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Smallfield he met someone else. I was in a terrible state and identified with Joe in the film – I really felt as though the rope had been cut on me. The Vicar of Burstow at the time, George Talbot, would visit me because he knew I wasn't coping, and understood that I just couldn't go to church. He never put any pressure on me but would pray with me at home and eventually I returned to the church.

I remember when I was about four, visiting my grandmother who must have been over 90. I had to kiss her, which I hated! But I also remember her patting the Bible on the arm of her chair and saying, "Sandra, dust on the Bible means dust on the heart. Don't ever forget that." A number of

passages have spoken to me over the years, particularly Psalm 68 (vv 19, 20, 28 and 35) and Psalm 118 (vv 1, 5, 6, 13, 14 and 17). The Bible passages in the Lent course spoke to me, too.

Through all my experiences I have never felt alone and have always felt God's love for me. When the Lent course started I thought 'this is going to be profound' and I was sorry that I had to miss a couple of sessions when I wasn't well. But as I watched the extracts from the film, listened to what people were saying about their own lives and went through it all in my head afterwards, I found it a very cathartic experience. I was able to start to face things in a new way and it has left me with a great feeling of peace.

The Lent course proved to be a thought-provoking stimulus. It was an example of true fellowship, where we came to an exploration of Christ's Passion via a number of life experiences. Whilst watching the truly remarkable story of endurance and survival, we were prompted to think philosophically about faith and how it affects our choices and actions in some of life's most challenging situations. A thoroughly enjoyable experience hosted so generously by Nick and Judith.

*Tracy Taylor*

*Exploring the Void* was such a good choice for the Lent course; I hadn't seen the film or heard the remarkable true story before. Each session had its moment of suspense, and this was literally true in week two when Simon lowered the injured Joe over the precipice and left him suspended in space. Trying to understand and to identify with the mental and physical pains and deprivations that each of the climbers had to endure was so appropriate for Lent and really helped me focus on the suffering of our Lord Jesus during his ordeal. In a way the two climbers, who were apparently without a personal faith, became 'types' of Christ, and I learnt from sharing their experience.

*David Spruce*

Exploring the heights (summits) and the depths (crevasses) of my own and other people's experiences, helps me be more 'sure footed' and centred in that which cuts across it all. For me, this is now how I understand the Cross.

*Gary Lynch*



**Windmill United Benefice**  
*The parishes of Burstow, Horne and Outwood*

Rector: Revd Nicholas Calver  
(nicholas.calver@btinternet.com)

*April 2016*

## Alleluia! Christ is risen!

### Journeying together through Holy Week

*Holy Week began at Burstow with the blessing of the palms and the procession into the church for the dramatised reading of the Gospel. (Pictures of Holy Week by Warren Hall, Liam Harvey and Alison Williams)*



On Maundy Thursday at Outwood we heard about and enacted events surrounding the first communion, with Nicholas washing our feet and followed by a symbolic vigil with Jesus in the garden. Having my feet washed was deeply moving as Nicholas in humility symbolised Jesus' act of great humility before his disciples and his love for them. On Easter Eve at Horne we were reminded that Jesus passed over from death to life to become the light of the world, as the fire burst forth into the dark church.

I have called myself a Christian all my adult life – that's always been the box that I ticked on the form – but these services focused my thoughts around what it really means to be a

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*Sue Wates writes:*

I found each of the Joint Benefice Services for Holy Week powerful, poignant and evocative.

At Burstow, we acted out the short-lived joy of Palm Sunday as Jesus rode into Jerusalem towards a destiny that was urged on by the same crowd, who, when their mood changed, shouted for Jesus to die. Even though it was a dramatisation, I found it difficult to say those words.

# Good Friday activities for all

On Good Friday morning there was an all-age workshop at Horne and in the afternoon Messy Church at Smallfield Hall. A reflective service in Outwood was followed by one at Burstow, from which people walked with the cross up to join those at Messy Church for Hot Cross buns



*Left: the Good Friday workshop at Horne. This page: the Good Friday Messy Church in Smallfield*

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Christian. At times during all three services I felt uncomfortable because of what I was doing, saying or hearing. Would I have joined the joyful throng on Palm Sunday? Would I have been shouting for Jesus' death? If I'd been one of Jesus' followers, would I have denied him, could I have betrayed him? Would I have waited with him?

At the services on Thursday and Saturday, in particular, I had a feeling

of not wanting to break the focus by leaving the Church.

On reflection two positive thoughts have emerged that I will endeavour to keep in mind; they are to be joyful in celebrating the risen Christ and to recognise Jesus in my daily life and act accordingly. You might say that these are fundamental to being a Christian and for me they have been highlighted and strengthened by reflecting on the Holy Week services.

**David Spruce writes:**

The procession carrying palms and the dramatisation of the Passion story are annual favourites of mine because acting out Bible stories that we think we know so well brings them to life and often reveals aspects that are not apparent when we only listen. I went to Oberammagau in 2010 to observe the large-scale enactment of the passion by the villagers, and although it was a wonderful experience, I didn't feel

part of it in the way that I do when I'm involved at home. This year, at Burstow, I played the part of Judas. Without his wicked betrayal the story might be so different. I can't say that I identify with Judas in the way that I can, say, with Peter's passive denial, but somehow I feel that Judas was acting bravely, being positive about what he felt was right. Maybe that side of him appeals and also adds a little bit of the naughtiness

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*After the lighting of the new fire and the blessing of the Paschal Candles, the wardens of Outwood, Burstow and Horne took their candles back to the churches ready for Easter Day, where signs of new life abounded throughout the churches.*

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of youth – the rebel that I never was!

I love the way Maundy Thursday links with the Passover and Jewish connections. The gospel narrative is one of the few times when Jesus' Jewishness is brought to the fore. The book *Liberating the Gospels: Reading the Bible with Jewish eyes* by John Shelby Spong, is a favourite of mine and it gives insight into the way accounts were changed to suit the needs of early

Christians with their Jewish customs. I loved the way the evening service ended at Outwood: the sanctuary stripped of decoration with everything in disarray, followed by the silence, and then the opportunity to meditate in the dimly lit church. I have never stayed until midnight, but... maybe next year.

Good Friday is the climax of Lent and a day where my attitude has altered greatly. I remember as a young chorister in the 1960s, having to be in

church for three hours from 12 noon until 3pm for a service that dragged on interminably it seemed, and I hated it. But now I can see how that was possibly a good thing to do, on this Holy day, time to reflect and to meditate.

Then on Easter Eve at Horne, the darkened church and visual drama of new light was a new experience for me. Previously I've experienced the Easter candle on Easter day, but the church is not dark, so the effect is less dramatic.

Easter Day was a joyful celebration, a fitting end to Lent and the beginning of Easter; great hymns and great fellowship. The church looked and smelt beautiful with all the flowers.

I've thoroughly enjoyed the worship at all three churches in the Windmill Benefice. The Lent course, the music and the thoughtful liturgies have been a real spiritual blessing to me, and to others I'm sure. I look forward to many more good times to come.

# Exploring the Void

'Some participants reflect on the recent Lent course

**Sandra Robson writes:**

I found the Lent course a great personal journey that was sometimes difficult and sometimes joyous. A course like that makes you face a lot of issues that you thought you had dealt with and got rid of but it brings them back up to the surface. I could relate to a lot of the issues in it.

I got engaged when I was 16, married when I was 17 and had Craig when I was 18. But my husband, who was four years older and a good man, turned to drink and started to use me as a punchbag. As a result, I lost a second baby at seven months and went back to live with my mother, bringing up Craig on my own.

After I lost the baby, I had become very ill and they found my gall

bladder full of stones. The next year, they found a huge mass on one breast so removed the breast and the next year there were two masses on the other breast that had to be removed. I was only 23. We were asked in the course, 'Would you have stepped out of the boat, like Peter?' I thought yes, I have often had to do that. I have had to have faith in very difficult situations.

I vowed that I would never marry again but I did marry when I met Mike, who, other than my family, was the love of my life. I moved around the country with Mike's work and when we were living in Tamworth I started going to the church in Amington. I had been volunteering at Age Concern and the local Vicar, John Fagin, heard me

*Exploring the Void* gave an extreme example of the decisions that sometimes have to be made. In the case of the two mountain climbers that the course was following, one had to make a decision that would probably mean life or death for his fellow companion. It was an awesome responsibility and one that I pray I never have to face.

**Peter Gregory**

Our recent Lent course, was based on the film 'Touching the Void' – an account of the two young men climbing a mountain in Peru that had not been attempted before and the disasters they met with. The course was beautifully written by Judith and Nicholas and was really inspiring, intertwining passages from the Bible with the story of the film. I tend to avoid scary and violent themes, but this showed how much positiveness can come out of adversity! The members of our group were all sympathetic and you felt that any response you gave was valued. There was a lovely trusting atmosphere and it was good to hear other people's views on events in the film, their personal experiences and how they dealt with them. I would say that the course has given me much to reflect on and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

**Wendy Boyden**

singing there and said that I ought to be in the church choir!

But those early anaesthetics took their toll on my body and my liver started to fail. I went into the liver transplant unit in Birmingham where I wasn't expected to live. My family were gathered at my bedside one night, but at three in the morning, I saw a face. I just knew that it was Jesus and I said to him, "Go away, I'm not ready!" He told me I was going to be all right and as he said it I felt a heat work its way through my body.

I spent my 40th birthday in the unit – my life certainly began at 40! – and

20 years later a friend surprised me on my 60th birthday by taking me back to that unit to see the consultant, who remembered me. He told me that he had felt that the damage of the illness would have taken too great a toll on my body and that I wouldn't make old bones, as he put it. However, he said that my sense of humour and my faith had seen me through. He was also a Christian and said that what he was doing was letting God work through him.

Mike and I were married for 23 years but soon after we moved to

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The film 'Touching the Void', was an interesting and, at times, nail-biting film. The course booklet we worked through whilst watching the film was thoughtfully produced and steered us into some stimulating discussions. The thoughts that made the biggest impact on me are: that acceptance is a more powerful agent for change than judgement and that sometimes taking a risk is the safest thing to do. I really enjoyed doing this course and it has made me think about the issues that the film highlighted

**Rosemary Spruce**



**A still from 'Touching the Void'**