

MARK'S MESSENGER



*The Parish Magazine of
St Mark's Church, Broomhill and Broomhall, Sheffield*

Winter 2023 *Donations welcomed and can be made via the app below*



**The James Webb Telescope observes the birth of a new sun
(image courtesy of NASA)**



GOODBYE FROM SUE



On Sunday 29 October I announced my intention to leave St Mark's and I promised to fill in some of the gaps in an article for the Messenger. So, here goes!

I went on sabbatical knowing that I needed to step back from the daily responsibilities of parish ministry in order to rest and recuperate and reflect upon my vision for ministry.

Those three months, May to July, did exactly what I needed them to. I walked and met up with friends, I went on retreat, I read lots of books and I attended a Modern Church Conference. Throughout this time I was trying to discern what my next steps might be, whether this was to a renewed vision within St Mark's or to move on to something different.

I love my role at St Mark's and I am so proud of the church that I serve. Our values are all about connectivity, connecting our faith with the issues facing our world today; connecting Jesus' teaching with the ways we are feeling, helping us to be the best people we can be, investing in our relationships and serving those around us. There is nothing easy about the Gospel but at St Mark's I think we are genuinely exploring the good news for our own generation.

I joined the team here at St Mark's as Associate Vicar back in 2010. I really did not expect to be invited to come here and yet it was a gift to me and my family and an affirmation of my call to ordained ministry. Reaching across into the lives of people in Broomhall was a particular joy and one which I miss. In 2015 I did not expect to apply for the role of Vicar and, when I saw on the day of the interview who the other candidates were, I was certain that I would not be appointed. So it was another shock when it was me who was invited to serve as the Vicar of the church which I had grown to love and admire.

In the eight years I've been the incumbent we've been through rather a lot. It's not every day that a Vicar speaks out against the nomination of a Diocesan Bishop. I could only do this because I knew that I had the absolute support of the people of St Mark's, a church which had worked so hard to ensure that General Synod voted for women to be ordained in 1992. In that tradition I felt I had to raise my voice in 2016 to say that appointing a diocesan bishop who would not ordain women would cause major problems for this diocese. It was the right thing to do but it was costly.

To then be the Vicar who led the church through a pandemic, when clergy were banned from leading services in their own churches and when we had to learn how to minister very differently, using online tools rather than public gatherings was also demanding. We did our best to assess the unknown risk of Covid 19

but it isn't easy to judge how many people are safe to gather in a church building when no one is explaining how to calculate that risk. It was not an easy time and many of us struggled.

Throughout my time at St Mark's I have been involved in discussions about how Hallam Deanery might manage fewer clergy numbers. This has been partly due to funding and partly due to a reduction in the number of people coming forward to serve the church in this way. At first five churches were looking to work as a Team but then two separate teams emerged and our Mission Partnership emerged. In many ways St Mark's is well matched with St John's, Ranmoor and St Mary's, Walkley, especially since all three churches have signed up to Inclusive Church, but it is a model of ministry which we are not used to. Trying to be the Vicar of St Mark's and the Priest in Charge of St Mary's has been challenging for both congregations. I am proud of the way that our churches have risen to the challenge and made the very best of the situation. In the background I have also tried to reach into our twin deanery of Ecclesfield to support the congregation of St Cuthbert's, Fir Vale. They are also members of Inclusive Church now!

So, I am proud of the ways in which St Mark's is reaching out into different parts of the diocese, sharing resources in different ways and learning from the communities that gather in different parts of the city.

I am proud of the way that St Mark's has come back to life after the pandemic. Our families found it particularly difficult and yet now we are blessed with so many children and young people. Students and young adults are also growing in number and professional people are also joining the congregation. St Mark's is vibrant, why on earth would I want to leave now? I don't.

My decision to leave is not because I want to move away from this ministry but is because I think it is time. It is within my gift to make space for someone else to enjoy the delight of ministering within this Mission Area. What a joy to be able to confidently leave knowing that the church will continue to go from strength to strength! In some ways it feels like an act of generosity.

But it is also very much in my best interest. During my sabbatical I enjoyed sharing a home with Sibylle. Travelling across town every morning and getting back late in the evening isn't my ideal. We enjoyed the occasional cup of coffee during the day, cooking and eating together and every now and then sitting in the garden. To be able to support Sibylle's ministry at St Aidan's is something which I will enjoy, and being able to offer some more time to St Cuthbert's, Fir Vale feels good.

So, I am leaving St Mark's on a high, knowing that I have given and received the best I could have asked for in ministry. Thank you for helping me to continue to grow in the Living, Thinking, Loving faith which we share together here. I can't wait to hear how you all continue to thrive after I have gone. May you know how blessed you are, that you may be a blessing to others.

With love, Sue x

SHAME



Recently I read Peter Frankopan's massive and authoritative book *The Earth Transformed, An Untold Story*¹ in which he writes history not from a political angle but from an ecological and climatic perspective, looking at the effect of such things as weather systems, volcanic eruptions and migration patterns, as well latterly as human activity, have had on the shaping of the earth as we know it today. The further towards the present day I came, the more I felt ashamed of being both male and from a colonising nation. Chapter 29, entitled *On the Edge of Ecological Limits*, is one of the most terrifying things I have read, sparing no detail in setting out the impact climate change has had and could well have.

Soon afterwards I read the Jamaican poet Lorna Goodison's poem *Reporting back to Queen Isabella*², and also had to prepare intercessions for the Harvest Festival.

In response to all of these stimuli, I found myself writing the following lines. The lack of punctuation is deliberate, and the tautology of male man is, at least in my head, a definite reflection of the phrase *εχθρος αντηροπος* (echthros anthropos, enemy man – though, sadly, most translations simply say an enemy) of the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13. 28).

I'm a white male man
Of privilege beyond belief

I'm a white male man
Ashamed of white male men

We are the ones who raped the earth
Who raped its fruitfulness

Who raped its people of their ways
Enslaved for cotton sweetness

We are the ones who won't change
Our ways our soft pleasures

Bought at the expense of oil
Of soil of plastic particulates

Found in deep sea fish
And every human lung

We are the ones who waged war
For gold for gain for glory

We are the ones who were unashamed
But leave ourselves our heirs

With post colonial angst
White male man's shame

Who can forget forgive

John Schofield

¹Frankopan, P, (2023) *The Earth Transformed, An Untold History*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing

²O Tuama, P, (2022), *Poetry Unbound*. Edinburgh: Canongate, p99

SIXTY YEARS AT ST MARK'S



Ann Lewin

I first heard about St Mark's just after Christmas in 1960, when a national newspaper ran the kind of story journalists love, about a vicar in Sheffield who asked the organist on Christmas Day to leave the anthem out, because he didn't want the service to over-run. The choir went on strike, and the organist resigned.

Little did I know then that two years later, almost to the day, I would be staying in the Rutland Hotel after a very snowy journey from Worcester where I was teaching at the time, prior to an interview for a job in Sheffield. Along the road, I saw a church which was being rebuilt. When I came to take up my new post in September that year, the church was reconsecrated. I didn't move into the area until October, and on my first visit to the church, I was greeted by the vicar, Michael Adie, who used to stand in the narthex before services to greet people, always with the words 'Who are you?' So my sixty years of life connected with St Mark's began. I was an active member of the congregation during his incumbency, and that of Michael Paton who succeeded him.

In the early years of Michael's time the style of worship was quite old fashioned. But the move to the new building from the Parish Hall where services had been held after the end of the War, provided the opportunity to move to new styles of worship. The Parish Communion movement was gaining ground, and Michael introduced a Sung Communion every Sunday, which preceded Sung Matins for some years. Matins was not to everyone's taste, and it wasn't long before the choir opted out. There were some unpleasant accusations made about the Vicar not being interested



Michael Adie

in the loyal few who had helped to keep worship alive when there was no church-shaped building to meet in. Actually he cared very deeply about them, and probably spent more time in discussion with them than with anyone else, and Matins wasn't abandoned until some time in Michael Paton's incumbency.

The old church had catered for quite an elite congregation, and there were vestiges of that when I arrived. The congregation was home to a number of consultant doctors and senior nurses – the new Hallamshire teaching hospital was being developed. (It used to be said that if you were going to have a heart attack, the best place to do so was in St

Mark's on a Sunday morning, where you would get instant expert attention). There, schools, whether LEA controlled or Private, were sought after. Sheffield University, just down the road, was home to highly qualified staff, including Prof. David McClean in the Law department, who became the Lay Chair of General Synod, and was responsible (after I had left Sheffield) for producing the legislation which brought about the Ordination of women to the Priesthood, when Michael Adie, by then Bishop of Guildford, steered General Synod as it made its Church-and world-changing decision after years of struggle, to open ministry fully to women. There were managing directors of a variety of industries too. Gradually the church attracted a more diverse body of people and became more like it is today.

There was a great sense of community as the congregation settled into the new church building. There was quite a lot of work needed to improve the grounds, and working parties were invited to shift soil and build up the slope between the Green and the church, with refreshments provided. I remember one occasion when Michael Adie's toddler son discovered how to turn on the tap on a keg of beer set up in the vicarage drive, and then couldn't turn it off. People saved the day with a fine turn of speed.....

People were always encouraged to do what they could to improve the surroundings. In Michael Paton's time, I suggested that we might refurbish the rusty railings around the church. Most places had lost their railings as part of the war effort, but for some reason St Mark's had kept theirs. Quite a few people joined in. It was the kind of work where you



Rebuilding the banking

toiled for an hour, and then found that you had only been at it for about ten minutes. Passers-by would make helpful suggestions, and ask if we were going to tip each railing with gold. There was only one answer to that. In the end a couple of men who had decided to camp in the car park helped us to finish the job.

Apart from activities like that, I was PCC Secretary for a time, and a representative on Deanery and Diocesan Synod. However lively the discussions, PCC meetings were often followed by a time of refreshment where disagreements were laid aside. I edited the parish magazine for some years too. It was rather disconcerting when people sometimes thought I was going to ask them for an article when all I wanted to do was talk to them. There was a lot provided for children and young people: Sunday School, Young Lions, activity weekends in the Peak district, trips to Mirfield for the annual Commem Day, and with Philip Mcfadyen, one of the curates, creating the Lion which hangs on the wall in the entrance to the church - his eyes are buttons which I donated.

Music was always a significant offering as part of the worship and, as the supply of trebles dwindled, the choir became an adult body. Evensong became an occasion for more adventurous music than could be embraced in the morning Eucharist. Music has continued to engage people as singers and instrumentalists, and there have been concerts and musicals,

like *Noye's Fludde* and the home-grown *Cousin John* about John the Baptist, written by John Earwaker, another of the clergy attached to St Mark's, which have involved people of all ages and drawn people in from the wider community.



Preaching was of a high quality, and as well as the resident clergy, many distinguished visitors came to stretch our thinking. Both Michael Adie and Michael Paton had contacts in high places who would come for a day, or to lead a course: we met many like David Jenkins, who challenged us – we were always encouraged to ask questions, and not seek easy answers. There was always plenty of stimulation, in Lent and other courses. Later on, after I had left Sheffield, the Centre for Radical Christianity held weekends which brought people from outside the parish to hear what people like Richard Holloway and Marcus Borg had to say. I

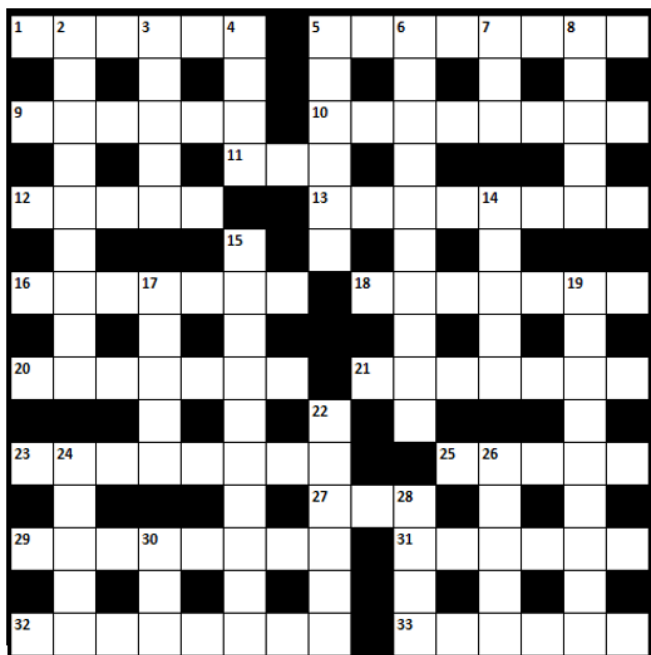
used to come back for those weekends, and joined in several Parish weekends at Whaley Bridge too, where there was always a mixture of worship work, music, and long walks, which tested our map reading sometimes.

I hope I shall be able to come and join you for a few more years yet. I made a lot of friends while I was at St Mark's, and when I left in 1978 to move back to Southampton, I knew that it would be difficult to find another church with the vibrancy, sense of transcendence and depth I had experienced while with you. Cherish what you have, and deepen your life – the Church at large needs what you have to offer.

Ann Lewin

Family crossword

Across clues are straightforward definitions or descriptions of the words to be entered. Down clues are cryptic. Some thematic links can be found within the puzzle as a whole.



Across

- 1 Derbyshire town noted for its spa water and opera house (6)
- 5 Often used as a mixer, (for example, in shandy), this soft drink can be still or sparkling (8)
- 9 Umberto Giordano's opera of 1898; also a type of hat (6)
- 10 Gauche, brash, awkward, indiscreet, obvious and inconsiderate can all be synonyms of this word (8)
- 11 An element which is one of the constituents of bronze (3)
- 12 Lacking polish due to not practising for a while; dull; corroded (5)
- 13 Animated films, often quite short, such as *Tom and Jerry* (8)
- 16 Neither at the start nor near the end of a period in office (7)
- 18 Disrupt a conversation, for example, by barging in; enter without being invited (7)
- 20 The father of James and John, two of the first disciples, probably a fisherman (7)
- 21 Huckleberry Pie, Banana Sundae and Sticky Toffee Pudding are all examples (7)

- 23 Esholt, Bingley and Skipton all lie in this valley (8)
- 25 Being aligned at right-angles to a ship's length (5)
- 27 Letter of the Greek alphabet corresponding to R (3)
- 29 Up-to-date, with sophisticated modern technology similar to that used in rockets and satellites (5-3)
- 31 Ewan McGregor grew up in this market town on the River Earn in Perthshire (6)
- 32 Central Italian city, capital of Tuscany, famous for fashion, textiles and art (8)
- 33 A periodic large-scale warming of the Eastern Pacific Ocean especially near Peru (2,4)

Down

- 2 Tune – (dire!) – leader of Ultravox composed, lacking in education (9)
- 3 Modest angler, who you thought finally got a fish (5)
- 4 A net gets tangled? The opposite (4)
- 5 Gouda's last to be served in meal for promotional event (6)
- 6 Isn't primed for revision, so made spelling errors (10)
- 7 Container, when inverted, can be used for writing (3)
- 8 Robert Zimmerman entertained by trendy landowner (5)
- 14 Old grandfather relates eerie stories; firstly, those like *Shrek* (5)
- 15 Up in court once more, got another chance (5,5)
- 17 Neat hem embroidery includes a recurring subject (5)
- 19 Dolphin's identifying feature: find sailor removing one at sea (6,3)
- 22 Appraiser, energetic at heart, becomes calm (6)
- 24 Boost for one politician – English Liberal (5)
- 26 One returns in May? Blessed be his name! (5)
- 28 Unusual echo where arrows get loosed (4)
- 30 Triumph, although not half scared (3)

**‘Education sows not seeds in you, but makes your seeds grow’
*Kahlil Gibran***



Education in its many forms has always been an important part of my life. As a young child my mother recounted how getting an eleven plus scholarship offered her the opportunity to be lifted out of a life of poverty. She became a teacher and spent many years educating young people in the same area in which she grew up. My love of literacy and belief in the transformational power of learning led me to follow her footsteps to work in

primary education with a commitment to nurturing the seeds within another generation and helping them grow.

My interest in further education was ignited when I started Reader training, studying at York St John's where I achieved a BA in Theology and Ministry. Further study at Luther King House led to me gaining a Masters in Contextual Theology. Last year I was offered a place on a postgraduate psycho-spiritual course at Oxford Brookes University. I am very grateful that my workplace, the Readers Education Fund and St Mark's generously offered funding to enable me to accept this offer.

This course enabled me to reflect on aspects of embodied psycho-spiritual care, exploring the relationship between faith, beliefs, spirituality and psychological approaches of care within the healthcare setting. We studied different psychological models of care, palliative care, narrative work, creativity and spirituality, mindfulness and nature, and the importance of cultural sensitivity in our roles as spiritual care practitioners. Throughout the course we were encouraged to engage with our own story of faith and spirituality. This high level of reflection helped me develop a greater awareness of self, which in turn has enriched and enhanced the chaplaincy support I offer those I meet.


It has also opened opportunities to give back to the faith community. In the past year I have contributed to the Bishop's Wholeness and Healing Advisory Group, assisted in creating liturgies and prayer stations for Night Service at St Mark's, and agreed to facilitate a bereavement group. I am also looking forward to being part of the group planning the 2024 Parish Weekend. Through these activities I become aware of glimpses of grace, the extraordinary in the ordinary aspects of everyday life and the mutual encouragement of those I worship alongside. I reiterate my thanks for the support I have received that has enabled me to share newfound gifts and talents across several communities.

Siobhan Hoyes

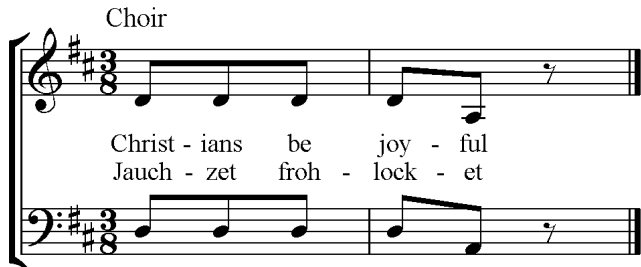
BACH – CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

From the opening five timpani strikes, echoed just one minute later when the choir enters, a modern-day audience can tell there is a joyous festival to be celebrated.

Timpani



Choir

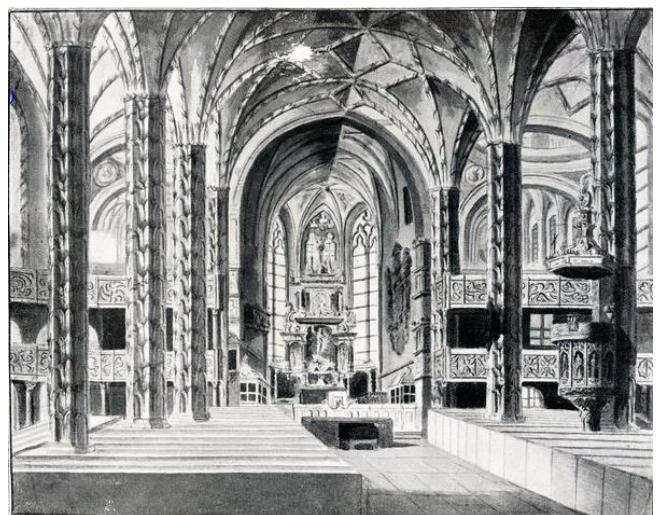


Christ - ians be joy - ful
Jauch - zet froh - lock - et

In just under three hours of music, Bach takes us through six highlights of the Christmas story:

1. Christmas Day – the Birth of Jesus
2. 26 December – the annunciation to the shepherds
3. 27 December – the adoration of the shepherds
4. New Year's Day – the circumcision and naming of Jesus
5. First Sunday after New Year – the journey of the Magi
6. Epiphany – the adoration of the Magi

Each story is told in a complete Cantata. The whole sequence was never performed together in Bach's lifetime, but each cantata was part of a service on the appropriate day at St Nicholas' Church and/or St Thomas' Church, Leipzig.



Nicholaskirche



Thomaskirche

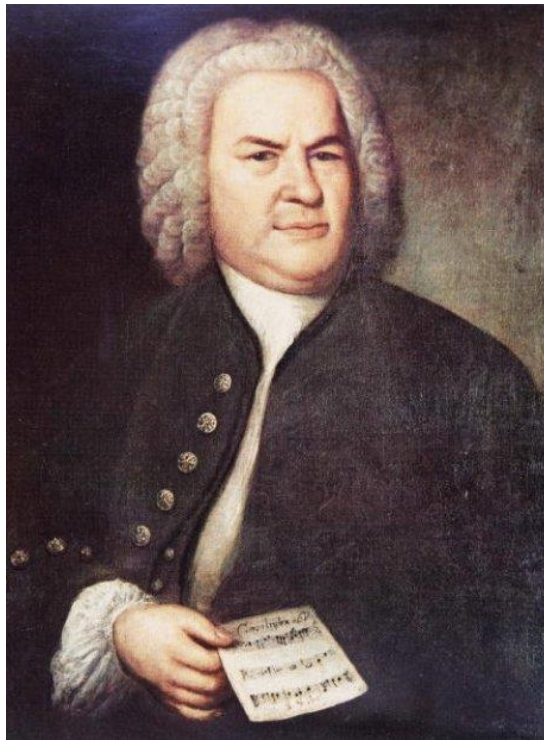
Bach had responsibility for the music at both churches. In modern concert performances the music is usually split between two concerts. In the Christmas season of 1734 for which Bach composed it, the six cantatas were performed:

1. 25 Dec, 1734 – morning at St Nicholas; afternoon at St Thomas
2. 26 Dec, 1734 – morning at St Thomas; afternoon at St Nicholas
3. 27 Dec, 1734 – morning at St Nicholas
4. 1 Jan, 1735 – morning at St Thomas; afternoon at St Nicholas
5. 2 Jan, 1735 – morning at St Nicholas
6. 6 Jan, 1735 – morning at St Thomas; afternoon at St Nicholas

Bach had produced a few cantatas for Christmas week while he was in Weimar, but it was the move to Leipzig which prompted him to write a complete six-part sequence (annually from 1723 to 1726). Four of these used texts by the librettist Georg Christian Lehms, who had published his libretto cycle for the Christmas season in 1711. However, it is thought that Bach's libretti in 1734 were likely to be by Picander (the nom de plume of Christian Friedrich Henrichi), with whom Bach collaborated widely from about 1725.

No fewer than 20 of the 64 movements were adapted by Bach from earlier secular cantatas. These were suitably festive pieces written in praise of royalty or notable local figures. Some earlier works are lost, so there may be more adaptations than we can now trace. The new text fits so perfectly with the re-

used music that some writers have suggested that Picander worked very closely with Bach to ensure a seamless fit.



Johann Sebastian Bach

As in the Passion settings, Bach used an Evangelist (tenor solo) for the gospel quotations, except in direct speech for which other soloists or choral groups represent the person speaking. In many cantatas Bach opens with a chorus and finishes with a chorale (Lutheran hymn tune). The second of these cantatas begins with a newly written pastoral sinfonia instead. Some of the chorale tunes in Christmas Oratorio cannot be traced to an earlier source and are assumed to be written by Bach.

Despite consisting of six independent cantatas, the Christmas Oratorio has a clear overall plan both in the scheme of keys used and in the repetition of the chorale melody from part 1 to conclude part 6. Bach clearly envisioned the sequence as a unified enterprise.

It was only in the mid-19th century during the Bach revival which Felix Mendelssohn's 1829 performance of St Matthew Passion set in motion that Bach's choral music was heard again. 1857 saw the first performance of Christmas Oratorio since 1734-5.

Sadly, there is no performance of this magnificent work near Sheffield this year. The Yorkshire Bach Choir are giving its nearest outing in York on 9 December.

David Sanderson

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN STAINED GLASS

We are well used to the idea that in the days before universal literacy the artefacts of ancient churches could provide access to the Bible that would otherwise be lacking. This is particularly true of stained glass used to convey the Bible stories that would form the basis of preaching and instruction. But stained glass representations of the birth of Jesus are not merely an ancient curiosity: they have their counterparts in much more recent times, and the coloured glass image retains its power to convey the heart of the gospels.

So you do not have to go to Canterbury or Chartres to see images of the nativity in stained glass. Our local churches – above all St Mark's – are full of representations of the events described by Matthew, Luke and John. Although there are depictions of the birth of Jesus in the early church, the tradition that we are heirs to comes to full fruition in the fourteenth century, with the Franciscan emphasis on the humbling of the rich and powerful in the face of the apparent poverty and weakness of Christ in the stable.

The story begins at St. Andrew's, Psalter Lane ...



In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

The 'New Creation' window at St Andrew's was intended 'to express the glory of God as we experience it in the creation and the resurrection of Christ'.

But it serves also to exemplify the opening words of St. John's gospel.



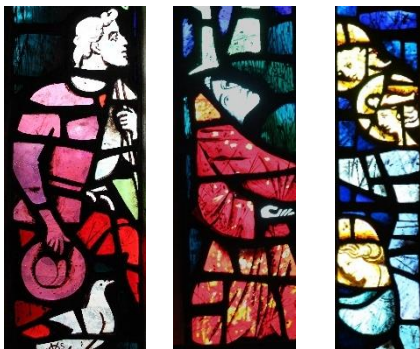
Both St John's, Ranmoor and St Mark's have images of Mary and the Christ child. For all that the expression is very different, both derive from a centuries-old tradition whose roots are in the Italian renaissance. But there *are* differences: at St John's, Shrigley's image conveys tenderness and sorrow while Stammers' window communicates joy and inclusion with the Christ child's arms outstretched...



At St. Mary's Walkley, Mark Angus shows Joseph as well as Mary and Jesus.



One of the most powerful images of the Christmas story is Luke's account of the angel appearing to Shepherds outside Bethlehem. The fact that the good news came first to the poor is highly significant. It is of a piece with Luke's wonderful *Magnificat* in which Mary rejoices that, 'humble as she is' she has been chosen to give birth to Jesus.



What is striking about Stammers' nativity is the variety of expression and representation of the shepherds. At least one of the shepherds appears to be a woman ...



The story of the three wise men (magi – astrologers?) is yet another of the enduring images of the Christmas story. How did they become identified as kings, as shown by Stammers? Were there only three? And what of their strange gifts? Perhaps the most striking and revolutionary aspect of this account is that the kings or magi were kneeling before a defenceless baby in a stable ...



And the final element in the Christmas story is the flight into Egypt, recreated here in stoneware, not stained glass. Once again, the image draws on a longstanding tradition of representation, most famously in the work of Giotto in Padua.

Philip Booth

The solution to the crossword on page 11

Initial letters of each clue taken in order spell out:													
Dougla and the Blue Cat - Magic Roundabout													
O	N	I	N	L	E		E	C	N	E	R	O	F
	I		A		H		N		I		A		E
F	F	E	I	C	R	I	E	G	A	E	C	A	S
	L		R		O	H	R		G				M
M	A	E	B	A			E	A	L	E	D	A	A
	S				D		S		D		M		
T					D	E	E	E	D	E	B	E	Z
	O		E		T			I		H			T
E			U	R	T	N	I	M	R	E	T	D	M
			G		I		H		T				D
S	N	O	O	T	O	A	R	C	A	Y	T	S	R
	A				P		N	I	T		U		R
E		L	T	B	S	U	N	U	A	R	O	R	F
	Y			I		I		A		E		R	N
E	D	A	N	A	M	O	N	L	E	M	O	N	B

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AT 60



On Sunday, 28 May 1961 a letter appeared in the Observer newspaper under the title *The Forgotten Prisoners*. The writer was Peter Benenson, a British lawyer and Quaker, who called for an international campaign to protest against the imprisonment of men and women for their political or religious beliefs. Within a month his appeal brought in more than a thousand responses including offers of practical help and details of many more cases of prisoners of conscience. Within six months the makings of a permanent international movement had begun .

The emphasis was on the international protection of human rights as enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent conventions and protocols. The principles of impartiality and independence were established from the beginning. Based on sound research and reliable information, members campaign for individuals anywhere in the world.

At first the focus was on calling attention to prisoners of conscience, provided they did not advocate violence, encouraging them by sending letters and cards and appealing to the authorities that were responsible for their detention. Later Amnesty realised that other victims of human rights abuses – such as torture, 'disappearances'

and unfair judicial procedures – deserved redress. Universal abolition of the death penalty became a major campaign.

Oppressive authorities also direct their attention against people persecuted for whom they are rather than what they say: journalists, human rights defenders, trade unionists, ethnic and religious groups.

Member nations of the United Nations assent to and are committed to enforce the articles of the Universal Declaration, but there is widespread infringement especially of the Articles dealing with freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, fair trials and the prohibition of ‘torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment’.

It is difficult to measure the success of Amnesty’s campaigns because cases may be resolved by other human rights organisations and by concerned Governments exerting diplomatic and economic pressure. However, it is clear that publicising cases and issues brings great moral influence even on hard-line authorities.

As Amnesty celebrates its 60th birthday, the organisation has representatives in 156 countries, over 3 million members and supporters and 7,800 groups in towns, cities, schools, universities and faith communities especially churches.

In Sheffield the Amnesty Group takes action on cases in the USA and the Caribbean, Russia and the states of the former Soviet Union, China, West and Central Africa, Turkey and Central Europe. It campaigns on the arms trade, violence against women and for the abolition of the death penalty.

St Mark’s has been a strong supporter of Amnesty’s work. We devote the Sunday nearest Human Rights Day, 10 December, to Amnesty. In addition during November and December each year we take part in the Write for Rights Greetings Cards Campaign. This involves sending greetings cards to prisoners of conscience to show them that they are not forgotten. You can also send letters to those responsible for infringing human rights to publicise what they are doing. These are actions we all can take.

Robin Story

THE REFUGEE SITUATION IN SHEFFIELD



At national level, the refugee scene has become increasingly bizarre with panic over small boat arrivals leading to draconian legislation and to ill-judged policies like sending asylum seekers to Rwanda or putting them on the Bibby Stockholm, reminiscent of the convict hulks in Dickens' Great Expectations. At local level, things are more humdrum but none the less disturbing.

Around 1,200 people are seeking asylum in Sheffield at present – a number swollen by the Home Office's terribly slow processing of asylum cases. Not allowed to work, people wait for years for a decision – their lives are put on hold. The Home Office is now trying to address its backlog. Surprisingly, recent Home Office decisions on individual cases have been far more favourable than in the past. In 2022 the refusal rate was 24%.

Where do asylum seekers live? Their housing is provided by a firm called Mears, working for the Home Office. In the past, Mears used private rented property but, with a mounting housing crisis, they have increasingly used hotels in Sheffield. This sounds luxurious but in fact is highly problematic. Asylum seekers cannot develop their own independent way of life in a hotel room. Hotel kitchens cannot possibly cater satisfactorily for the varying food requirements. Asylum seekers in hotels get only £9.58 a week spending money – not enough for transport or buying their own ethnic food. Recently, the Home Office required Mears to introduce room-sharing at one of the hotels. Asylum seekers, many with mental health problems, found this distressing. The Home Office is now trying to end the use of hotels, but we do not know what alternatives could be used in Sheffield.

What happens to asylum seekers turned down by the Home Office? Those without children often become homeless and destitute. I recently went to the 20th birthday celebrations of ASSIST which was set up to support people in this situation. In 2022/23 they supported over 100 people, including providing accommodation for 79 people. The availability of legal help remains an acute problem but a voluntary body, South Yorkshire Refugee Law and Justice

(SYRLJ), is now partially filling the gap left when the austerity cuts in legal aid greatly reduced the number of solicitors engaged in immigration work.

Gaining refugee status does not mean that one's problems are over. The Home Office used to stop providing support after 4 weeks but now does so after a week – far too short a time to sort out one's social security, accommodation or job. Staff from City of Sanctuary give all the help they can but this new policy could create increasing homelessness and destitution for our cash strapped Council to address. Most refugees want to become British citizens. But this takes years and is expensive. Recently, the cost of naturalisation including a citizenship ceremony rose to £1,580.

What can we do to help refugees? In 2006, St Mark's committed itself to offering hospitality to refugees and supported the idea that Sheffield should become a recognised City of Sanctuary for refugees. In 2007, the City Council unanimously declared Sheffield a City of Sanctuary. Since then, St Mark's has supported a number of refugees and recently we have been blessed to have several Iranians in our congregation. But the best way to help is probably for members of St Mark's to join one of the voluntary associations involved with asylum seekers.

Fortunately, in Sheffield the voluntary sector provides a lot of support. There is a session every Wednesday afternoon at Victoria Hall offering help from up to 17 different bodies. City of Sanctuary plays a central role, described as 'walking alongside asylum seekers as they navigate the system while trying to change the system'. Their centre in Chapel Walk offers a welcome, information, advice and English classes, provided by SAVTE. There is also the Conversation Club, ASSIST, SYRLJ and several other organisations.

Personally, I have focused on campaigning for better treatment of asylum seekers. In 2007, we set up the South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG) and this remains very active. Manuchehr from our congregation is now Co-Chair. Recently we have been meeting with some sympathetic councillors. They put a motion to the Council which was passed unanimously reaffirming its City of Sanctuary status and creating a 'Migrant Champion' – a position now filled by Councillor Nabeela Mowlana.

Refugee issues need to be taken seriously in our troubled world but unfortunately they have instead become a political football. We must strive to improve the system and to welcome those who come to Sheffield and to our church.

David Price

A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES



It was only as a result of reading the weekly email that I realised that Saint Mark's was destroyed on 12 December, 1940. My family and I were similarly affected by the German bombing on that date and my first recollection as a child is standing in my grandmother's garden overlooking the valley of the housing estate in which I lived as it was attacked by bombers. The house was badly damaged but not destroyed, although we had to move fast and became refugees. My father stayed in Sheffield whilst my mother and I moved to Nottinghamshire to the village where a

maternal aunt and her family lived. Over the Christmas break I contracted measles so not only did they have additional people to look after but also a very nasty disease with it.

We were not able to stay permanently in Nottinghamshire and another maternal aunt had the village shop in Hackenthorpe just outside Sheffield. She was a stalwart of the local church which was supported by "the big house". Probably as a consequence of this, we were offered quite a small cottage connected to the house which served us well until 1947. During the war years the house was used as a training establishment for the national fire service who used the farm buildings attached to the property as a trainee fire site. In 1947 we moved into the big house in an apartment following a change of use and ownership. I think it is fair to say that, because of the circumstances of our move, we were not very popular in the village. Most of the people in the village worked in the local mine, the local steel works or on the farm. My father, who was an engineer in Sheffield, was in a reserved occupation. I have recently come across a pay slip from 1942 where he worked 60 hours in one week for gross pay of £6 (equivalent to £348 or £18,000 pa today)

From the church point of view, it is interesting that at the bottom of our garden was the Shire Brook and on our side of the brook we were in the Diocese of Derby and Archdiocese of Canterbury, whilst the other side of the brook was in the Diocese of Sheffield, in the Archdiocese of York. The village of Hackenthorpe became part of Sheffield in the 1960s. I became a server at the church and was confirmed at the age of 9. The move into Derbyshire had a considerable effect on my life and I often wonder what would have happened had we stayed in Sheffield.

David Chapman

Just as David adapted and rebuilt his life, so did St Mark's church. With only the tower and spire surviving, services were held in the Church Hall until the newly designed St Mark's was consecrated in September 1963.



Since then, the church has progressed in many ways, including improvements to the building, merging with the parish of St Silas, strengthened links with the local community, becoming part of a mission area working alongside St John's Ranmoor and St Mary's Walkley, contributing to working groups within the Diocese and extending our outreach nationally and internationally.



Sheffield was not the only city that sustained damage during the war. Sue wrote about a church she visited in Mannheim in Germany. The Trinitatiskirche (Trinity Church), one of the oldest buildings in the City, was hit so badly during a British bombing raid on the night of 5 September, 1943 that only the outer walls remained. After the war, like St Mark's, the building was completely redesigned. Inaugurated on 1 March, 1959 it attracted world-wide attention in architectural circles and was described in American journals as the 'most modern and beautiful church in Europe.' Sadly, dwindling membership, financial difficulties and a decline in church tax revenues meant the church

remained closed in winter due to high heating costs, and services moved into the parish hall. Demolition of the building was discussed and rejected. Instead, it was secularized and since 2017 has been rented to the Ein TanzHaus as a venue for contemporary dance and interdisciplinary projects. The previous church community now have no connection with the building.

In order that St Mark's does not go down this route, and that we continue to be an active resource for worship and for the local community, we need to make St Mark's more visible to those who are looking for an inclusive church or a venue to host meetings or events and to pay attention to the fabric of our building in a way that shows our commitment to the C of E's goal to be carbon-neutral by 2030.

We invite and welcome you to be part of this journey.

Shan

BOOK REVIEW:

The Chimes, by Charles Dickens

A Victorian man is reading to a crowd of friends. If you saw the movie *The Man Who Invented Christmas*, you might just recognise him as the young Charles Dickens, and you might think, given the way he's been drawn here with a sort of halo around him, that he's reading to them about the redemption of Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*—but he's not. He's reading a book he thought would have more power to change things at Christmas, *The Chimes*. *Christmas Carol* is the story of one man who is deprived of love and loses his capacity to care about the poor. This is about a poor man and all the figures of power who make his life intolerable, until he's paralysed with anxiety about those he loves.

Trotty Veck is a ticket-porter, the Victorian equivalent of an Amazon driver, walking all day in all weathers to deliver things to the better off. Two things keep him going – the love of his daughter Meg and the music of the church bells. But as the festive season approaches Trotty has a series of encounters with politicians, and they leave him suicidal. The comforting sound of the bells turns into ghostly voices ringing out 'Hunt him and haunt him, break his slumbers,' and he seems to be staggering up the bell tower and falling. He sees his shattered body on the ground. Suicide or accident? We don't know, but in his absence his daughter is forced into prostitution and Trotty finds himself as a helpless ghost struggling to save Meg's best (and even more impoverished) friend from drowning both herself and her child.

Trotty's deliveries bring him into contact with a disturbingly familiar trio. He buys fast food – in his case tripe – and gets a huge telling-off from Alderman Cute, about how wasteful it is – 'more expensive, properly understood, than the hothouse pineapple.' Then he's shouted at by an MP who calls himself the Poor Man's Friend, for not rejoicing enough in the Dignity of Labour while he cuts all your benefits. Like all populists, the Poor Man's Friend boasts that he can speak to the working man in his own language.. 'Every New Year's Day myself and my friends will drink his health... and when he sinks into his comfortable grave I will be a Friend and Father – on the same terms – to his



The Works of Charles Dickens
– Volume 18: *The Chimes*
Frontispiece

children.’ And then comes the economist who maintains that the poor have no right to get married, or indeed to be born, and intends to Put Down homeless mothers, boys without shoes, sick people and the young. ‘And if there’s one thing on which I can be said to have made my mind up more than any other, it is to Put Suicide Down – so don’t try it on.’

It’s not just, as Dickens well knew, hard work or deprivation that cause despair – it’s the accompanying feeling of worthlessness. Trotty ends up believing that he and all those like him are born bad. Populist contempt for the poor blights any hope of a better future by convincing you that you lack all the qualities needed to build one (a cheaper alternative for politicians than creating social conditions in which it’s possible). As a suicidal young woman puts it, ‘So many hours, so many days of hopeless, cheerless, never-ending work – not to live grandly nor gaily, not to live upon enough, however coarse, but to earn bare bread; to scrape together just enough to toil upon, and want upon, and keep alive in us the consciousness of our hard fate.’



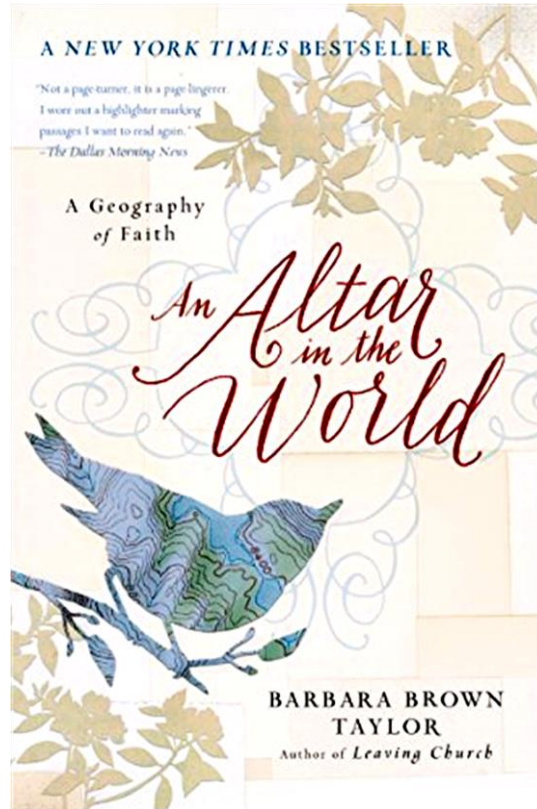
Charles Dickens reading *The Chimes* to his friends in John Forster's chambers

It’s that sense of hope that Trotty recovers from the harsh lesson of the bells. The nightmares they inflict on him for wanting to end his life spring from the fact that if the Trotty Vecks and Amazon workers can’t hang on to a bit of faith in the future, there is no hope that the power structure will change. As Trotty says, ‘There is a Sea of Time to rise one day, before which all who wrong or oppress us will be swept away like leaves.’ Dickens hoped his public might bring that day about. It’s a wonderfully angry book – if Christmas movies are getting a bit sickly, give it a go.

Frances Gray

BOOK REVIEW:

An Altar in the World; Finding the sacred beneath our feet,
by Barbara Brown Taylor (2009)



This is a most refreshing book, perceptive, humorous and easy to read. It is delightfully down-to-earth. 'What is saving my life now is the conviction that there is no spiritual treasure to be found apart from the bodily experiences of human life on earth. My life depends on engaging the most ordinary physical activities with the most exquisite attention I can give them. My life depends on ignoring all touted distinctions between the secular and the sacred, the physical and the spiritual, the body of the soul. What is saving my life now is becoming more fully human, trusting that there is no way to God apart from real life in the real world.' (page xv)

She is extremely practical and wants us to stop of living in our heads. 'In a world where faith is often construed as a way of thinking, bodily practices remind the willing that faith is a way of life.' (page xvi) Taylor keeps on ramming this home. "The daily practice of incarnation – of being in the body with full confidence that God speaks the language of flesh – is to discover a pedagogy that is as old as the gospels. Why else did Jesus spend his last night on earth teaching his disciples to wash feet and share supper? God does not come to us beyond the flesh but in the flesh, at the

hands of a teacher who will not be spiritualised but who goes on trusting the embodied sacraments of bread, wine, water and feet. ‘Do this,’ he said – not *believe* this but *do* this – ‘in remembrance of me.’” (pages 43, 44)

The titles of the chapters reflect her down to earth approach: ‘The practice of waking up to God’; ‘The practice of paying attention’; ‘The practice of wearing skin’; ‘The practice of walking on the earth’; ‘The practice of getting lost’; ‘The practice of encountering others’; ‘The practice of living with purpose’; ‘The practice of saying no’; ‘The practice of carrying water’; ‘The practice of feeling pain’; ‘The practice of being present to God’; ‘The practice of pronouncing blessings’.

She has an fascinating account of blessing someone’s house. They go round all the rooms and finish in the dining room. ‘We looked at the table, set with the same kinds of dishes most of us ate on at home. We looked at one another’s faces, gilded ever so slightly by the glow of the candles on the table. We bless the ordinary bread and the ordinary wine passing them between our ordinary hands to place in our ordinary mouths, and as we did so we were fed – by God, I should say, but also by one another. God has no hands but ours, no bread but the bread we bake, no prayers but the ones we make, whether we know what we are doing or not. When Christians speak of the mystery of the incarnation, this is what they mean: for reasons beyond anyone’s understanding, God has decided to be made known in flesh. Matter matters to God. The most ordinary things are drenched in divine possibility. Pronouncing blessings upon them is the least we can do... A blessing does not confer holiness. The holiness is already there, embedded in the very givenness of the thing.’ (pages 201, 203)

One reviewer says of this book: ‘It is about how faith can be both practical and sensuous. In Barbara Brown Taylor’s hands, the old division between heaven and earth is healed and both come alive. Your mind, your body and your soul will be well fed by this wonderful book.’ (Nora Gallagher) Taylor finishes by saying, ‘I hope you can think of a dozen chapters I left out of the book. I hope you can think of at least that many more ways to celebrate your own priesthood, practised at the altar of your own life.’ (Page 209) The book’s emphasis on practice, taking our bodies seriously and recognising that matter matters to God is refreshing and empowering. It is good to be encouraged to stop getting lost in the complexities of what we do or do not believe and to be urged, as Jesus taught us, to get on and, ‘Do it’. Do read this marvellous book and talk about it with your friends.

Michael Bayley

DRIVING TO PORTUGAL BY ELECTRIC CAR



Using the Milo Card

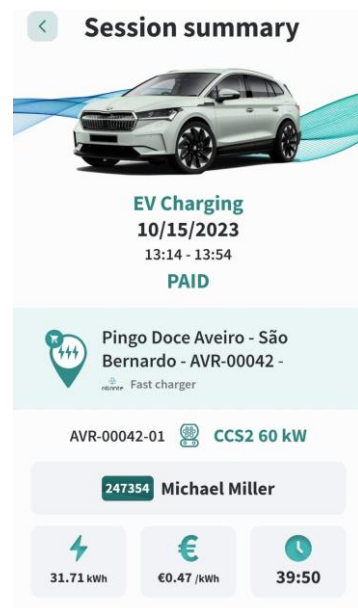
As an 83 year old the idea of driving to Portugal by electric car seemed quite challenging. However, with some planning, it all went very smoothly. I was helped by having seven years' experience with a plug-in hybrid Golf so had become familiar with electric driving and using charge points. Thus I made sure I chose a replacement BEV with a good battery range, a Skoda Enyaq with a nominal 320 miles. From experience I knew that real world range would be only about 250 miles and moreover that keeping within the recommended 20% to 80% battery charge levels (to prolong battery life) meant in reality a maximum driving range of about 150 miles between charges (you can of course, and I have, charged to 100% on occasion). But you need a break in that time and the secret is as far as possible to choose charge points that have a café and coincide with a break.

In the UK there are about 50 different charging networks, but fortunately an Octopus Electroverse contactless card enables you to tap-and-charge at 29 of them and also works at virtually all chargers in Spain and most other European countries. This reduces the problem of having to use lots of different apps or cards

to pay for charging. In Portugal the system is different but all the charge points are worked by a *mio* card (it also works in Spain and France) You can acquire one of these before you go, thus making charging in Portugal much easier. Both those apps also have very good maps showing the location and characteristics of electric car charge points. This helps in pre-planning charging stops as well as on the go.

Although there are now 50,000 charge points in the UK, motorway service areas are poorly provided because the National Grid is badly in need of upgrading to cope with their sometimes remote locations, let alone the input from new renewable electricity sources. As an aside, one of my 'green' investments is in Levistor developing a magnetically levitated flywheel device that powers up a fast charger from a less powerful supply (levistor.com).

However there are often good charge points near motorway junctions. For example there is a good one with seven 150kW connectors at a garden centre with a café off M5 junction 6, and a whizzo new one with 16x 300kW points at a farm shop and café off the A38 at Buckfastleigh. Although my car charges at a maximum of 125kW input, more powerful charge points automatically adjust to suit. After a night near Plymouth and another on the Brittany ferry to Santander, our first Spanish charge was off the A67 near Aguilar de Campoo, a charming little town, where there were two 150kW *Wenea* chargers beside a café/restaurant; 20 minutes topped us up to 80% battery at €0.67 per kWh (I pay 8½p/kWh off-peak at home). Incidentally faster chargers are usually pricier than slow ones but still often cheaper than fossil driving – the break-even is about 55p/kWh, so longer



The charging session summary



The charging point at Buckfastleigh

trips using fast chargers may cost a little more than in a fossil car (I love that phrase!) but with the benefits of a quieter smoother ride that doesn't puff out carbon, particulates or NOx.



Charging the car in Portugal

Just over the border at Vilar Formoso in Portugal, my first use of the *mii* card was a trouble free 23 mins at the Restaurante Turismo's 100kW charger, cheaper at €0.54 (46p) per kWh. Many Portuguese service areas have chargers (and better cafés than UK ones; they are less busy), so a charge at one on the A25 got us to our destination, the lovely horseshoe bay at São Martinho, near where we once owned a holiday house. Ensnared in a lovely new apartment just 300m from the beach, shops and restaurants and with weather 8° hotter than usual we were able to enjoy sea-swimming, as well as ambling around the unspoilt town, to walk in the Serras de Aire e Candeeiros and to revisit our favourite places such as Caldas da Rainha, Óbidos and Alcobaça with its World Heritage Monastery which once housed 1200 monks! Sadly it was eventually time to return home, carrying in the capacious boot a souvenir of 16 bottles of excellent bargain-price Portuguese wine. Stops in Aveiro, Tordesillas and Santander got us to the return ferry. So a great holiday with 1,700 miles of problem-free electric driving, giving me confidence for any future European touring.

Michael Miller

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