

Dear friends,

'I'm not religious.' I've lost count of the times I've heard that. Sometimes it is almost apologetic, sometimes more of a challenge. I find it interesting that archaeologists seem to assume that structures like Stonehenge must have had a religious meaning: suggesting perhaps that all people were once religious (but no longer). It has also been said that all wars have been started by religion. Not true, but religion is often a factor, as it was in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Kosovo. People on each side were identified by their religion, though those conflicts were about other things. What, then, do people mean by 'religious' or 'spiritual'?

All these thoughts have arisen from a number of quite unrelated stimuli: a photograph of Adolf Hitler leaving church after a service; a comment once made during a Christian conference; the forthcoming exhibition of modern art at St Mary's Guildford; two composers; and a prayer. The photograph appears in a book of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's prison poems. Bonhoeffer, remember was a Lutheran pastor and professor whose opposition to Hitler led to his execution, just a few days before the end of the War. Adolf Hitler went to church. He had his own chaplain. He was, in that sense, religious. He may have had a spiritual nature. He was certainly capable of love, as I learnt from a biography of his mistress Eva Brown. Yet by no means could we now think of Hitler as in any way Christian.

Leslie Weatherhead was one of Methodism's great wartime preachers in London, alongside William Sangster and Donald Soper. He addressed a Methodist Missionary Summer School in 1933, his talks later published in the book 'Discipleship'. One phrase stays with me: 'The simple truth, whether we like it or not, is that religion can be a substitute for Christianity.' He pointed out that 'in the days of Jesus' flesh the great enemy of Christianity was religion.' It was, after all, the religious people who crucified Jesus. Yet Jesus did not reject religion. He was to be found in the synagogue, and spent time at the temple when in Jerusalem, as did his disciples. Weatherhead had a memorable ministry as a church pastor, robes and all, so the structure and ritual mattered, as they do still. But the difference is between the person who comes to church to feel superior, in some way, and the person who comes in humility, aware of their need of forgiveness, and 'help in this business of living.'

I am looking forward to the exhibition of paintings from the Methodist Collection of Modern Art at St Mary's. Each piece of art is a sermon in paint, for those with eyes to see. Yet that does not mean that each artist is necessarily a card-carrying Christian. God speaks through a fine artist, or poet, or playwright, or novelist, or musician, whether they are aware of it or not. I mentioned two composers. One is very much alive and has produced some of the finest Christian choral music of our generation, set often to his own poetry: Sir John Rutter. Yet Rutter does not regard himself as a Christian. He is clearly influenced by the Christian religion, and writes as one who speaks from the heart. It is one of God's practical jokes, perhaps! Peter Maxwell Davis, who died ten years ago, was a similar case, writing the most beautiful music, much of it inspired by the Orthodox tradition. The Christian story gripped him, but he would have said that he was not a believer. To listen to his music is to encounter the living God in some mysterious way.

The prayer, from the Church of Scotland Common Order, expresses far better what I have been struggling to articulate here: 'Let us praise and thank God for all great and simple joys: for the gift of wonder, the joy of discovery, and the everlasting freshness of experience; ...for the joy of work attempted and achieved; for musicians, poets and artists, all who work in form and colour to increase the beauty of life; for the likeness of Christ in ordinary people, their forbearance, courage and kindness, and for quiet and faithful service cheerfully given.'

God bless,

Peter

Resources/Good News



The Repair Café

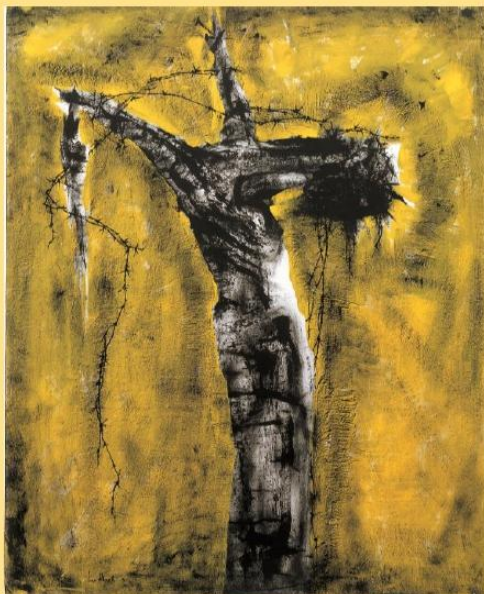
Repair Cafés are free meeting places and they're all about repairing things (together). In the place where a Repair Café is located, you'll find tools and materials to help you make any repairs you need. On clothes, furniture, electrical appliances, bicycles, crockery, appliances, toys, etc. You'll also find expert volunteers, with repair skills in all kinds of fields.

Visitors bring their broken items from home. Together with the specialists they start making their repairs in the Repair Café. It's an ongoing learning process. If you have nothing to repair, you can enjoy a cup of tea or coffee. Or you can lend a hand with someone else's repair job. You can also get inspired at the reading table – by leafing through books on repairs and DIY.

[Repair Café - Fix Your Broken Items](#)

Repair Cafés are held regularly across Surrey. You can find your nearest café by entering the name of your hometown here [Visit a Repair Café Near You](#)

FROM DARKNESS



... TO LIGHT

Explore stunning works
from renowned artists such as
Graham Sutherland, Elisabeth Frink,
Patrick Heron and Maggi Hambling

at

St Mary's
Quarry Street
Guildford GU1 3UP

9 March to 5 April 2026

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9 March to 5 April 2026

Free public opening times will include
Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays
9 March – 5 April 11.00 – 15.00

Events open to all:

Wednesday 11 March * Ticketed event	19.00	A Journey through the Passion: Prof. Ben Quash in conversation with Rev. Karen Case-Green
Thursday 12 March	12.30	A Lunchtime Lent Reflection: Rev Sarah Hutton introduces three water-themed images
Saturday 14 March	09.30 to 11.30	Practical Aspects of Spirituality: <i>Dark ... Light ... the Spirit in paint:</i> Rev. Paul Glass
Thursday 19 March	12.30	A Lunchtime Lent Reflection: Rev. Karen Case-Green introduces Lee-Elliott's Crucified tree-form – the Agony.
Friday 20 March * Ticketed event	19.30	From Darkness ... to Light: Reflections in music and poetry, with poet Alwyn Marriage and cellist Annelies Terry.
Wednesday 25 March * Ticketed event	19.00	A Door to the Holy: Contemporary Art & Faith A talk by Laura Moffatt
Thursday 26 March	12.30	A Lunchtime Lent Reflection: Rev. Brian Roberts introduces Cazalet's Fool of God and Brokenshire's Pentecost
Sunday 29 March	18.00	Shadows of the Cross - a Palm Sunday Reflection including music from In Nomine Choir
30 March – 5 April		Programme of events for Holy Week to be published on the website

* Ticketed events: £10 each
see Eventbrite for
MMAC Guildford

More details at
www.htsmguildford.org/mmac-2026
For further enquiries:
MMAC2026@htsmguildford.org.uk



Mark Cazalet: Fool of God. Lee Elliott: Crucified tree-form – the Agony. Richard Bevir: The Empty Tomb.

Images from the Methodist Modern Art Collection © TMCP, used with permission.
www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection

STOUGHTON METHODIST CHURCH

(On the corner of Stoughton Road and Grange Road)

COFFEE CORNER

Tuesdays from 10 am – 12 noon



3rd February
10th February
17th February
24th February

2026

3rd March
10th March
17th March
24th March
31st March



Enjoy Coffee & a Chat, Coffee & a Game, or Coffee & a Book
The choice is yours!

Everyone welcome – bring a friend!



**Saturday morning events at the
Addlestone Methodist Church Café on
Station Road**



***Come along between 10am and
12 to enjoy tea/coffee and cake
and join in with activities***

EVERY MONTH

1st Saturday – Fun Bingo

*Donations to Sam Beare Hospice or
Open Doors Charity*



**2nd Saturday – A time to sing – favourite
hymns & songs**

3rd Saturday – give popular games a go



**4th Saturday – Hymns, songs
and time for prayer**

Check notice board for any changes



Woking People of Faith

The WPOF Environmental Working Party invite you to

HELP THE HEATHER

**JOIN US TO HELP THE HEATHER
SURVIVE ON HORSELL COMMON!**

Saturday 14th of February



10 am - 12 pm



Horsell Common

(meet at Heather Farm at 9.45 am)



Bring Boots and Gloves!

All welcome!

For more information email John West:

westjohn630@gmail.com