

Spring 2022

INTOUCH

Women of Faith

The angel said to the women... "He is not here, he is risen" ... "Go quickly and tell his disciples" Matthew 28:5-7

 St John's Lindow
www.saint-johns.org.uk

SIMON'S SCRAWL

by Simon Gales

Part of God's goodness to everyone is that he provides us with rulers and governors. Because those rulers are fallen human beings, they don't always do a good job (as we are well aware) but even so, they are usually better than the alternative – total anarchy. When we are blessed with a ruler who remembers that her authority is God-given and seeks to model her reign on the Servant King himself, that is a great reason for thankfulness and gratitude to God.

In a few weeks time we celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. In her Christmas broadcast of 2014, she said "For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace is an inspiration and an anchor in my life." and her 2011 message included these words "God sent into the world a unique person - neither a philosopher nor a general - but a Saviour, with the power to forgive." (read more on pages 6&7).

So, in this edition of In Touch, as we prepare to celebrate the reign of a queen who upholds the Christian faith, we're looking at the role of women more generally within Christianity.

Many think the Bible is sexist and that the sort of Christianity which sticks to the Bible's teaching cannot be dignifying to women. Yet it is the Bible which teaches that men and women are equally created in God's image – revolutionary stuff in the ancient world! The portrayal of women in the gospels is stunningly counter-cultural. Whenever Luke (for example) pairs men and women together it is almost always in the woman's favour – when visited by the Angel Gabriel, Zachariah fails to believe and is struck dumb, but Mary is commended for her faith! In his first sermon, Jesus enrages his audience with two examples of God's love reaching beyond the Jewish nation

– one is a woman, the other is a man (Luke 4:25-27). In a male-dominated culture, Jesus' attention to women throughout his ministry is remarkable. Not surprisingly many women have played a prominent role in the history of God's people (for more on this see page 4 and read *First Wives Club* and *Liberated*, both reviewed on page 9).



At this time of Easter, we celebrate the triumph of Jesus' death and resurrection. Of the many who saw Jesus alive the very first were a group of women (see the article on page 3 for how remarkable that was). In those days women were considered unreliable witnesses and their testimony was not accepted in a Jewish court of law. In such a culture, if the gospel story had been fabricated or even tampered with, no doubt male witnesses would have been inserted! So, those female witnesses are further confirmation that the gospel records are authentic, and that Jesus is risen!

If you are yet to meet this living Jesus then please pick up a copy of our Easter giveaway 'Love Story', available in the church porch.

Jesus is risen! Good news for men & women everywhere!

Simon

SKETCHY THEOLOGY BY BEN HOLLINSHEAD





FEMALE WITNESS

TO THE RESURRECTION

By Nicky Jones

It must have seemed astounding in first century Israel that Jesus chose women to be the first witnesses to his resurrection, the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Women then had no equality with men and were not allowed to give evidence in a court of law because they were considered to be untrustworthy and unreliable. Indeed, even the disciple, whom Jesus had told three times that he would rise from the dead, did not believe those women: 'their words seemed to them like nonsense' (Luke 24:11). Yet all four gospels are consistent in telling us that the risen Jesus did first appear to his female followers.

The detail of these witnesses in each gospel varies. All mention Mary Magdalene; others mentioned by name are Mary the mother of James, Salome and Joanna. They were all devoted followers of Christ and had supported him (Mark 15:40), witnessed his crucifixion, death and the empty tomb. They stayed with him to try to minister to his needs when the disciples were forced to flee and go into hiding. John chapter 20 gives the most detailed account of Mary Magdalene's first encounter with the risen Christ, telling us that she did not recognise him at first until he called her by name.

Why did Jesus choose women to witness his resurrection? He was a revolutionary and his words and actions always went against the grain of popular thinking, particularly in his regard for women. He rejected the double standards of the day for men and women. There are multiple stories of him liberating and affirming women. Women were his disciples, he reached out to unnoticeable and socially

unacceptable women (the Samaritan woman at the well). He healed the woman with the flow of blood, who touched his cloak in a crowd, and wanted to know who she was. He healed a woman bent double for 18 years, causing indignation in the synagogue. For Jesus, women had intrinsic value equal to that of men. He did not see them for their sex, age, mental or social status, beauty, wealth, intelligence or eloquence. He saw them in terms of their devotion and faith in God. He knew each of them personally and knew their hearts. He trusted them to follow his request to go and tell the disciples of his resurrection. Paul repeats this attitude in Galatians 3 when he says 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus'. This statement is not abolishing differences between the sexes, but speaks of our equal value in the eyes of God and shows that we can all give testimony to Christ no matter who we are.

For us today the gospel accounts of the female witnesses also support the truth of the gospels, and confirm that they are not a fabricated account. First, there is consistency in all four gospels that women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. The varying detail in the accounts is what one would expect of actual witness recollections. No two witnesses will give exactly the same account. Second, if it was a fabrication it is extremely unlikely that the authors would have chosen females, viewed by their own society as unreliable. It simply has to be true. And on reflection, not astounding at all that Jesus chose them to be the first witnesses of his resurrection.

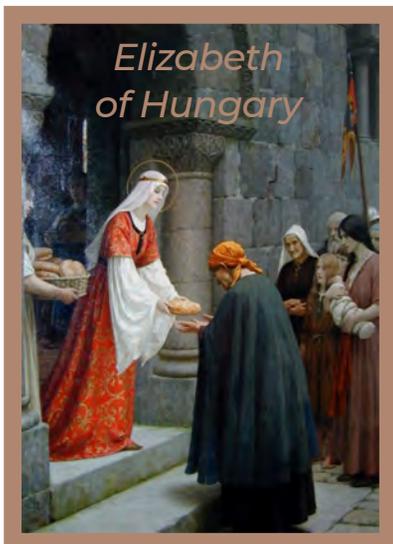
Significant Christian women in European History.

By David Watts

There are many inspiring records of Christian women from the Reformation era onwards. But that period is only one quarter of Church history so far. Prior to the 16th Century reformation, Christian believers were members of the Early - and later - the Mediaeval (Western) and Eastern-Orthodox Churches. We should not allow our Protestant sensibilities to consider ourselves superior to those earlier followers of Christ, amongst whom were some remarkable women. Here we glance at a few examples.

Euphemia, known as the *All-praised* in the Eastern Orthodox Church, was a Christian saint martyred for her faith in AD 303 for refusing to offer sacrifices to the Greek 'god' Ares. She was arrested and, after suffering torture, died in the arena at Chalcedon in Bythia from a wound sustained from a bear. She is commemorated by the Anglican Church, on September 16th, the date of her martyrdom.

Bible into German. But she was widowed aged 20 – just a few weeks before the birth of her third child, Gertrude. After her husband's death, Elizabeth assumed control of affairs at home, building a hospital at Marburg where she herself served the sick and distributed alms in all parts of their territory, even giving away state robes and ornaments to the poor. Nevertheless, like many widows in that era, Elizabeth had a very difficult life. She became a symbol of Christian charity after her death at the age of 24.



Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231) was a princess of the Kingdom of Hungary. Her ancestry included many notable figures of European royalty, going back as far as Vladimir the Great of the Kyivan Rus (Ukraine). The famous Elizabeth bridge in Budapest is named after her. In those days, the Kingdom extended

into the region of Thuringia (now central Germany). Elizabeth was happily married at the age of 14 to Louis IV, Landgrave of Thuringia. Thereby, Elizabeth lived at the Wartburg castle at Eisenach, where - three centuries later - Martin Luther translated the



Catherine of Siena (1347 - 1380) was born during an outbreak of the plague in Siena, Italy. She was the 25th child born to her mother, although half of her brothers and sisters did not survive childhood. Despite her deep Christian beliefs, she did not enter a convent but joined the *Third Order of St. Dominic*, which allowed her to live at home. Fellow Dominican sisters taught Catherine how to read. Meanwhile, she lived quietly, within her family home and developed a habit of giving things away including her family's food and clothing to people in need. At the age of 21 she had a mystical vision of Christ which led her to re-enter public life and to help the poor and sick. Although she only lived to the age of 33, her life had a profound influence on Italian literature and the Christian Church in her day.

VIEW FROM THE PEW

Nesta Morris

Marc: So, Nesta, where did you live growing up?

Nesta: I lived in Liverpool during the war and it could be quite frightening but when I was 12 years old we moved to Caernarvon in Wales. I used to go to a Church of England school in Liverpool but when we moved to Wales the school I went to was great.

Marc: That sounds like a big move! When did you eventually come to be in Wilmslow?

Nesta: Well I returned to Liverpool in 1945 and went to Commercial College. I eventually met my husband when I started work and it wasn't until 1971 when we came to live in Wilmslow.

Marc: It sounds like you must be quite settled now. Are the rest of your family nearby?

Nesta: My son, David, and my daughter Julie, both live quite far away with their own families. However they regularly keep in touch and they take me to see my grandchildren who live even further away. I currently have five grandchildren and nine great grandchildren!

Marc: Tell me, where you were during the Queen's coronation?

Nesta: I remember back in 1953 I was in a little house at the time and there was a group of 12 of us watching the coronation. I was married in the March of that same year!

Marc: It's amazing you were able to see such a historical event, and it's encouraging to see the Queen still going strong as a faithful Christian! How did you come to be a Christian?

Nesta: I grew up going to church so Christianity has always been part of my life. I was confirmed in Christ Church, Caernarvon by the Archbishop of Wales in 1943 and was given a Prayer book. So there was never a specific moment for me. God has always been there.



Marc: That's really encouraging to hear and still a wonderful way to come to faith. How did you then come to be at St Johns?

Nesta: My husband retired in 1987 and went to the Guild in Wilmslow to do French classes (we used to love driving to France to go on holidays there!). It's there that he met Anne Elliot and she invited us to the Christmas carol service at St Johns. I eventually chose to do the Wednesday morning communion but when Covid happened I began using Zoom on my iPad to join in the Sunday morning service.

Marc: Do you think you may ever move on again?

Nesta: I feel like I'm at a point now in my life where I don't want to start afresh. It's as though God as is looking after me and always has.

Marc: So how would you say God has helped you through your life?

Nesta: As I've always gone to church he's always been there for me, so I don't feel alone. My husband passed away 20 years ago but I know I'll eventually see him again. Other loved ones have died as well and it's been hard, but I have always felt that God has been there.

Marc: That's a really comforting point to end on. Thank you, Nesta, for taking the time to share some of your life with us.

Through the Years:

Queen Elizabeth's Christmas Messages

1984

'Above all, we must retain the child's readiness to forgive, with which we are all born and which it is all too easy to lose as we get older. Without it, divisions between families, communities and nations remain unbridgeable. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to live up to standards of behaviour and tolerance which we are so eager to teach them.'

2000

'To many of us our beliefs are of fundamental importance. For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life. I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ's words and example.'

2002

"I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God...I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel."

2008

'I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life. Countless millions of people around the world continue to celebrate his birthday, inspired by his teaching. He made it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than in being served.'

2013

'For Christians, as for all people of faith, reflection, meditation and prayer help us to renew ourselves in God's love, as we strive daily to become better people. The Christmas message shows us that this love is for everyone. There is no one beyond its reach.'

2014

'For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose birth we celebrate today, is an inspiration and an anchor in my life. A role model of reconciliation and

By Andrea McConchie

To many of us, the Queen's Christmas message is an essential feature of Christmas day and is a tradition that dates back to 1932 when the Queen's grandfather, George V first addressed the nation, and continuing under her father, George VI.

This annual broadcast allows the Queen to speak freely to the nation (without government scripting) and for a large part of her reign, she did so with only a passing reference to the religious significance of Christmas.

However, just as the UK and the wider media have become more secular, the Queen's annual message has helped bridge the divide, particularly over the past 20 years. In 2000 she focussed her message on Christ's life and his teaching, declaring that these "provide a framework in which I try to lead my life" and called her faith "the anchor in my life" in 2014. In 2016 she said: "Billions of people now follow Christ's teaching and find in him the guiding light for their lives. I am one of them because Christ's example helps me see the value of doing small things with great love, whoever does them and whatever they themselves believe."



These words very much echo the Christ-centred way in which she lives her life and her understanding that "genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than in being served." It is notable that despite employing 1200 staff, the Queen still feeds her own dogs! Reportedly still working 40 hours a week, she remains fully committed to duty and honouring the vow she made at her Coronation "I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong."

The secret of her remarkable consistency of character is revealed in a speech she gave

in 2002 in which she remarked “I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God...I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.”

According to Ian Bradley, professor of cultural and spiritual history at the University of St Andrews and the author of *God Save the Queen – The Spiritual Heart of the Monarchy*, “this truly makes her Defender of the Faith” (a reference to the title that all monarchs have used since it was first bestowed on Henry VIII in 1521 by Pope Leo X before he broke with Rome).

It remains to be seen if the Queen is the ‘last Christian monarch’ as a senior Vatican official said. While the Queen has said: “Christians have the compelling example of the life and teaching of Christ and, for myself, I would like nothing more than that my grandchildren should hold dear his ideals which have helped and inspired so many previous generations”, we do not know whether a King’s speech will focus on the Christian message. We can however take comfort that the Prince of Wales has become more public in confessing his own faith in recent years, stating ‘ We must do what we can to support our fellow Christians’ at a service for persecuted Syrian Christians in 2017.

forgiveness, he stretched out his hands in love, acceptance and healing. Christ’s example has taught me to seek to respect and value all people, of whatever faith or none.’

2015

‘Despite being displaced and persecuted throughout his short life, Christ’s unchanging message was not one of revenge or violence but simply that we should love one another’

2016

‘Billions of people now follow Christ’s teaching and find in him the guiding light for their lives. I am one of them because Christ’s example helps me see the value of doing small things with great love, whoever does them and whatever they themselves believe.’

2020

‘Every day, we herald the coming of Christmas by turning on the lights. And light does more than create a festive mood. Light brings hope. For Christians, Jesus is the light of the world, but we can’t celebrate his birth today in quite the usual way...’

2021

‘...It is this simplicity of the Christmas story that makes it so universally appealing: simple happenings that formed the starting point of the life of Jesus — a man whose teachings have been handed down from generation to generation, and have been the bedrock of my faith. His birth marked a new beginning. As the carol says, “The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight”.

The Promises that Queen Elizabeth II made on her Coronation

Archbishop of Canterbury: “Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law? Will you maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, as by law established in England? And will you preserve unto the Bishops and Clergy of England, and to the Churches there committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges, as by law do or shall appertain to them or any of them?”]

Queen Elizabeth II: “All this I promise to do.”

The Queen then moved from the Coronation chair to the altar of Westminster and, kneeling, with her right hand on a bible, said:

“The things which I have here before promised, I will perform and keep. So help me God.”

and the words said as she was presented with a Bible:

Our gracious Queen: to keep your Majesty ever mindful of the law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is Wisdom; This is the royal Law; These are the lively Oracles of God.

Record Breakers!



Write down the first letter of each picture to work out this lady's name!



She was queen of England for only 9 days / weeks / months / years
circle the correct answer.

She was the shortest-serving monarch in British history.



Who is this lady? Work out using the code 1=A, 2=B

17 21 5 5 14 5 12 9 26 1 2 5 20 8 19 5 3 15 14 4

She became queen on the 6th of February 1952 2022
and on the 6th February 2022 she celebrated -1952
being queen for - how many years? =

This special celebration is called a
16 12 1 20 9 14 21 13 10 21 2 9 12 5 5

She is the longest-serving monarch in British history.

But do you know what these 2 ladies
have in common?

They both

6 13 12 12 13 23 5 4 10 5 19 21 19

Jane followed Jesus even when it got her into trouble. She was only 16 when she died because she was a follower of Jesus. The night before she was killed she sent her sister a book which she said was "worth more than precious stones" and would "teach you to live and learn you to die." Which book was it?



20 8 5 2 9 2 12 5

God used Lady Jane Grey even though she was only queen for 9 days and died at the age of 16.

God has used Queen Elizabeth II for over 70 years and is still using her now when she is 95!

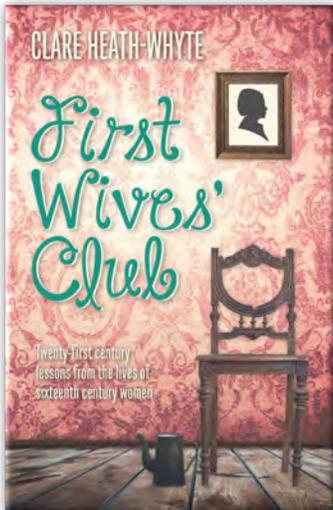
God can use us whatever age we are and for however long He chooses.

If you want to read more about our longest-serving monarch look out for this book - we will be giving them out in church in May!



BOOK REVIEWS

Reviewed by Leonie Earnshaw



“First Wives’ Club” by Clare Heath-Whyte is an excellent read and despite the title is inspiring for women (and men) regardless of marital status.

The book focuses on the period of the Reformation in the 16th Century. An exciting, but extremely perilous time, when the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church were being challenged, and in some countries overturned.

Several great leaders of the emerging Protestant church, including Martin Luther, John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingi and Matthäus Zell placed themselves at the forefront of physical danger, financial ruin and social isolation. However, this book tells the stories of their wives, who not only supported them, but in the case of Katharina Schütz Zell and Argula von Grumbach became religious leaders in their own right.

Katharina Zell was a reformer who wrote religious pamphlets and campaigned for the right of clergy to marry, and for women to proclaim the gospel. Argula von Grumbach was the Reformation’s first female theologian and author, a noblewoman from Bavaria who campaigned tirelessly for the Reformation. She was fiercely determined; despite opposition and hostility, she famously challenged the University of Ingolstadt over the punishment of a Lutheran student.

The book tells the story of six women, their struggles, resistance, and often heart-breaking loss, who somehow balanced their zeal for working towards the Reformation, with managing their homes and family life. It is difficult to envisage just how, during such a difficult and testing time, but their steadfast commitment to the gospel shines through these short biographies. An inspiring and often poignant read. Highly recommended!

“Liberated” by Karen Soole

Reviewed by Rachel Hollinshead

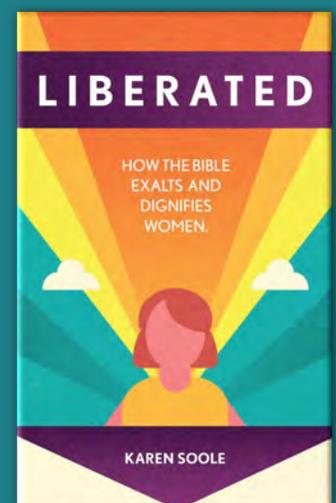
In our ever changing world where the focus is on independence and doing things for yourselves; it is clear there is a shift in perspective around how women should be treated for the better and arguably so. Therefore the bible’s perspective and teachings are often demoted as archaic and irrelevant; not liberating and ahead of its time at all.

I must admit I sometimes did feel that the bible did not treat women equally or empower them as much as the world says it should. Why should women be treated differently? Why women are always blamed for the fall of man?

Soole sets out to dispel these ideas, focusing on how women are lifted up and liberated by God and Jesus throughout the bible, many times over. Starting from the beginning; looking at Eve’s role within the fall of man in Genesis right through to Revelation. It becomes clear that the world’s understanding of what the bible truly says is distorted and is subject to our own ideals, agendas and perspectives.

Soole uses statistics and current affairs to focus on how consistently the world fails women and men; but God liberates, loves and supports all of us throughout history.

For those that struggle with longer books; this is a short, concise and a valuable insight into how God truly loves all his people; of every gender.





Congratulations to Amy and Marcus on their engagement!



We were joined by some special guests in March!



Ladies' Breakfast



David representing St John's 'Everyday Faith' at the Diocesan Lay conference



Church family walk

What impact has the spread of Christianity had on the position of women in society over the last two thousand years? A big question to ponder, and of course any answer (or answers) we might arrive at will be multi-faceted. In general terms, much will depend upon the particular era and the particular society we are considering, and it may be problematic to attempt to attribute particular social changes to the Christian faith *per se* rather than to the actions of those professing to be Christians. On an individual level, sweeping through the ages since the rise of the early church, women have been elevated to high office and martyred for their faith alike, and everything in between.

Christian feminism is an academic discipline in itself, encompassing both theological and historical studies. The terms 'Christian' and 'feminist' have come to mean many things to many people. The former has been around since the first century AD, the latter only it seems since the late nineteenth century. But if a Christian is simply someone (man or woman) who seeks to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and a feminist someone (again, man or woman) who believes in the fundamental equality of the sexes, then I would suggest that the two appear to sit well together.

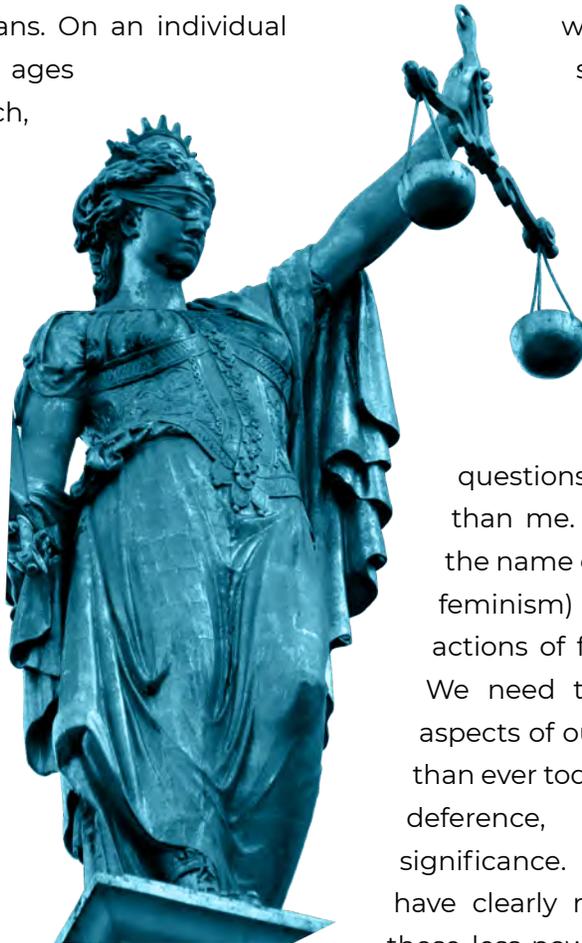
Jesus was a radical. First century Jewish religiosity largely excluded women from public life. Jesus repeatedly affirmed the value of women in a society that was very far from equal. The Jesus we see in the gospels regularly spoke to women in public, ate with them, stayed in their homes, healed them, confronted them with their sin, called them to repentance and ministered forgiveness to them. He

clearly treated them as individuals (regardless of their marital status) who were able to take responsibility for their own state before God. Perhaps that doesn't sound like a big deal to our modern ears, but in first century Jewish culture it was revolutionary. Furthermore, it has often been pointed out that it was the women followers of Jesus who were last at the cross, first at the tomb to see the risen Lord, and the first witnesses to be entrusted with the gospel- extraordinary in a society where the testimony of a woman would not be accepted as evidence in a court of law.

Is Christianity then 'good news' for women? Has it altered our position in society for better or worse? A good deal of ink could be spilled on each of these

questions by those much better qualified than me. Many things have been done in the name of Christianity (and in the name of feminism) that have been nothing but the actions of flawed and sinful human beings. We need to confront the more troubling aspects of our western Christian history more than ever today, in an age where class systems, deference, and statues tumble from significance. Powerful professing Christians have clearly not always been good news for those less powerful than themselves in society,

women or not. The gospel, however, is good news for all people for all time. The church needs to grapple honestly with the issues of the day, with the compassion and humility of Christ, to spread that good news.



Sarah Hill is a mental health lawyer and (occasionally) an ecclesiastical lawyer.

***Sarah's note:* "Neither a theologian nor a historian- all views expressed my own!"**

SPRING/SUMMER PROGRAMME

	Mornings 10am	SUNDAYS	Evenings 6.30pm	HOME GROUPS
24 Apr	Annual Review			Meeting in various homes around the parish during the week (evenings and afternoons) to study God's Word and to encourage and support one another.
1 May	Colossians: The Complete Christian – A Bird's Eye View	Acts 13-18: The Gospel Grows The Gospel gets going – Acts 13:1-12		
8 May	All Age Parade		Free Indeed! Acts 13:13-43	COLOSSIANS : The Complete Christian During the summer our homegroups are linked to our Sunday morning series. Meeting weekly the groups begin on 5th May and finish on 21st July. Dates given are Thursdays but some groups meet at other times (full details on weekly noticesheet). One week each half term will be a Prayer Evening (see below) In addition a men's bible study meets 6.30am Fridays.
15 May	True Christians and the True Gospel – Colossians 1:1-8		BIG QUESTION: How can you take the Bible literally?	
22 May	Be filled for this – Colossians 1:9-14		Realistic Expectations – Acts 14:1-20	
29 May	Christ Supreme! – Colossians 1:15-23		Fruit that lasts – Acts 14:21-28	
5 Jun	Queen's jubilee Sunday Special			
12 Jun	All Age Parade True Ministry – Colossians 1:24 - 2:5		By Grace Alone – Acts 15:1-35	
19 Jun	Kidnapped! – Colossians 3:1-8		Crossing Continents – Acts 16:1-15	
26 Jun	The Christian and Christ – Colossians 3:1-8		BIG QUESTION: Doesn't Christianity crush diversity?	
3 Jul	The Christian and the local church – Colossians 3:9-17		Unlikely Converts – Acts 17:1-15	MONTHLY PRAYER EVENTS (in church rooms) 23 April Prayer Breakfast 8.30-9.45am 12 May Prayer Evening 8-9.30pm 9 June Prayer Evening 8-9.30pm 9 July Prayer Breakfast 8.30-9.45am
10 Jul	The Christian at home and at work – Colossians 3:18 - 4:1		The world turned upside down – Acts 17:1-15	
17 Jul	Final Instructions – Colossians 4:2-18		Making known the unknown – Acts 17:16-34	

SPECIAL EVENTS

April 28 8pm
Sure Foundations – a meeting of the Christian Institute, church rooms

May 7 9.30am
NWGP training morning 'Revival' – St Andrew's Leyland

May 8 12.15pm
Evergreens lunch

May 15
'Simply Lunch'

June 26 3pm
Evergreens tea