bear Hunt," which included refrains to join in with, much enjoyed by adults as well as children! This was followed by a range of Christmas craft activities and then a drink and a snack at the end. It was a very happy afternoon.

Janet Harvey



CHRISTMAS CHARITABLE DONATIONS



Thank you to everyone who supported our various Christmas Appeals:

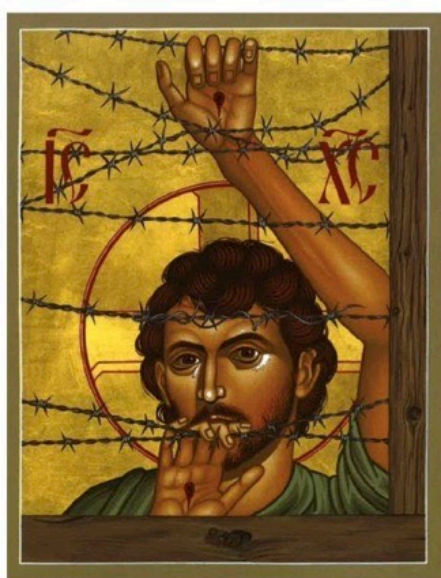
- Our Christmas Card, which we signed to send Christmas greetings instead of sending cards, raised £163 for CRISIS.
- The collections taken at our Candlelit Carol service and Christmas Day service raised £471.50, which will be shared between Homeless Action in Barnet for the work of Together in Barnet Night Shelter and the London Churches Refugee Fund.
- New Citizens Gateway were very grateful for the large donation of toys and clothing items delivered in time for their Christmas party - most of the gifts were distributed to children living in four Home Office contingency hotels in Barnet, where most of the families receive only £9 a week and often struggle to afford basic needs, let alone buy toys for their children. In total, 758 toys were distributed to more than 200 children.
- Our appeal for new and used candles will be collected shortly to support the people of Ukraine, as they continue to be impacted by power cuts caused by the damage to infrastructure. A local family from the Association of Ukrainians are working with a Rotarian group to send these by lorry to Ukraine.

London Churches Refugee Fund

For those of you who may not be aware, I thought it might be worth saying a bit more about the work of the **London Churches Refugee Fund (LCRF)**. The following is from their website where more information including their Annual Report and case studies can be seen, <https://www.lcrf.org.uk/>.

LCRF was set up in 2007 at the request of a network of refugee charities in London. We are an ecumenical Christian-based organisation and inspired by the gospel, but support the relief of destitution among refugees regardless of creed or colour. LCRF makes grants of up to £1,000 every Spring and Autumn to multiple front-line refugee projects in London. Our grants are used by the projects to purchase phone credit, travel cards, hygiene items, nappies, food, and emergency payments, to give to the thousands of destitute asylum-seekers in London who come to them for help. All the work of the charity is undertaken voluntarily (we have no staff and no office) so nearly every penny we raise goes directly towards our grant-making. To date, we have raised and distributed over £500,000. 🙌

Here is a list of some of the groups who have received grants from LCRF: Action for Refugees Lewisham (AFRIL), African Refugee Community, Babylon Migrants Project, Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile, Cartesian Academy (Choir) Supplementary School (CASS), Citizens of the World Choir, Cotton Tree Trust, Croydon Refugee Day Centre, Freedom from Torture, Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group, Hackney Doorways, Hackney Migrant Centre, Happy Baby Community, Holy Trinity Church Hounslow, Hope for the Young, Housing Justice, Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants, Islington Mind, Jesuit Refugee Service, Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network, Life Seekers Aid, London Catholic Worker, NNLS Asylum Seekers Drop-in, Notre Dame Refugee Centre, Peaceful Borders, Room to Heal, St James Church Piccadilly, St Jude and St Paul's Church, Mildmay, Salusbury World Refugee Centre, Waging Peace, Waltham Forest Migrant Action, West London Welcome, Women Against Rape (Asylum from Rape), Globe Community Project.



**Monthly Memorial Prayer Vigil
for refugees and asylum-seekers
on the 3rd Monday of every month
Outside the Home Office SW1P 4DF
12.30pm to 1.30pm**

Praying for:

- *Those who died trying to reach the UK***
- *Victims of current wars***
- *Those in detention & who are homeless***
- *The UK to be a more welcoming nation***

*Sign up to receive email news & alerts of changes or
cancellations at : homeofficevigil@gmail.com*

I am sure that all these groups and LCRF welcome our support and prayers for the work they are doing to make refugees and asylum seekers feel more welcome in our communities.

Alison Bond

Helen Marlborough

17th November 1932 - 22nd September 2025

On Tuesday 28th October the funeral service for Helen took place at New Southgate Crematorium. A few of us from the church attended the service. Helen had been a valuable member of the choir at St John's; she had a lovely soprano voice and, indeed, at the service we listened to a recording of Helen accompanied on piano by her sister, Sheila, in their younger days singing an aria from Handel's *Messiah*, 'Come unto him all ye that labour'. The two sisters had been members of the United Reformed Church in Wood Street, before becoming members at St John's.

She met her husband, Denis at a dance; they were married in 1953 and had two children, Rosalind and David.

At St John's in January 1994 Helen took the lead role in a production of *Baboushka* by Donald Swann and Arthur Scholey - produced by Ann Kirby - proving that she had not lost her lovely soprano voice.

Revd David Skitt had reason to be particularly grateful to Helen who noticed some disorganisation in his paperwork and offered her services to do some general administration for him; something Helen never talked of and about which most church members were unaware.

Latterly Helen lived at Hadley Lawns Care Home and was visited regularly by Valerie and Andrew Mills.




Editors

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
A service for everyone!

Brookside Methodist Church
Saturday 7th March at 2:30pm

NIGERIA 2026



INFORMED PRAYER PRAYERFUL ACTION
24-7 365 Days a year Prayer movement Ecumenical International Women-led
wwdp.org.uk Registered Charity Number 233242

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to be with the editors by
Friday 27th February.
churchrecord2023@gmail.com

Thanks for flowers:

Sunday 2nd November
Ann Bannerman

Sunday 9th November
Pauline Wishart

Sunday 30th November
Alison Bond

Calendar of Events

JANUARY

Sunday 11	11:00am	Worship led by Helen Snider and Andrew Summers
Tuesday 13	7:30pm	Elders' meeting
Thursday 15	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 18	11:00am	Worship led by Alison Bond
Thursday 22	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 25	11:00am	Worship led by David Paul and Richard Harvey
Monday 26	11:00am	Women's Group (venue to be advised)
	3:00pm	Bible study: Sunshine and showers: the Bible's beautiful strangeness (see article)
Thursday 29	9:30am	Mainly Music

FEBRUARY

Sunday 1	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Sarah Beaumont
Monday 2	3:00pm	Bible study: Sunshine and showers: the Bible's beautiful strangeness
Thursday 5	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 8	11:00am	Worship led by Paul Elsdon
Monday 9	3:00pm	Bible study: Sunshine and showers: the Bible's beautiful strangeness
Tuesday 10	7:30pm	Elders' meeting
Thursday 12	9:30am	Mainly Music
Sunday 15	11:00am	Worship led by Revd Roger Orme
Wednesday 18		The start of Lent
Sunday 22	11:00am	Worship led by Roz Douglas
Wednesday 25	11:00am	Women's Group (venue to be advised)
Thursday 26	9:30am	Mainly Music

MARCH

Sunday 1	11:00am	Worship with the Lord's Supper led by Valerie and Andrew Mills
Thursday 5	9:30am	Mainly Music
Saturday 7	2:30pm	World Day of Prayer at <i>Brookside Methodist Church</i>