



THE NEWS



May 2026

The Magazine of Potters Bar United Reformed Church



May Day in England

*May Day in England, the sun smiling wide, new leaf unfurling and catkins beside
Wildflowers dancing like children at play, all this can be seen on an English May Day
The melodious robin competes with song thrush, the bees sizzle past in their nectar-drunk rush
The church bells are pealing 'Go love while you may'
Sweet are the sounds of an English May Day*



Dear Friends,

One of the many duties that fall to a Serving Elder during the time of vacancy, is the writing of the “Minister’s Letter” that features at the beginning of the Monthly News.

I propose to pose a question and then answer it from my own observations.

“We haven’t had a full time Minister, or a stipendiary Minister shared with another Church or Churches, for at least 7 years - and what do we have to show for it?”

My answer would be “quite a lot”. The Church is still here and holding regular Church Services every Sunday, with a pool of visiting Ministers and Worship Leaders taking our Services, and ensuring that the Christian Message and the preaching of the Gospel, is enacted.

Though there has been an inevitable fluctuation in Member numbers, we have welcomed new Members and Adherents and have an active Eldership and Management Committee.

The men of the Church still take up the challenge proposed so many years ago, are still able to stage and produce in excess of thirty breakfasts of choice on Easter Sunday.

Regular monthly musical recitals and Charity Lunches take place, and the annual and well supported Quiz Night is to take place in the Autumn. The Church continues to support a thriving independent Nursery School.

There will be challenges that remain and lie ahead, but I’m sure we will meet those with customary brilliance and Christian verve.

My other “Church” is my Croquet Club. It has similar, probably identical challenges, although these are “ball centred”, in that the idea is that a physical ball needs to go through a physical hoop. Not much difference otherwise. We in the Church get metaphoric balls through metaphoric hoops on a regular basis.

Spring is a time of activity. We have just celebrated Easter with a performance of Stainer’s Crucifixion, the story of Christ’s brutal death and joyful resurrection.

May I wish us all a pleasant and relaxing countdown to Autumn.

God Bless,

Frank Palmer

For and on behalf of the Elders.



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Serving Elders

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Our final Goodbye to Amelia

Yesterday was the funeral and the village church was packed with 300 attending. Friends from school, swimming, and football - nearly all dressed in the Oxford United colours of yellow and navy. I wore a yellow shirt, navy trousers and blue and yellow tie. Peter and Trish didn't want black and sombre, so the clerical collar stayed at home. I was glad that the local vicar took the service, but I'd prepared a eulogy. This came very early in the service and I was able to say it loud and clear with my emotions fully contained. This allowed the content to be absorbed by all attending. There was also a short address by a football representative, words from a friend and a poem by another. Sadly all overcome by tears. It might have helped if they had come earlier without time to build up their emotions. I could have done mine later because I have a lot of experience. Nevertheless, the whole service was a fitting tribute with the vicar, and his wife, who is also an Anglican vicar, making it a good and caring.

I led the committal and we had a display of photos of Amelia's life. I dreaded pressing the button for the curtains. But there were three buttons - dark curtains, lace curtains and auto. Auto closed the lace curtain first then the dark curtain. It was a gentler way of doing it. And it was easier for me than stabbing the button and obscuring Amelia from sight.

About half those attending the funeral came to the reception at the village hall. The day was a fitting tribute for a high achieving girl, lost too soon.

May our God bless her soul with His love.

David

(I have printed David's Eulogy a copy of which is on the table at the back of the church).

Lunchtime Recital Friday 1st May at 12.15 – Jinah Shim (piano)



Programme:

Robert Schumann – Kreisleriana, Op. 16

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Äußerst bewegt | (extremely animated) |
| 2. Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch | (very profound and not too fast) |
| 3. Sehr aufgeregt | (very excited) |
| 4. Sehr langsam | (very slow) |
| 5. Sehr lebhaft | (very lively) |
| 6. Sehr langsam | (very slow) |
| 7. Sehr rasch | (very fast) |
| 8. Schnell und spielend | (fast and playful) |

Scriabin- Prelude and Nocturne for the Left Hand Op. 9

Fazil Say - Paganini Jazz

British-Korean pianist Jinah Shim is in much demand as a soloist, chamber musician and accompanist. She has won prizes at both national and international competitions including Chandos Young Musician of the Year 2011, 1st prize at Christopher Duke International Piano Competition, 1st prize at the Alexander Kelly Concerto Competition, 2nd prize at Tunbridge Wells International Piano

Competition and 1st prize at John Longmire Competition. In 2019, she won the Mozart Memorial Prize, in association with [Kent International Piano Course](#), where she was awarded the title of 'Pianist in association with London Mozart Players'. In 2021, she won 1st prize at Alfred Kitchin Competition, in addition to the Audience Prize at Oleggio International Piano Competition. She also received the Kerr Memorial Prize at the Royal Overseas League Competition for two years consecutively.

Notable past performances include performing concertos with London Mozart Players as well as directing Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 12 at the piano with Birmingham Junior Chamber Orchestra, aged 18. She has performed with a variety of orchestras including Southampton Concert Orchestra, Havant Symphony Orchestra, Petersfield Orchestra, Dorking Chamber Orchestra, Aylesbury Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Festival Orchestra, Epsom Orchestra, Guildford Symphony and Winchester Chamber Orchestra.

Jinah regularly gives recitals and has performed in prestigious venues around the UK including London's Wigmore Hall, Steinway Hall, St.Martin-in-the-Fields, and St James's Piccadilly Church. She has also given recitals as a guest artist in Italy, France and Germany.



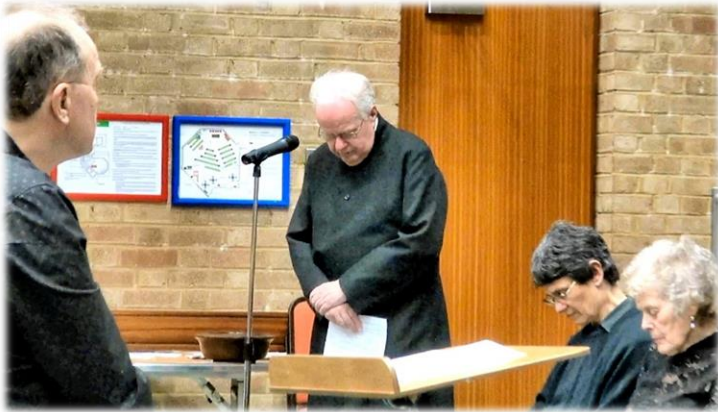
The Good Friday Choir presents John Stainer's Crucifixion – 3rd April 2026

You might think it's difficult to write a review from the ski slopes of the French Alps with the biggest family group ever, but actually it's not so different from being at the back in "Tenor-World" with strong voices on either side of you. You have to be in the audience, or behind the video camera to really appreciate the performance as a whole. And luckily John Knott was there to record it for me.



We've done The Crucifixion a couple of times before, but each year is different because the choir is different. And each year our soloists bring their own particular magic. Some things are constant – Stephen Jones conducting and Simon Worley playing the organ – but the rest is a shifting scene.

At the close, Janet O'Connor thanked Stephen and Simon, Moses and Saul



our soloists, Canon Richard Osborn for the opening and closing prayers – and of course the Good Friday Choir as a whole.



And to this I'd like to add a personal



thank you. The 'GFC' is something special, a constantly shifting membership perhaps, reflecting individuals' commitments, but the rehearsals and the performances are simply great fun – so much so that we attended all the rehearsals we could even though we knew we couldn't be there on the day. That's down to everyone who comes, working and laughing together.

And it showed on the day too as you can relive with the video on our website at



<https://pottersbarurc.org/previous-recitals-2/3-april-2026/> .

David Morris's Photo Corner - VISIT TO HMP BRIXTON PRISON



Sorry that this item for the News is not a “photo shot” but is something very different. We had an experience, via Orange Henn, Dutch Nurseries, Brookman’s Park, who arranged a Sunday Lunch at HMP Brixton.

On arrival we had to prove who we were, surrender our driving licences and we put our phones etc into lockers, then we went through airport type security before being escorted to the dining room which had formally been the governors house - dating back to 1819 (*the normal picture you will see re Brixton Prison*).

Although the windows had decorative iron bars over the windows and we were locked

in, it was still very pleasant, being fully air conditioning.

We’d had to pre-order our three-course lunch: our party of approximately 30 sat down to an excellent meal. Pauline and I chose as our main course roast beef with all the trimmings, Yorkshire Pud, roast potatoes and four vegetables. It was delicious! We could have beer (*it was non acholic*) and the cutlery was good quality plastic. We were served by the prisoners, and at the end of the meal they were encouraged to talk to us.

One man we spoke to was due out on the 1st April: he will be tagged until November. He was in for drug trafficking and sentenced for 3 years. His condition of early release was to live with his grandma, and he was looking forward to that. In fact, he is a jewellery designer. Of his time inside (*he had been in three prisons*) he commented, “There will not be a next time”, and we wished him all the best.

The second one we spoke to had been sentenced to 10 years. He’d not wasted his time, got a Masters degree, and has a job to go to when he is released later this year.

What’s it is all about, The Clink Charity is a national rehabilitation charity, providing training opportunities and rehabilitation support to two groups: people in prison and those who could be at risk of offending. Through the training projects inside and outside of prisons, they create an environment where students can develop new skills, interact with the public, and access the support they need to successfully reintegrate into society on their release.

They operate restaurants (*I believe now only Brixton*) that are open to the public, training kitchens within prisons, horticulture programmes in prison gardens, an events catering social enterprise, a premium catering delivery service and an artisan bakery.

The Clink Restaurant food at HMP Brixton is cooked and served by the students in training who are working towards gaining their City & Guilds NVQs in Food & Beverage Service, Professional Cookery and Food Hygiene. The Clink Restaurant at HMP Brixton is frequently placed in the Top 10 restaurants in London by TripAdvisor. It opens five days week and on one day serves both lunch and dinner.

In 2024, they trained over 800 students in prisons around the UK, delivered around 650 NVQ qualifications, and helped 159 students with rehabilitation support when they were released from prison. In fact, the furniture we sat on was made by people in prison at HMP Frankland.

What a wonderful Sunday and an experience.

Pauline and David Morris

Communion Service Sunday 19th April led by Revd. David Aplin

It was a day with the odd lapse – and cause for some merriment!



The recent events in the Aplin family are - unsurprisingly – still very much centre stage for David. He'd talked of the potential challenge to his belief, but his belief has been, if anything, strengthened by what has happened. And the Easter story - always for him at the core of Christian belief – provided an opportunity to share this with us.

He'd been unsettled whilst searching for a suitable prayer to find one asking for forgiveness for finding the truth of Easter hard to believe. For him, belief in Easter and in Jesus Christ was not optional and the idea of doubting the truth of Easter was appalling. He didn't find it hard to believe in Easter, to believe that Jesus Christ had died for him, or that He was resurrected. He believed Christ had died for us, that our sins might be forgiven, and that we could follow our Lord into new life after death. And he that trusted we would one day follow that path.

Space in a grave in Cardiff for himself and Maren was important for him: "You can take a man out of Cardiff, but you can't take Cardiff out of the man" – so for him, especially, it would be like going home. But he recognised that this was human sentimentality. Our bodies were merely temporary temples for our souls—little more than tents. At funerals, we were reminded of the impermanence of our physical bodies. It was our souls that were permanent, and through Christ, would not die but live forever in the Kingdom of God.

After sitting with Amelia's body for three hours in tears with her Mum Tricia, he'd feared pressing the button at the crematorium that would send her away forever. When the time came, he'd pressed it with love and care, trusting his faith that she was no longer within that body. Her soul had departed, through the love, sacrifice, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

David's Bible spanned 1,328 pages (including the appendices), yet its message was summarised by the reading from Luke: "The Lord has risen indeed." The Old Testament offered us history and prophecy, the Gospels recounted Jesus's life, and Paul's letters addressed the spread of Christianity and answered questions. People had suggested that he should write about his experiences with the Spirit, which often came to mind when he was preaching or writing sermons. These experiences had happened not just to him, but to millions of believers over centuries—the Spirit had worked !

The story of Jesus had been written: He was born as a baby, served for four years as Jesus Christ, was arrested, tortured, and executed by crucifixion. The Lord had risen indeed and appeared to Simon. He'd showed Himself to many and ascended to heaven, becoming once again God the Son.

Our lives ran in parallel: born as babies, growing, living, and serving as disciples, guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, with a human propensity to fail and sin—hopefully only in small ways. Through Christ's sacrifice, we were forgiven. Our souls ascended to God's kingdom, made possible by Christ overcoming death.

We should be confident: our souls were saved forever, for Christ had promised this.

And it was also a good day to welcome Joan Powell into membership





A short story.....

The tree-planting campaign is splendid. During my years in the Rotary Club, I was involved in a number of plantings, but the one ingrained in my memory is the first one in 1991. As part of the World Rotary project Preserve Planet Earth, Kew Rotary Club decided to plant a new tree on Kew Green. I arranged coverage by the local paper and a TV gardening presenter agreed to be our celebrity guest.

The first problem was that the council could not plant a tree on the proposed date, so it would have to be done two days earlier and we would have to pretend to plant it on the day. Then, on the morning in question, those involved arrived on the green to find the silver maple there, but the branches were still tied up. So while our vice-present knelt down, another member had to stand on his back and climb up the tree to undo the branches. We then proceeded with the so-called planting.

The photographer found the untying of the branches more interesting, so that picture appeared in the local paper, and the celebrity guest was not even mentioned!

Derek Scott, Fakenham, Norfolk

A Serious Charge

At a major London airport today, an unnamed teacher was arrested. He attempted to outwit the authorities and security was tested.

He was found to be carrying a set-square, a protractor and a ruler, so they dragged him from the aircraft and threw him in the cooler.

A calculator, slide-rule and a pencil, were also found on his person. The man was told he must tell of his associates, or his position may worsen.

A spokesman for the authorities said, they were pleased with the result. He said, 'We've uncovered a new sinister movement. It's called the Al-Gebra cult.'

They've not identified the teacher but have charged him with obstruction. Also pending is the more serious charge of carrying weapons of maths instruction.



Boom..... Boom.....

Far-from-home terrors

Far from home am I, Lord, with bad toothache. In the waiting-room of a strange Dentist.

In a strange town am I, Lord. In pain, and in a bad state of plain ordinary fright.

You have a minute? Please?

My own man, Lord, is in Harley Street. In some splendour.

Fresh-from the laundry copies of *Punch and Country Life*.

Knee-deep carpet and a receptionist in a white coat, with blue hair.

In Harley Street, in splendour, in a big way of business and, at present, in Bermuda.

This waiting-room is lino-tiled, Lord, and has seven chairs and a table in plastic and steel.

One notice: one picture; one light.

No-one here but me. I've got the shakes, Lord. The lady outside (normal colour hair) said, "The Dentist will be back soon". She didn't say from where, Lord. Sinister.

She fitted me in, Lord; emergency; urgent; without appointment, But sinister.

Let the Dentist be from a quiet sympathetic place. Let him be of gentle upbringing,

Of good family with loving parents. Let him be married, in perfect happiness, with lovely children and no mortgage.

Make thou his hands steady. Lord, and his breath sweet, make thou his skill complete,

His eye keen and his reading up-to-date.

Where is he, Lord? What's keeping him?

Let him not make bad jokes, Lord, or ask me questions when my wide-open mouth is full of his tools. Let his tools sit easy in his hand, Lord, and his hand be easy with the needle.

(Let me not need the needle, Lord.)

But most important, Lord, *let him be nice.*

I heard the outer door bang, Lord!

Forgive me my trespasses and I will try to love my neighbour and lift up mine eye unto the hills from whence cometh my help.... *(In fact, as long as help comes, I'm not particular from whence it comes.)*

I can hear voices, Lord!....thy rod and they staff support me...and walk with me through the Valley of the Shadow...

What am I saying?

The voices have stopped, Lord..... **'You have a minute, Lord?' David Kossoff**

(A sort of a prayer book)

Christian Aid Week, 10-16 May 2026

Christian Aid Week is a powerful moment to come together and raise funds that fight global poverty and injustice. Since 1957, Christian Aid Week has brought faith and action together to help families survive poverty and violence, and communities rebuild after crisis.

This year our support will help parents in Nairobi, Kenya, facing the devastating reality of urban poverty and the daily struggle to feed their children. In the crowded and bustling settlements of Nairobi, most parents wake every day knowing that they must go and earn money, otherwise their children won't eat that evening. It's a precarious and frightening existence that no family should have to face.

But where hardship means hunger, urban farmers can grow hope. With tools and specialised training from Christian Aid's partner, Beacon of Hope, parents are fighting food insecurity by farming vegetables in small city plots to feed and earn an income to support their families.

Christian Aid invites us to help such families living in crowded informal settlements so they can escape the cruel grip of poverty, protect their children from hunger and grow a more hopeful future.

Envelopes will be available on 10th May to bring back the following Sunday. Last year we raised £295; can we do even better in 2026?

You can read more at caw.christianaid.org.uk

Alastair Maclean



Diary for May

Fri 1	12.15	Lunchtime Recital by Jinah Shim (piano)
	13.15	Charity Lunch
	14.30	Phoenix Group Whist (every Friday)
	19.00	Choir Practice (every Friday)
Sun 3	11.00	Communion Service led by Mr Mike Findley
Mon 4	BANK HOLIDAY	
Thur 7	10.30	Events Meeting
Sun 10	11.00	Morning Service led by Mrs Anne Walton
Tue 12	14.00	Elders' Meeting
Sun 17	11.00	Communion Service led by Reverend David Aplin followed by.....
	13.00	Church ANNUALGENERAL MEETING (bring lunch)
Sun 24	11.00	Morning Service led by Pastor Peter Gooch
Wed 27	14.00	Knit & Natter Group in the Vestry
Sun 31	11.00	Morning Service led by Reverend John Steele

Rotas

Pulpit Supply

3rd Mr Mike Findley 10th Mrs Anne Walton 17th Revd. David Aplin 24th Pastor Peter Gooch
31st Revd. John Steele

Duty Officer

3rd Mrs Janet Green 10th Mr David Ramsay 17th Mr Frank Palmer 24th Mrs Janet Green
31st Mr David Ramsay

Communion Preparation

3rd Mrs Margret Hillyard 17th David & Chris Ramsay

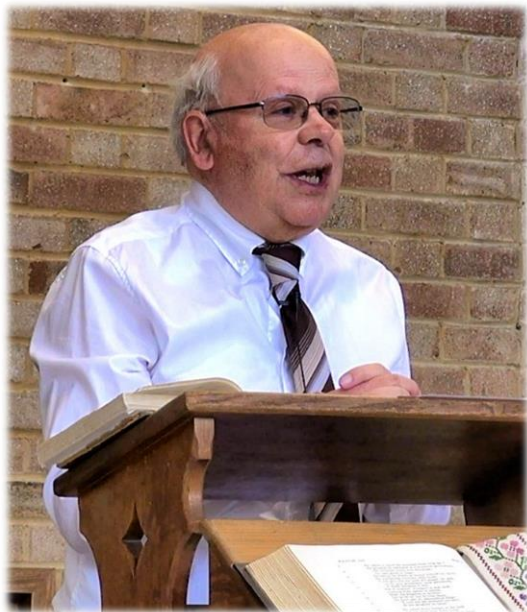
Bible Readers

3rd Mr Frank Palmer 10th Mr David Ramsay 17th Mrs Marian Poulton 24th Mrs Mary Deller
31st Mr John Knott

Coffee

3rd Heather & Geoff 10th Margaret Hillyard 17th Marian Poulton 24th Chris/David Ramsay
31st Heather & Geoff

Morning Service Sunday 26th April – led by John Wainwright



How thoughtful of John to pass up the opportunity to compete in the London Marathon to come and lead our Worship (or so he told us!). Wainwrights come as 'double-headers' with Sue reading for us "A modern version of Psalm 23 for busy people". This week it was all about shepherds and sheep. John had been brought up on a farm and knew quite a bit about shepherding: he'd even had a sheep called Floss and had bottle-fed a lamb called Violet. I will not forget the image of John returning

to the little plot of land that belonged to his parents, leaning over the fence and calling "Meeeeeah!" to the assembled sheep. The sheep look up at him but do not come and follow him. I think he will have had a bit more success with us!

To challenge the misconception that the Christian life was nothing but a miserable and dull existence, John offered us a 'blow by blow' account of the healing miracle from John, Chapter 9, before moving to the day's Lectionary reading from John 10.

The story was about Jesus healing a man who had been blind from birth. The healing had taken place on a Sabbath day and so became a point of contention between Jesus and the Pharisees. Following the healing, some people had questioned whether the healed man was indeed the same beggar they had known, or merely someone resembling him. The man confirmed that it was Jesus who had healed him: the Pharisees insisted that a prophet would know not to heal on the Sabbath. Some of the Pharisees accused Jesus of heresy yet acknowledged the miracle. Seeking a different answer the authorities had summoned the man's parents who had confirmed that their son was indeed born blind but feigned ignorance when asked about his healing. The authorities had again questioned the man about his healing, and he'd responded that he had already explained it to them and then asked them if they wanted to become disciples of Jesus as well. This had provoked insults and the authorities had aligned themselves with Moses and expressed ignorance regarding Jesus' origins. The healed man had found it remarkable that they did not know where Jesus had come from despite the miraculous act. He observed that God listened to those who did His will, and that never before had anyone heard of a man born blind being healed. If Jesus were not from God, He could do nothing. The Pharisees had reacted harshly, accusing the man of being steeped in sin (*his blindness having been due to his own sin*), and casting him out.

In John Chapter 10, Jesus had spoken about the Good Shepherd. The image of the shepherd appeared many times in the Old Testament, with David, the shepherd boy, famously singing the 23rd Psalm and God depicted as the great Shepherd of His people.

When we thought of shepherds, the qualities that came to mind were, first and foremost, their care for the sheep; tending to them diligently, often exposing themselves to risks from thieves or wild animals such as wolves. Not highly educated by the standards of religious leaders of the time, their work was of great importance. Indeed, in the Christmas story in Luke, the angels first brought the news to shepherds, not to the religious elite. Jesus distinguished between the actions of a good shepherd and those who failed in this duty. He highlighted the shortcomings of certain religious leaders—such as the Pharisees—who, preoccupied with their own status and rigid rule-following, neglected true pastoral care.

Jesus contrasted the thief, who entered the sheepfold by deceit to steal and destroy, with the Good Shepherd, who entered properly and acted with the sheep's best interests at heart. The Good Shepherd was trustworthy and compassionate, caring for people even if they did not always adhere perfectly to rules, but whose hearts were open to him.

Jesus had said, “I am the gate.” The function of a gate was to protect what lay within. The sheepfold’s gate especially protected the sheep at night, and Jesus referred to himself both as the sheepfold and the Good Shepherd, proclaiming that he had come so that people might have life, and have it abundantly. None of us was perfect, but God was ready to renew and refresh us through the Holy Spirit, provided we were willing to listen and open our hearts.

Our attention today was pulled in many directions—from the media to political debates—which often left us questioning what was true. Jesus, however, assured us that by trusting in him, we would find the truth. He demonstrated this by living his teachings, accepting all rather than excluding those who did not meet human-made standards. Jesus called each of us by name, just as shepherds in ancient times knew their sheep individually. When their shepherd called, they followed, recognising his unique call. In the same way Jesus’ true followers recognised and responded to his voice. Jesus cared for each of us individually, giving us a sense of freedom, courage, and joy. His care was not just for our own benefit; he called us to be pastoral too - each of us reaching out in our own way to others. Our mission was to witness to Jesus, sharing the joy of knowing him, and

emphasising his care during both high points and life’s valleys. Many people faced challenges—health, finances, family issues—and while God might not remove our difficulties, he promised to be with us through them all, just as the shepherd had sought the one lost sheep.

And a ‘high point’ for Margaret Barton, at a big family celebration for her 95th Birthday the day before had been the news - quietly let slip by her eldest granddaughter - that a baby was due in October. We all prayed that things would go smoothly for her.



Psalm 23 for Busy People (Sue Wainwright read this prayer)

Toki Miyashina

The Lord is my Pace Setter, I shall not rush,
He makes me stop and rest for quiet intervals,
He provides me with images of stillness,
Which restore my serenity.
He leads me in ways of efficiency,
through calmness of mind; and his guidance is peace.
Even though I have a great many things to accomplish each day,
I will not fret, for his presence is here.
His timelessness, his all-importance will keep me in balance.
He prepares refreshment and renewal in the midst of my activity,
by anointing my head with his oils of tranquillity,
My cup of joyous energy overflows.
Surely harmony and effectiveness shall be the fruit of my hours,
For I shall walk in the pace of my Lord,
and dwell in his house for ever.