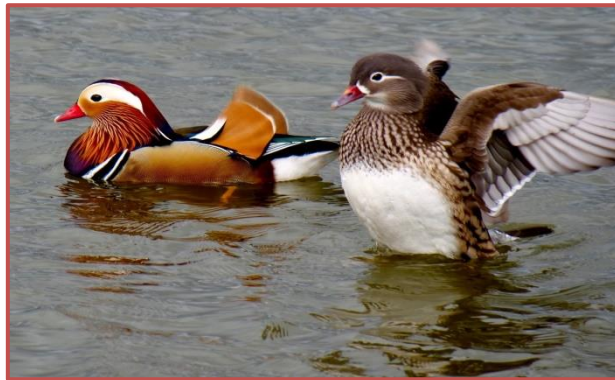


The New Walk

The monthly magazine of St Stephen's
United Reformed Church (formerly Presbyterian)

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From Rev. Philp Tiplady:

I've never been much of a gardener. I've never had the patience to do all the hard work, the preparation of the ground with the digging and the raking, the planting of the seeds, the work during the growing season, watering and weeding and after so long the end result.

I can admire the gardens that many of you have created and developed, having the vision to see what is possible and make it reality. Some of them you have been working on for many years, constantly changing the layout and the planting to make something even better.

I can appreciate the gardens of great country houses, the products of the famous designers of the past who could put large teams of people to work to remodel the landscape to bring into existence the wildest dreams of the landowners.

I know enough to realise that this is the time of year when gardens that have been dormant over the winter come back to life. Snowdrops have been around for a few weeks, now there are signs of growth in the other plants and shrubs, offering a hope of another summer of abundance.

Gardens aren't a major feature of the bible. People rarely seemed to be settled enough to make the commitment to create something that might last for generations. There was cultivation which sometimes brought in plenty and sometimes failed, leading to famine, but not often gardening.

The story of human life is described as beginning in a garden, in Eden. This was a place of abundance, where the first humans lived with God and shared all the good things that he could give them. In paradise they never wanted for anything.

But they messed up; they were unable to continue living in that wonderful place. They would never again see the beauty, they would never again live the life of leisure. They would have to work hard to create something that was nowhere near the place they had known.

There is another significant garden in the text, part of the Easter story. Jesus has died on the cross and has been laid in a grave in a garden. There it is assumed that he will rest for ever amid the beauty of the garden.

The story is told of how the tomb was empty and several people met Jesus in the garden. From there the news that he was alive spread and the message of life travelled around the world.

In the first garden the perfection of creation was marred. The best efforts of humanity were unable to restore it. The loss of the garden showed the effects of human weakness and the limits of human endeavour.

In the second garden we see the possibility of restoration, by the intervention of God in the world, brought about by the presence of his Son bringing through eternal kingdom.

May you find time in a garden this Easter to reflect on those gardens.

Philip

Services for March and April

- Mar. 1st** **11am Service led by Rev. Stephen Blythe, also on Zoom**
- Mar. 8th** **11am Service led by Rev. Mike Playdon; also on Zoom**
- Mar. 15th** **11am Service, led by Mr. David Coxhead; also on Zoom (Mothering Sunday)**
- Mar. 22nd** **11am Service led by Rev. David Howlett; also on Zoom**
- Mar. 29th** **11am Palm Sunday Service led by Rev. Paul Ellis; also on Zoom**
- Apr 2nd** **7.30pm Maundy Thursday Service, led by Rev. Philip Tiplady (not on Zoom)**
- Apr 5th** **11am Easter Communion Service led by Rev. Mike Playdon; also on Zoom, followed by hot crossed buns**
- Apr. 12th** **11am Service, led by Rev. Philip Tiplady; also on Zoom**
- Apr. 19th** **11am Service, led by Rev. David Howlett; also on Zoom**
- Apr. 26th** **11am Service, led Rev. Philip Tiplady; also on Zoom**

Dates for diaries:

- The next church meeting, **the AGM**, will be held following the service on April 26th. Our discussions regarding the future of St. Stephen's and reports of the progress of initiatives will form the bulk of the meeting so it is hoped as many as possible will be able to attend.
- There will be an **extended coffee time** after the service on Easter Sunday, April 5th. Hot cross buns will be on offer so please stay if you can.
- The **'Warm Space' sessions** continue every Wednesday from 10am – 2pm at Christ Church, Barbara Road, LE3 2EB. Anyone of any age is most welcome but especially those alone or cold. Hot drinks, hot food and table top activities are all available free of charge.
- Our **Book Sales at St. Stephen's** continue every Friday from 11am – 4pm. There is a sign-up sheet in the coffee area if you are able to help for all or part of a session. Donations of books are always welcome.
- **Volunteers** are also needed to help **keep the garden tidy**. Please see the sheet in the coffee area.



Happy Easter!

