

**TRINITY TIMES**

**EASTER, 2026**

**Holy Trinity Church, Maisons Laffitte**

**Donation 3 Euros**

# Who Does What

<b>Chaplain</b>	Rev'd. Canon Charlotte Sullivan chaplain@htcml.com	<b>Church Wardens</b>	Angela Labaisse- Brodie and Beth Jusseaume
<b>Curate</b>	Rev'd. Claire Smith curate@htcml.com	<b>Church Council Secretary</b>	Rachel Meuriot
<b>Reader</b>	Richard Medcalf	<b>Chaplaincy Assistant</b>	Jenni Gibson office@htcml.com

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Contact person</b>
Address List	Jenni Gibson
Book Stall	Katrin Dubreuil
Charitable Giving	Hesry Marshall
Choir	Rachel Meuriot
Coffee Rota	tinyurl.com/ TeaCoffeeHTCML
Ecumenical	Christine Salisbury
Electoral Roll	Elizabeth Bean
Flower Rota	Fiona Dabas
Guiding	Christine Salisbury
Intercessions	curate@htcml.com
Lesson Readers	curate@htcml.com
Link	chaplain@htcml.com
Little Fishes	info@htcml.com
Organist	Joan Bauman

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Contact person</b>
Planned Giving	Robert Manterfield
Safeguarding	Alice Auperin
Scouting	contact@maisons- laffitte-scouts.fr
Sidespeople	Jackie Gale
Sunday Groups	LJ Desmeulles
Treasurer	Bob Hughes
Trinity English School (TES)	trinityenglishml @gmail.com
Trinity Times	Nancy Huguet
Web Site	office@htcml.com
Welcomers	Anna Danute- Dobrovolskis
Youth Group	info@htcml.com
<b>Bible Study</b>	
Tuesday a.m.	Rev'd. Claire Smith
Wednesday evening	by Zoom: <a href="http://htcml.com/">http://htcml.com/</a>



# Chaplain's Corner

## Easter Reflections from the Ruins of Coucy

Dear friends,

I recently spent a day at Coucy-le-Château in Picardy.

If you have ever been there, you will know it is less a castle now and more a vast ruin. The scale is still breathtaking. The towers that remain are immense, and yet so much of it is gone.

In 1917, as the German army retreated, they deliberately blew much of it up. This was not accidental damage or collateral loss, but intentional destruction. The great donjon, once one of the largest towers in Europe, was reduced to rubble in a matter of minutes. Standing there, it is hard not to feel the weight of it.

There is something sobering about human capacity for ruin. What takes generations to build can be dismantled very quickly. Structures that once symbolised permanence collapse into broken stone. And somewhere among those fallen walls I found myself thinking about Easter.

Easter does not begin in strength. It begins with everything apparently lost. A sealed tomb. Frightened disciples. Hope that seemed to have come apart. Whatever they had believed about Jesus suddenly looked fragile.



Coucy has a way of exposing how much we rely on what looks solid. We build. We fortify. We assume stability. We trust that what stands today will stand tomorrow.



History is not so reassuring.

Later that same day I drove north to the Armistice Clearing in the forest of Compiègne. It is a surprisingly quiet place. Trees, grass, a railway carriage, a few memorial stones. And yet it was there, in 1918, that the armistice ending the First World War was signed.



After four years of devastation, the fighting stopped. Not because everything was healed. Not because the damage disappeared. Simply because, for a moment, destruction did not have the final word.

Standing in both places on the same day made the connection feel strangely clear. At Coucy you see what destruction looks like. At Compiègne you see what it means for destruction to stop.

Neither place pretends the past can be undone. The ruins remain. The memory remains. But so does the quiet possibility that even after immense loss, life continues.

Of course those reflections do not belong only to the past. We live in a world where cities are still reduced to rubble and families still flee violence. As I walked through Coucy, it was impossible not to think of the conflict in the Middle East where fear, grief and anger continue to shape daily life. Ruins are not just medieval or historical, they are painfully present.

Which makes the Easter story all the more striking. Easter does not tidy up Good Friday or pretend the cross was somehow mild or symbolic. The risen Christ still bears wounds. Resurrection does not erase what happened. It simply says that what looked utterly final was not quite as final as it seemed. The stone across the tomb must have appeared as solid and decisive as any fortress wall.

And yet we know how fragile things can be. Nations, communities, relationships, even our own carefully constructed plans can fracture more quickly than we expect. We know something about ruins. Easter does not promise that nothing will ever fall.

Standing there at Coucy, I was struck by the stubborn persistence of life amidst the ruins. Visitors wander quietly through what was meant to be obliterated. Around sixty tonnes of explosives were used to destroy Coucy. The castle was blown apart, but it was not erased.

Perhaps that is something like the hope of Easter. Not denial. Not wishful thinking. But the quiet defiance that destruction does not always get the last word. Castles fall. Wars scar landscapes.

And yet Christ is risen. Not because nothing was broken, but because brokenness will never be the end of the story.

*Rev'd. Canon Charlotte Sullivan*

**PLEASE PRAY FOR PEACE!**

*At the last AGM David Bean stood down as church warden.*

*The Trinity Times Committee would like to thank him  
for his many years of service  
to the clergy and the congregation at Holy Trinity.*

*All our very best wishes, David!*



## Curate's Corner

I love the sense of hope that Easter brings. One of the things that this season always reminds me of is that God is still in the business of bringing life out of places that once seemed finished. Resurrection isn't only something that happened long ago - it is something God still loves to do.

So I'd suggest Easter invites us to wonder: *what hopes in our lives might God want to resurrect?* Maybe there are quiet dreams we once carried that have been set aside over the years. Easter reminds us that God is wonderfully good at breathing new life into things we thought were over.

And what plans might we like to resurrect? Perhaps a habit of prayer that slipped away, a desire to serve others, a project that once filled us with enthusiasm, or even just the intention to spend more time noticing the beauty of the world around us.

The risen Jesus met his friends in ordinary places - gardens, breakfast tables, dusty roads - and gently invited them to begin again.

Easter still carries that same invitation.

So this season, maybe we could ask God to breathe fresh life into our hopes, our plans, and even into us. And who knows what new life might appear when we place those hopes and plans, once again, in God's hands.

***Rev'd. Claire Smith***

# Pause for Prayer

Prayer is one of those words we Christians use a lot. We know we're supposed to do it, but for many of us, our relationship with prayer is more complicated than we would like to admit.

If we're being honest, how many of us rather enjoy the fact that we can get praying "out of the way" in church, where our voice is surrounded by those of our brothers and sisters, guided by the liturgy, or expressed by someone we suspect is nearer to God's ear than we are?

We buy books on prayer. We read articles on prayer. We ponder the meaning of prayer. We tell people that we're praying for them. We may even ask others to pray for us, or accept their prayers when offered.

And yet, when we find ourselves alone with God, are we eager to pray? Or do we struggle with one or all of the following:

We cannot abide silence. Or we cannot *find* silence.

Our thoughts are so chaotic that we get swept away by them.

We get hung up on the language we're using. Is it too formal? Is it too informal?

To whom are we speaking, actually? Is it the Father? Jesus? The Holy Spirit? The full Trinity?

We can't hear anything on the other end. Is God angry? Is He turning a deaf ear on purpose?

Should we be using a fixed prayer? An app? Should we quote Scripture? Recite the Lord's Prayer?

We compare ourselves to others, certain that we're somehow doing it wrong. "If only I could pray like SHE does, or like HE does... I'm no good at this. The angels are probably rolling their eyes at me."

And on it goes.

Alright, I'll confess. Most of this reflects myself at various stages in my life.

Not so today.

Why not? Because of God's kindness, mainly. But also because of the Great Cloud of Witnesses: saints and sages and fellow pilgrims that Providence has

placed along my path, who have taught me by their words and by their example how to pray.

Here's the short version: It's not that complicated. Prayer is conversation. Conversation with your God. The Creator who knit you together in your mother's womb (Psalm 139:13); the Son who set aside the glory of heaven for you (Philippians 2:7); the Holy Spirit who gives you life and more life (John 6:63; Romans 8:2). This triune God—who loves you with an everlasting love, who has drawn you with loving kindness and boundless mercy—wants you to pull up a chair at the divine kitchen table and have a chat, one on One.

Where do you envision God when you pray? Is He “up there” in the heavenlies, too lofty for you to attain? Is He trapped in an icon, gazing out at you with unblinking eyes? Or is His living presence right there in the room with you, inviting trust and intimacy?

God isn't judging your prayer style. He doesn't care what you look like when you talk to Him. It doesn't matter what language you use, or if you pass from one language to another. He loves it when you feel comfortable enough to pray in tongues, or when you use no words at all but rather rely on the Spirit to pray for you. He understands when all you can do is murmur, or groan, or weep. He may know what you're going to say before you say it, but *He wants to hear you say it anyway*. God is fiercely relational. “Let me see your face,” declares the Lover in the Song of Songs (2:14). “Let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.”

Something else that God loves is when two or more of us gather to pray together. He promises that when we do, His Spirit is among us in a special way (Matthew 18:20). By some mysterious power that we may not understand yet can readily observe, God does mighty things through the prayers of His people. This is why believers praying together down through the ages have indeed moved mountains. Disasters avoided. Suffering alleviated. Oppression countered. Captives freed. Aide provided. The Gospel received. Lives transformed. Miracles great and small, on every continent and every scale: global, national, local, personal. Prayer is a wondrous gift to us. It is an invitation to participate in God's activity in the world and an open door to deep, rich, life-giving intimacy with the One who loves us beyond anything we could ever ask or dream or imagine.

But there's more. Psalm 115:4-9 and 2 Corinthians 3:18 describe a similar phenomenon: we come to resemble that which we worship; as we bask in God's light, we gradually become like mirrors reflecting His glory. This means

that the more time we spend with Him, the more accurately and beautifully we bear His image. God first invites us to enjoy the goodness of His presence and then rewards us when we do.

Do you want more prayer in your life? Are you free on Wednesday mornings? Because if your answers are “yes” and “yes,” I have good news for you! A Holy Trinity prayer group meets on **Wednesdays from 9:30 to 11:30** at my flat in Maisons-Laffitte. We share some coffee and nibbles, and more importantly, we pray together. For each other. For our families. For our chaplaincy. For Maisons-Laffitte. For France. For the world.

If you are thirsty for more of God, come! Taste and see that He is good.

***Katrin D.***

**WEDNESDAYS  
9H30 - 11H30**

*Pause for*  
**prayer**

Midweek prayer in a warm, unhurried space.  
Come for coffee, conversation and shared prayer  
as we lift our church, families, city,  
and the world to God together.

**email [info@htcml.com](mailto:info@htcml.com) for details**

***The Trinity Times committee would like to thank Jane Drew  
for the beautiful cover design of this issue.***

# Being Enough

When I arrived at the HTCML women's retreat on November 14, 2025, my life was in freefall. When my father died in 2022 after a long illness, the Earth trembled. When cancer ravaged my mother in the matter of a few short weeks in 2023, I was pushed to the precipice. When my marriage of 25 years ended abruptly in 2025, I stepped into the void.

I started attending church at HTCML in September 2025. This was a big step for me. Despite my Lutheran upbringing, I've always been rather suspicious of organized religion. From the little I retained of my bible education, I remembered that Jesus fought against the religious authorities of his time and privileged private prayer. So I kept my spirituality conveniently private. But in honesty often I didn't keep it at all. Whenever I did attend church service I'd find some little pebble which would rub me the wrong way and I was never able to truly feel at ease. I felt as if I was looking in from the outside.

I'm not sure what possessed me to sign up for a women's retreat where I knew no one, but I guess at that point I figured I had nothing to lose. If nothing else, it would be an escape from the difficult situation at home for a few days.

From the moment I stepped out of my car literally into Charlotte's open arms, I began to understand a new kind of relationship to a church community and to God. At our arrival dinner, I observed the smiles and banter of the women at the table who clearly knew each other well. There was an openness and humor that set me at ease as they tried to figure out "who is this Nora person". Despite an evidently close-knit group, everyone immediately made a place for me.

We then began our working sessions around the verse in Galatians 5:1.

*"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."*



The leaders gave us each a gentle but firm shove towards identifying our internal yokes, challenging us to know we are not loved for our works (which are never “enough”) but by the grace of a loving God (for whom we are always “enough”). Something began to shift in me from the first session as I came to realize that I had always sought to do so much in the hope of being loved, but had failed. Perhaps there was another way and this verse had some merit after all.

My notes on the second working session with Claire include a capitalized and underlined phrase “THE COURAGE TO RECEIVE THE LOVE OF CHRIST.” I was stopped in my tracks by the insight that indeed it takes courage to receive love. I realized in a flash that the problem had not been the church all along, but my own reluctance to open my heart and believe I could be loved in such a generous way.

That realization, though painful, was accompanied by a feeling of pure joy as my perspective on my life was transformed. I saw how clearly Christ had been present all along, bringing me to this place where there was no longer any impediment to my relationship with Him. The women around me, while each carrying her own yoke, reflected God’s love in my direction like a guiding light.

The road is now wide open for faith to guide my way. My challenge is still to find that courage to accept a gift so beautiful and so humbling. Through the retreat, God showed me I could travel the road with others, no longer alone. And that has made all the difference.

I couldn’t be more grateful to Rev’d. Charlotte, the masterful architect of the retreat, and her co-leaders Claire and Katrin, for bringing me this message and to the women of the HTCML community for welcoming me and being there to support me.

I know now that something extraordinary can happen when you take a week-end away for spiritual nourishment with a community of faith.

***Nora N.***

# Finding Family Fellowship

*Look at how good and pleasing it is when families live together as one.  
Psalm 133:1*

One of the many things I love about Christmas is receiving messages, photos and news from family and friends around the world in the form of cards, emails and texts. For me it is a time for exchanging news, catching up and staying in touch.

Last Christmas I was surprised to receive a card from a second cousin whom I had never met!

Let me explain. My maternal grandmother was the youngest of 11 children. One of the things I remember most clearly about my grandparents' home is the only photo my grandmother owned of her whole family together which, understandably, stood proudly on their sideboard. In it she is a baby on her mother's lap while half of her siblings are already young adults. It is a photo I love - not just because of my childhood memories associated with it, but because it is a beautiful photo in its own right - it is a record of history and an image of a Welsh family of farmers at the beginning of the 20th century (1913).



The second cousin who wrote to me is the granddaughter of the young girl with two ribbons in her hair, leaning against her father. She was the tenth child of the siblings, so the closest in age to my grandmother.

Thanks to their 11 children, my great-grandparents went on to have 27 grandchildren and about 50 great-grandchildren!

Needless to say, it was impossible for us to know all of them, and as a child I was never able to understand who was who nor how it was possible for some of my mother's cousins to be older than my grandparents; it was all very confusing!

One of my mother's many cousins - one she has always been close to - recently celebrated her 90th birthday. The guest list was long and included my mother, as well as some of her cousin's nieces and nephews who my mother had never met before. (When she was growing up, my mother knew her two female cousins from this particular family but not the boys, who were sent away to boarding school; but maybe that is a subject for another article...).

Anyway, it was one of these nieces (and therefore my second cousin) who wrote to me from her home in Switzerland last Christmas to say she was coming to Paris and ask if we could meet up... Of course, I didn't hesitate for a second!

We met for brunch and spent time getting to know each other and exchanging stories about our particular part of this large family. Apparently due to a fall-out between her father and her aunt (my mother's first cousins), she has only recently met any members of the family so is slowly trying to piece things together. (The two siblings were eventually able to forget their differences and make up, but it was just six months before her father's death).

The most incredible thing of all is that she has a sister who has lived in Paris for over 20 years, with her French husband and two sons, without either of us knowing about the other's existence! I was very sad to learn that the sister was unable to join us as she is currently unwell with cancer, although on the road to recovery now. We have planned for all three of us to meet up in the spring. It is such a shame to think that I have had family living on the door step for all these years without even realising!

**What have I learned from this experience?** I think that the main lesson I have learned is that **family is precious**. If we are lucky enough to have a family, we should cherish them. Even though family members can sometimes drive us mad - causing us to argue, fall out and have rifts - it is important to try to work at and maintain our family ties as well as we can, by practising forgiveness and tolerance, not bearing grudges and trying not to be consumed by bitterness and regret.

**Please don't leave it too late!** After all, these are the people with whom we share a history which has ultimately made us who we are.

And, if we want to be idealistic, how great it would be if we could extend this feeling of family fellowship into the world as a whole!

***Carolyn F.***

# Holy Clean!

## Going Green with your Household Routine

*Tina shares her path to eco-living*

It all started, rather unexpectedly, with a toilet. Now, I realise that's not the most glamorous opening line for a church magazine article, but bear with me! One evening, while idly scrolling through Instagram (which I had only joined to keep up with what on earth my children were doing online), a video popped up about... cleaning toilets. For some reason, it caught my attention. Perhaps it was my slightly particular nature when it comes to cleaning, or my constant quest for quicker, more effective ways to get things done. Either way, I watched—and that's when I discovered Nancy Birtwhistle.

Like many of us, I've always tried to be mindful of our planet. Recycling? Absolutely. Composting? Of course. Doing my bit where I can has always felt important. But when it came to eco-friendly cleaning products, I must admit I hesitated. They often seemed expensive, and I wasn't entirely convinced they would work as well as the familiar eco-unfriendly brands.

Nancy changed all that.

At the time, I had no idea who she was—certainly not that she had won The Great British Bake Off (a programme I've barely watched!). To me, she simply came across as a warm, practical Yorkshire woman who could easily have been someone's aunty—or perhaps even my own. There was something instantly reassuring about her “let me show you” approach.

What really struck me was her journey. Nancy had realised just how many everyday household products were full of chemicals that aren't great for the environment. Rather than despair, she did something about it—creating her own cleaning solutions using natural ingredients, much like developing a baking recipe.

I was intrigued... and before long, I was truly hooked.

I started by following her on Instagram, and very quickly found myself not just watching, but doing. My first attempt was her famous “Pure Magic” toilet cleaner. I'm happy to report that not only does it work brilliantly, but it has multiple uses too. In fact, I haven't bought a bottle of toilet cleaner in nearly two years—and my loos have never looked better!

From there, I branched out into laundry detergent, fabric softener, and a whole host of other household staples. What surprised me most was how simple it all was. No complicated chemistry—just a few basic ingredients that you gradually build up over time.

And it's not just cleaning. Nancy's cooking and baking tips have also found their way into my kitchen. Her two-minute pastry has completely transformed my quiches and mince pies—honestly, it's a game changer. And her marmalade? Well, if you've ever bought marmalade at the church fete, there's a good chance you've already tasted the results!

What I love most about this journey is how it ties into something deeper: our responsibility to care for God's creation. In Genesis, we are called to be stewards of the earth, and this feels like one small, practical way of living that out in daily life. It's not about perfection, but about making better choices where we can.

If you're feeling inspired, I would really encourage you to have a go. It's not nearly as time-consuming as you might think, and it you will save a surprising amount of money. The key is to start small—pick one recipe and see how you get on. From there, you can build step by step.

If you're on social media, Nancy's Instagram ([nancy.birtwhistle](https://www.instagram.com/nancy.birtwhistle)) or Facebook page is a great place to begin. If not, she has a wonderful book, *Clean & Green* (and her newer *Clean Magic*), which includes QR codes linking to helpful demonstration videos.

Nearly two years on, I can honestly say I've replaced almost every household cleaner in my home. Almost—because I still have a soft spot for *Cif* cream cleaner, and there's still a bottle of bleach lurking under the sink for the occasional drain!

But overall, it's been a simple, satisfying shift—one small step at a time towards a greener clean home, and a small contribution towards caring for the world we've been given. And all thanks to a toilet-cleaning video that I nearly scrolled past!

And I'll be more than happy to help anyone with a few tips and pointers to set them on their way, just drop me a message on WhatsApp!



***Tina O.***

Source : <https://www.refillreuserenew.co.uk>

# Organ Centenary Festival



On March 15th, we continued the celebration of our HTC Organ Centenary in 2025-26, with an unusual workshop for discovering the organ and how it works, presented by Xavier Lebrun, a renowned specialist in Baroque and ancient organs, who has also been tuning and servicing our organ for the past three years.

With Jenni and Beth, we planned out a convivial afternoon for the 28 participants, starting with a buffet lunch directly after the coffee hour following the 11 a.m. church service. With Robbie's technological assistance, Xavier showed us a series of short films which he had prepared to demonstrate the various aspects of organ building, and to explain exactly how an organ works. One thing to keep in mind is that an organ is considered to be a wind instrument, unlike the other keyboard instruments such as the harpsichord and the clavichord which are string instruments, or the xylophone, vibraphone, marimba and celesta, which are percussion instruments. The piano and the pianoforte belong to both the string family and the percussion family, as the strings of the piano are struck by the hammers in the mechanism in order to produce a sound.

The organs before our era of ready electricity were played by a large bellows inside of the organ to blow air into the pipes, thus making them sound out. The air pumped into the bellows was activated by huge levers manned by one or more strong men. As of 1920, the levers became obsolete, as electric motors replaced the need for manpower. Our organ still has its original lever, which was kept in case of power outages, which were frequent in the early 20th century (and even later).

After showing us an actual organ pipe, with its many complex parts, Xavier proceeded to blow into one end of it, which made it play its unique note. Like the panpipes (Flûte de Pan), which is made of several tubes of different lengths, the organ is composed of several sets of tubes, each of which emits a single note. These sets, called registers, contain one specific tube for each key on the organ. Our organ, designed for the relatively small volume of our church, has only ten such registers, five of them for the upper keyboard and the other five for the lower keyboard. The registers are engaged by pulling out a small wooden shaft called a 'stop'. The registers can be used singly, or combined in order to produce a large variety of sounds.



For triumphal music with full volume, we often ‘pull out all the stops’, hence the origin of that expression. Our organ has 560 total pipes. (Just to compare, the great organ of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris has five keyboards, 115 registers, and 7952 pipes.)

After this technical presentation, we were invited into the sanctuary where Xavier presented his two portative organs for which he had personally constructed the pipes of all of the registers. Xavier’s portative organs were modeled after the Baroque portative organs, which were considerably more elaborate, played by a normal keyboard, and which produce very beautiful sounds, with rich tone colors.

During this part of his presentation, Xavier and I performed the Andante in C Major for Flute and Organ by W.A. Mozart (1756-1791) in order to demonstrate the lovely tone of his larger portative organ.

Afterwards, we were all invited up into the organ loft to see our own organ, and to view the inside of its mechanism.

Xavier then performed a short concert to demonstrate the variety of tonal combinations possible with our organ, starting with the Prelude and Fugue in C major by J.S. Bach (1685-1750), followed by the Choral «Vater Unser» for Organ by Georg Boehm (1661-1733), who was one of the most influential composition professors of J.S. Bach. He then performed a selection of short organ works by Louis Vierne (1870-1937), Prélude, Epitaphe et Pastorale pour orgue. The final work on the concert was the Menuet des Champs Élysées pour Flûte et Orgue by Cristoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787).



*Two portative organs for which Xavier constructed the pipes.*

The afternoon closed with a relaxed champagne and dessert reception, during which participants were able to chat with Xavier, and to share their impressions with each other.

The free-will donations brought in around 450€, which go towards the upcoming cleaning and renovation of the organ. We wish to extend our thanks and gratitude to Xavier Lebrun, who kindly waived his fee for his presentation of this workshop so that all donations could go towards the Organ Repair Fund.

***Coming up next in our Organ Centenary Festival will be a concert for Flûte and Organ offered by Joan Marie Bauman and Éric Arnal in October 2026.***

A big thank you to Jenni for her invaluable help in organizing this event, and for the wonderful poster which she created. Many thanks, too, to Robbie for his help with the technical aspects of Xavier's presentation with slides and videos projected onto the television in the Fellowship Hall. A giant thank you to Beth who helped with the organization and planning of the food, and who contributed much of the food for the lunch, and masterminded setting out the buffet and serving everyone. A big thank you to my dear husband Éric, who helped out with a multitude of behind the scenes preparations. And a heartfelt thank you to everyone who pitched in by bringing salads, cakes, helping set up chairs and tables and put them away again, and straightening up at the end.

My gratitude to you all for helping to make this a successful and enjoyable afternoon!

***Joan B.***

Everyone who attended the workshop would like to thank Joan for all her hard work organising such an informative and cultural afternoon!

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***The policy of this magazine is to publish articles of interest provided they are neither illegal nor immoral. The content of the magazine does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial committee.***

# Our summer fair is fast approaching!

## *Here is a report on our Christmas Fair 2025*

This year's Christmas Fair was coordinated by Sylvaine with a lot of help from Jenni, Bob and a devoted team of stall holders and helpers. After the first snow-fall of the previous week, we almost welcomed grey skies and menacing clouds. Luckily the rain only came at 5 o'clock when everything was put back into place. The only ones who suffered from the cold wind (despite their strong denial, but still, a small extra tent will be ordered from the Mairie for them next year!!) were the members of the Ministry team: our Chaplain Rev'd. Charlotte Sullivan, our Curate Rev'd. Claire Smith and our Reader Richard Medcalf helped by Robbie who stood at the gate in turn, welcoming our 446 visitors with good cheer and smiles.

**The preparation** followed step by step the Excel spreadsheet listing all the tasks to be done ahead of time, starting as early as September with official notifications to the Mairie and to their Services Techniques for tables and tents, making lists of all the volunteers, and organizing the Clearing Party after the event. On the communication side, flyers, posters and notices on social media were posted in October. Fiona and her team continued the tradition of the Big Mix up (for puddings and mincemeat) in October, Christmas cards and poinsettias were ordered and we had a beautiful Christmas cake made by Hesy again this year for the "Guess the weight of the cake" competition. Set-up Friday was a particularly busy day. Thank you to the team of valiant volunteers who had come and set up the tables the evening before and to Jane who helped decorate the walls with Christmas decorations. Most of the stall holders and some of their teams were there from 9 till 4 to prepare their stalls and add their own finishing touches.

**Novelties:** This year it was felt that a particular effort should be made to reduce the amount of rubbish received each year, sometimes in bags thrown over the gate/fence... especially as we don't have the Cashluxe company coming any more to take away the leftovers. So it was decided to upgrade the "Toys and White Elephant" into a "Toys and Household items/Gifts" stall and to be more selective in our takings, including for the book stall. Thus, the church was only opened at certain times in the preceding week when donations could be received and checked. We still had a couple of bags thrown over the gate but the quality of the donations improved and it also meant less last-minute sorting out to do for the stall holders.

**On the big day:** The atmosphere was cheerful, everyone had put on their Christmas jumpers and Christmas music was provided by Bob outside and by Susi's choir singing traditional carols. Visitors were queueing early to get in!!

**Books for adults**, still in the garage, had a good selection on the shelves thanks to Sarah, Anne and Nancy, but may have been sometimes overlooked despite the big sign on the lawn. **Mulled wine** was served by Bob and his team of gentlemen, and next to them 35 beautiful **poinsettias from the Lycée Horticole de Saint-Germain-en-Laye** were good reminders of the Christmas season (sold by the Lucas and Tolchard families). Michael saw to **the fire-pit** where children and adults were invited to roast marshmallows on the open fire. **The Toys and Household gifts** stall, efficiently run by Chris and Jeremy, had definitely more quality items to offer and attracted more visitors.

**At the entrance** of the building, **in the kitchen**, people were welcomed by Sarah and Steve, then by Robbie and Max selling “funny money”, the latest issue of Trinity Times and Raffle tickets for 23 very tempting **hampers due to be raffled at 3**. Anna, LJ and Alice were kept very busy all day at the **Tea and coffee stall**, with the Guides next to them selling **homemade Christmas sweets**. As usual **lunches** by Hesry, Geraldine and their team were extremely popular!

**In Trinity Hall downstairs**, Helen, Elspeth, Jan and Jane sold a lot of **jam, marmalade, lemon curd and mincemeat**, Jane, Rachel and Sarah displayed very tempting **cakes, cupcakes, scones and puddings** some of which had been prebooked for fear of them being sold too quickly. Virginia, Jane and Isaline attracted quite a few visitors at the **Bottle tombola**, well-furnished in prizes this year. Visitors could also find **Christmas cards** (with Angela, Rachel and Patricia), **Christmas craft/home-made gifts** (with Emma, Carolyn and Jackie) with contributions from very clever ladies led by Emma who had worked hard a few Sundays in a row before the Fete. Last but not least, the **Bric a Brac & Jewellery stall** with Judy, Caroline and Margaret was as popular as ever.

**In the basement**, the Trinity English School was running the stall of **Children’s books**, and Gillian and her scouts were proposing **Kids’ crafts**.

The overall attendance was as busy as in previous years if not busier, and we were pleased to welcome Monsieur le Maire again this year. The Raffle was drawn at 3 making 23 very happy winners, the weight of the cake was revealed and the name of the lucky winner announced, bringing to a close a very pleasant day which was fun for everyone and contributed to the Church’s finances and its Outreach projects.

SO ...MANY, MANY thanks to all of you!!

Although it is impossible to give the names of all those who have been instrumental in this year’s success, from the preparation days to the day itself and the cleaning afterwards, please rest assured that you are remembered in this report. Hope you all had fun and are ready for the Christmas Fete 2026!!!

*Sylvaine H.*

# Recipe

## Lentil and Tomato Salad



A simple salad that is a source of fibre and high in protein and makes for a surprisingly tasty and satisfying lunch – it is perfect for a packed lunch.

You can be creative with flavours by adding herbs or a bit of chilli, a squeeze of lemon or some black pepper. Let the contents of your fridge inspire you – other crunchy salad vegetables can be added to the basics (eg: chopped peppers, celery or cucumber). Also a small can of sweetcorn or vacuum-packed beetroot

can add extra colour and texture.

### Ingredients :

200 g cooked brown, green or Puy lentils – you can use a pouch or a can of pre-cooked lentils.

Half a red onion, finely diced (or you could use 1-2 spring onions).

3-4 tomatoes or a handful of cherry tomatoes.

A drizzle of olive oil – no more than 1 tbsp (or a dressing of your choice).

A little fresh or frozen herbs (parsley, chives or mint leaves work well).

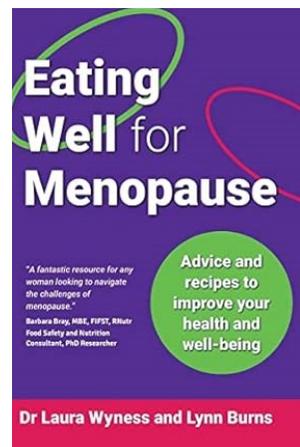
100 g feta or soft fresh cheese.

This delicious recipe, and others, was made and tasted at the recent nutrition and menopause workshop run by nutritionist Lynn Burns. It can be found in her book (available on Amazon).

Due to the popularity of the workshop, we hope to run others in the future. Watch this space!

### Preparation :

1. Chop the tomatoes and onion.
2. Mix together in a bowl with lentils.
3. Add oil, herbs or a dressing of your choice.
4. Sprinkle on the cheese.
5. This salad keeps well for a day or two in the fridge.



# Taizé in Paris

## A pilgrimage of trust on earth



After 23 years, Paris once again welcomed young Christians for the 48th Meeting for European Youth organised by the ecumenical community of Taizé! The meeting held in Paris and Ile de France between 28th December 2025 and 1st January 2026 hosted 15,000 pilgrims from 72 countries for a time of shared conversations and prayers with host families opening their homes to the young visitors.

### What is a European Meeting?

Every year, the brothers of Taizé along with a group of young volunteers in conjunction with local churches, organise a meeting for young adults (18 to 35 years old) to pray and share the life of local parishes in a large European city. The first meeting took place in Paris (1978!) and since then, there have been 48 meetings (one online due to the Covid pandemic).

### How did Holy Trinity participate?

The Paris meeting was an opportunity for us to open our doors to strangers, share our lives and culture with people from other countries and to pray together for peace over 5 days. Gillian welcomed 4 young people in Paris and Beth and I volunteered with the churches of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (the Catholic church and the United Protestant church) to show our belief in ecumenicalism and hospitality. Local families shared their homes with 55 pilgrims in the Saint-Germain area!

### Who were some of the pilgrims?

Beth hosted a young pilgrim from Nancy, and our family hosted friends from Catalunya (whom we met this summer in Taizé!) and two medical students from Poland who had come with their university youth group. These pilgrims joined others from the Netherlands, Ukraine, Slovakia and Switzerland in the Saint-Germain parishes.

### What did the pilgrims do during the meeting?

On a typical day, our guests: Marta, Xavier, Paulina and Carolina shared breakfast with our family and then we went to pray in Saint-Germain (both churches there took turns hosting). After the prayer, the young people went into small groups in which they discussed questions regarding prayer, faith and community. They then went to Champs de Mars for their packed lunch (and packed dinner for later!) and then joined a midday prayer in one of the churches of Paris: Notre Dame, Sacre Coeur, The American Cathedral to name but a few. In the afternoon, pilgrims could sign up to over 120 workshops and talks on themes such as unity, immigration, vocation, disability, ecology, social media, mental health and biblical history etc. The day ended with a communal prayer at Bercy Accor Arena open to all pilgrims.

### How was New Year's Eve celebrated?

On 31st December Beth, Christine, Romain and I went to Bercy Accor Arena to begin the evening of prayer. It was a glorious experience to pray with so many people! Taizé services are a mixture of meditative chants and silence. The time of silent meditation lasts for about 8 minutes and to find oneself in this stillness amongst thousands of other pilgrims felt very powerful and enriching.

After leaving Bercy, the young people and we went back to our parishes to welcome the New Year in with a prayer for peace and reconciliation followed by an international party! Beth and I, along with the other volunteers from Saint-Germain watered and fed our pilgrims and they delighted us with their traditional dances - especially the Polish and Ukrainian dances which got everyone involved.

I am so happy to have been part of this journey of peace and hope and the young people we welcomed into our home showed such openness and enthusiasm for making the world a better place through their faith and their actions.

The next European meeting will be held in Lodz. And so the Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth will continue in Poland in 2026!



## Post script:

Brother Matthew the (Anglican!) prior of Taizé wrote in his 2026 Letter from Taizé: “What are you seeking? So many people are looking for meaning in their lives. They are searching for something greater than the easy promises that fill our screens so much of the time. Are humans not created for a real purpose? What can enable us to discover this?”

**When we try to live from the trusting of faith we sometimes ask ourselves:**

**What does God want of me?**

**We have so many desires.**

**Which is the path I can walk with God?**

**These questions will be discussed in the meetings at Taizé this year.**

**Please do not hesitate to talk to Beth, Christine, Anna or Serge if you are interested in visiting Taizé or have any questions about the community.**

## **Links:**

**How can I go to Taizé?**

<https://www.taize.fr/en/coming-to-taize>

**Where can I watch Taizé prayers live?**

<https://www.taize.fr/en/prayer-and-reflection#live-prayers>

**Where in Paris can I go to a Taizé style prayer?**

<https://www.taize.fr/fr/prieres-en-france>

**For those who like a list:**

**Wikipedia link: List of European meetings:**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_cities\\_hosting\\_Taiz%C3%A9\\_meetings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_hosting_Taiz%C3%A9_meetings)

*Anna D.*

## **Dates for your Diary**

**Sunday services:**

**9.15 am and 11.00 am**

<https://htcml.com/>

