



March 2024

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## Giving something up for Lent

I once gave up both coffee and alcohol for Lent. My family said I was so grumpy for the duration of the season that they asked me not to do it again.

'Giving something up for Lent' does seem to be one of those residual religious observances that still lingers in our popular cultural consciousness; like Advent calendars and fish on Fridays. But the point of Lent fasting, or abstinence, is not to make us grumpy!

One of our Lent prayers says "each year you give us this JOYFUL season, when we prepare to celebrate the Easter mystery with mind and heart renewed." The discipline of Lent fasting should, and can, be a joyful experience. We deliberately and thoughtfully lay aside some of the more extraneous things in our lives in order to give attention to the more ordinary things, be reminded that there is more to life than food and drink, noise and activity and rediscover the joys of simplicity. In doing so we are grateful for what we have, mindful of those less privileged than ourselves and alert to our connectedness with all humanity and the planet we share.

For Christians, during Lent, the context of this is distinctively religious as we seek to deepen and live out

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our faith. And fasting goes alongside other Lent disciplines of prayer, study and charity. But the idea of fasting or abstinence for the good of ones soul, or personal well-being is hardly unique; 'Veganuary', 'sober October' etc. are increasingly popular for example. And growing numbers of people practice meditation or mindfulness seeking a greater awareness of themselves and the world around them.

The prayer quoted above speaks of having "mind and heart renewed". Our Lent discipline hopefully leads to better awareness of ourselves, our inner being, and of God, of the Spirit's presence with and within us. Allowing this awareness to reshape our sense of the world around us, to find more hopeful perspectives and to lay aside

unnecessary sources of worry, anxiety and negative influence helps us to discover the joy of 'mind and heart renewed'.

If you bump into me this Lent season I hope and pray that you will not find me grumpy! And for all of us, in whatever way we can engage with it, may it be a season of renewal and joy.

*Rev'd Jim*



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SCAN ME



# From the Editor

William Keegan in a recent Observer column referred to the concept of 'animal spirits' a concept which had been developed by John Maynard Keynes. There are a number of interpretations, but the one I am writing about is that of 'spontaneous optimism rather than mathematical expectation.'

Many public services have as their foundation the benefit or wellbeing of the ordinary public. For example, public slipper baths were constructed when most people did not have access to a bath at home. Parks, libraries and swimming pools also come about for the benefit of ordinary people.

The NHS is a very good example of a public service; although that is mostly free at the point of delivery. The 1942 Beveridge cross-party report established the principles of the NHS which was subsequently implemented by a labour government. It was imagination and will that saw its implementation.

It will require imagination and a real sense of optimism to revive the NHS. On my way from church, I bumped into a fellow congregant and asked her how her family was. I knew one of her daughters was a midwife and asked how she was, only to hear that she had resigned her position and was moving into another career after sixteen years in midwifery. The person in question felt underpaid and undervalued. Just the thought that an experienced midwife had left the NHS worried me.

Presently, I am not hearing anything from any political party about raising spontaneous optimism. The failure to settle the doctors' strikes has led to increasing waiting lists and the failure to overhaul dental contracts that were established under the previous Labour government have not been properly negotiated and we now have what are called dental deserts in the UK.

It has been reported in the i newspaper a few weeks ago that the shadow health secretary talked about opening up the health service to tec billionaires. The only motive of tec billionaires is to make even more money . I wonder what Aneurin Bevan would have thought of that idea? I think that type of talk lacks imagination.

The NHS has always required doctors, surgeons and nurses from all over the world and they have inspired and taught many students from elsewhere and the UK. One only has to think about the great heart surgeon, the Egyptian born Sir Magdi Habib Yacoub, who worked with Donald Nixon Ross, the South African born heart surgeon, to know that the NHS has benefitted from doctors born elsewhere.

In my view Clement Atlee, Aneurin Bevan could be said to have had great imagination in social reform. However, Harold Macmillan and Harold Wilson were statesman who also could be said to have had great imagination and cared for the ordinary people. It is not necessary that they came up with all the ideas themselves but they recognised great ideas when they came across them and I am thinking of the Open University developed under Harold Wilson.

I think there is a need for the development of medical schools, particularly in the Midlands area. Believe it or not Brunel University London began a new medical degree programme in September 2023 but all 100 of its intake are from overseas. Certainly if we are to have more UK doctors there needs to be subsidy to make it possible for less wealthy people to take such an expensive degree.

(Research internet sources : Wikipedia.)

Geoffrey Cave, Sydenham Life Editor

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# Acting on climate change and nature loss in 2024

Already we are well into 2024. It's a year of potential change, with elections in many countries, the UK and US included. There are big international meetings scheduled: the Conference of the Parties on Biological Diversity (COP16) in Colombia in October and the equivalent for climate (COP29) in Azerbaijan in November. Will these bring about change too?

COP28 was in Dubai and many people said that it had lost its way: there were thousands of corporate lobbyists – many more than the political negotiators who were there to agree the national commitments that the conference is set up to discuss. Azerbaijan will have fewer people – it has much less hotel accommodation for starters - so the lobbyists will be limited.

The COP29 goal is a new target for how much finance should be committed by rich countries for countries most affected by climate change to pay for schemes to mitigate and adapt to it.

The COP16 conference is the first since a new Global Biodiversity Framework was agreed. It will be a chance to see how countries are planning their biodiversity conservation strategies – are they being radical or is it business as usual?

Action is needed on climate and nature. Large amounts of money have been pledged, but much smaller sums have actually been transferred to the communities who are most vividly experiencing the impacts of climate change and nature loss. And that's people in urban areas as well as the

countryside - at the moment only 11 per cent of climate-specific multilateral finance goes to cities. No doubt that will be a topic for debate at the World Urban Forum, also in November.

Back to May, it is the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Community-Based Adaptation in Tanzania. This is the place where local community organisations, non-governmental organisations and Indigenous groups come together to share their innovative and inspiring ideas, tried and tested in real life, for adapting to a changing climate. Schemes that local, municipal and national governments could learn from.

Then in June we have London Climate Action Week – keep an eye out for events being advertised – and a big nature conference in Oxford. In September there is New York Climate Week, the UN General Assembly and The Summit of the Future, considering key reforms on major topics such as UN organisation, the global financial system, and the way we deal with emergencies.

It's a big year, with critical issues up for discussion. It's essential that local people and communities are part of the conversation. In the end, even if it's international conventions, frameworks and treaties that get agreed, it's communities who will put those into practice. And it is communities that will hold governments to account; pledges are only the start, then the money must get to the places where it matters.

*Rosalind Goodrich*

# Five rosés for spring



As the days lengthen and the miseries of winter become nothing but a chilly memory, my thoughts turn from warming reds to the crisp, fruity delights of a well-made rosé. And Kylie Minogue, of course.

A couple of years ago I tweeted a witticism: “That noise you can hear? It’s the sound of a thousand wine writers gnashing their teeth.” The joke was that the Australian singer had graced one wine journalist – and only one – with an interview at her Provençal estate. He’d spent the day amongst the vines with the singer, and duly produced an article lauding her rosés (and her legendary beauty). Wine hacks were not amused. Several said (rather implausibly) that they wouldn’t have accepted such an interview. Minogue was dabbling in winemaking, they grumbled, and to praise her would be a betrayal of their journalistic integrity.

Kylie is one of many, many celebrity wine producers; in Provence alone, George Clooney, Brad Pitt (see my recommendations below), Ridley Scott, George Lucas and Jon Bon Jovi also have rosés. She’s certainly not a dilettante – she now has wine labels in Australia and Italy as well as France. And my honourable colleagues missed the point entirely about her rosé: it’s good. It’s fresh and fruity with enough weight to make it the perfect match for strawberries and cream.

Rosé at its best is light and full of summer fruits, but it should also be crisp, with brisk acidity. Without that it can be flabby and candy-flossy – if you’ve ever had a cheap Californian Blush Zinfandel, you’ll know what I mean. So avoid the bottom shelf, but don’t sniff at the celebs – Kylie didn’t get where she is today without knowing that you can

be taken seriously as well as being charming and fresh as summer dew.

## Five rosés to try this Spring

### Morrison’s The Best Pinot Grigio Rosé

This Italian rosé is wonderfully fruity with red summer berries but it has that crucial tartness on the mid-palate that gives it weight. Pinot Grigio is a white grape so they add a few baskets of red grapes, which give it its colour and also that slightly tannic mouthfeel.

*Morrison’s £7.75*

### Kylie Minogue Rosé Wine

Strawberry-fresh and summery with a nice bright acidic streak to give it a bit of concentration. This is Kylie’s entry-level rosé and it’s as charming as you’d expect. One for eleven o’clock on a beautiful spring weekend morning as you fire up the barbecue

*Tesco £9.75*

### Kanonkop ‘Kadette’ Pinotage Rosé, Stellenbosch, South Africa

Crisp and crunchy red fruit with an exotic hint of Turkish Delight. Brilliant value from one of South Africa’s oldest wine producers.

*Majestic £9.99*

### Ramon Bilbao Rosado Rioja, Spain

While many rosés can be floral, this (from a venerable old Rioja winery) has a fine citrus tang along with orange blossom and mineral intensity. Perfect for tapas or seafood.

*Tesco £9.99*

### Château Miraval, Provence, France

From the estate of Brad Pitt (Angelina Jolie has sold her share). Made by the Perrin family of Château de Beaucastel, a beautiful pale pink, with flavours of red summer fruits and crushed rose petals and a serious mineral core. Cheaper than a cinema ticket!

*Majestic £17.50*

*Adam Lechmere*

# Are you being financially served?

## Bank vs Credit Union

According to Which? Over 5,764 branches have shut their doors since 2015. There are only about 5000 branches left across the country! Of the major high street banks, the following number of branches have closed or will close during 2023/2024. Halifax:62, NatWest:140, HSBC: 114, Barclays:156. Lloyds :107. As banks close their branches across the country, what do you do if you would like to deal with real people in a real branch? How about opening an account at a Credit Union? Credit Union, what is that, you ask?

## What is a Credit Union?

A credit union is a financial institution that serves the needs of its members. Credit unions are non-profit organisations that are owned and operated by their members. The goal of these organisations is to provide low-cost financial services to their members. As profit is not a motive, unlike banks, credit unions do not have shareholders to be concerned about, which means they can offer lower interest rates on loans and higher interest rates on savings. This means they can provide lower interest rates and fewer fees than banks, making them a more affordable option. You can find credit unions all over the UK and internationally, and you're sure to find one in your area with a quick online search. In the UK, credit unions are dual-regulated by both the FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) and the PRA (Prudential Regulation Authority) to ensure that they have sufficient capital and are run in a safe and sound manner.

Credit unions are often formed to serve a specific group of people, such as employees of a certain company, members of a certain profession, or residents of a certain borough. In Lewisham, Lewisham Plus Credit Union has been serving the community for over three decades. The credit union, is one of the largest in the country,

following the recent merger with Crownsavers credit union and has four branches now, located in Sydenham, Downham/Bellingham, Catford and New Cross. You are very lucky in the London borough of Lewisham as there are more branches of the local credit union than any single bank.

In the old days, it used to be a case that you have to turn up at a branch to transact! Thanks to technological advances, these days, it is a matter of choice. If you like a branch based service then you have that option, to visit any of the branches Monday to Friday and Friday evening and Saturday morning at Sydenham. If you are a busy individual, then you can access all services online via the website or the app, 24/7.

If you are not a member (or even if you are a member), please look us up at [www.pluscu.co.uk](http://www.pluscu.co.uk) to find out, how we help local communities, how we instil the savings habit at primary schools, how we help homelessness in the borough, how we support local charities and food banks, how we partner with other not for profit organisations and support groups.

It would be great to serve you in person or virtually, whatever suits you sir/madam!

*Ravi Ravindran CEO*

If you have any feedback on any of the articles, or if you would like to contribute one yourself, please email the Sydenham Life Editor, Geoffrey Cave, on [sydenhamlifeditor@gmail.com](mailto:sydenhamlifeditor@gmail.com)

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# St Bart's Crafters – our day out in Rochester

On Friday August 25th, which was a warm and sunny day, the Knit and Natter group from St Bart's Sydenham, embarked on the train from Penge East station and made the hour long journey south east to the town of Rochester for a visit to the second oldest Cathedral in the country founded in AD 604. This building was initiated by Bishop Gundulf in 1080. The architecture is Norman, Gothic.

We were on a pilgrimage to experience and admire the wonderful and inspiring work of the talented artist Jacqui Parkinson 'Threads through Creation'. As we made our way there, we were captivated by all things bright and beautiful, the sights and nature of God's wonderful creation. Our eyes were focused on the elegant flowers, the tall leafy trees, crowded shrubs, ploughed fields, and the wild life of the Kent countryside.

As the train was pulling into the station we could observe in the distance, the historic Rochester Castle standing on the hill. It was built about 1127 by William of Corbeil with the encouragement of King Henry I.

We took our time and walked leisurely to the cathedral which took approximately ten minutes, breathing in the fresh Kent air which felt so different from the London air we had left just an hour earlier.

As we made our entrance through the north door of the cathedral we were received by the Steward who greeted us with a warm and welcoming smile. We then continued on our way through the nave, towards the west door to view the first of the twelve textile panels to begin of the journey through creation.

The exhibition explores the story of the first seven days of creation which is written in the first three chapters of Genesis, the first book of the Bible.

These twelve amazing and spectacular textile panels were made with eight million stitches, miles of black thread and took three years for the artist to complete. Each measuring 1.5 metres high as much as 4 metres wide, this is the second of her original work, the first one being, 'Threads in Revelation.'

As we stared at the wonderful beauty, which contained every colour of the rainbow, there were exclamations of 'Wows! Aahs! and breath-taking sighs.' Some of us looked on with opened mouths and were speechless by the array of such beauty.

The exhibit on the first panel tells that nothing existed except God. Next, God made light and darkness followed by the creation of water. The green earth was made, then the stars. The creation story tells us that next he made the animals for the water and sky. God then created Adam and Eve. On the seventh day he rested.

Panel 9, is about Satan once a beautiful angel being thrown out of heaven.



Photographed August 2023

'Threads through Creation' by Jacqui Parkinson

Along with all the beautiful trees in the garden, God made two more, one of them represented good, and the other evil.

God told Adam and Eve they could eat the fruit from any of the trees except the evil one.

In the last panel number 12, it's about their disobedience and being thrown out of the garden.

Jacqui Parkinson lives in Devon, married with two children, has a degree in Embroidered Textiles.

Her other work includes, 'Threads through Revelation, re-imagining the last book of the Bible and she is now working on 'Threads through the Cross'.

A booklet can be purchased for a small price of two pounds which gives a short guide to the exhibition and explain the story in detail.

(For more information on Jacqui Parkinson's amazing work, visit the website [www.creation-threads.co.uk](http://www.creation-threads.co.uk) or instagram [threadsthroughcreation](https://www.instagram.com/threadsthroughcreation).)

When we left the cathedral, we inspected the 150 year old Catalpa tree, more commonly known as the American Bean, covered with masses of six inch fruit hanging low from its branches in the Cathedral's garden. It is surrounded and is protected by a ring of metal railings. We stood there for awhile, looking, questioning and studying the nature and creation of this iconic feature as it was being admired.

We all sat together in the open air while we dined, and talked about our day's experience.

We then walked into the town visiting the variety of different types of local shops. Lastly, we took a photo of ourselves to remind us of the exhilarating time and beautiful place we spent together. Then it was time to board the train back to London for a well earned rest.

St Bart's Crafters meet every 1st and 3rd Saturday from 10.30-12noon in the church. All are welcome to join us for a cuppa, crafting and chat.

*Jo Perry. This trip took place in August 2023*



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