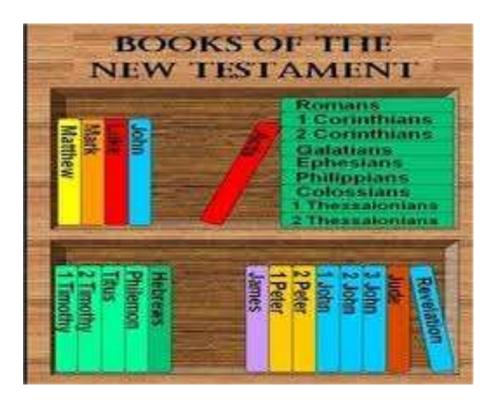


The bi-monthly mini-magazine of Churches Together in Birmingham 30

Our Bible Stories



Who wrote the Bible?

I was challenged recently when I quoted a bit of the Bible, and someone asked me when it was written, and when it was included in the Bible. I had absolutely no idea, so did a little research. If you know more than me, and can correct any of the following, then please do leave a comment—otherwise, this is where the Bible came from:



The first 5 books of the Bible were traditionally thought to have been written by Moses, and are called The Pentateuch. There is some disagreement on this, even amongst very conservative Jews.[1] My own view is that even if the narrative originated from a single person, it was not

physically written until much later and was edited over the centuries.

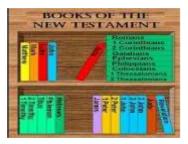
These books were probably established as 'scripture' by Ezra and Nehemiah, and they are what the Jews today still mean when they refer to the Torah. (The books were in existence way before Ezra and Nehemiah, but the early Jews pretty much ignored them until the prophets reminded them they were important.)

Then, about 200BC, the writings of the prophets were added. Later, the book of Psalms was also included as 'scripture'. Some of the texts (called the Writings) were not fully accepted as canon until much later (about AD 100) according to some sources.[2] However, the books were used by people, given authority and called 'scripture' before they were officially accepted as 'canon.' Therefore, the writers of the New Testament quoted as scripture texts that are not always part of what we call the Bible.

It became important for the Jews to have a clear understanding of what their holy books were. Jews were beginning to move away from Palestine, and they wanted to know exactly what defined them as a race, what their core beliefs were. Further afield, other Jews included other books as part of their scripture. The further away from Palestine they lived, the more books they seemed to include (some had as many as 15 extra books in their 'scripture').

As many Jews lived in Egypt, where Greek was spoken, they wanted scripture translated into Greek. This is sometimes called 'The Greek

Old Testament' and sometimes called the Septuagint, and this contains hidden books (known as Apocrypha which means 'hidden'). Some of these books have since disappeared, and we don't know what was in them. (Actually, it is not as simple as this—for example there was not only one Greek translation that was used in Egypt, so referring to the Septuagint is a little misleading.[3])



So, what about the New Testament? Well, after Jesus left, the people who believed in him, began to separate from the Jews into a new religion. They still regarded the books we call the Old Testament to be scripture. However, gradually, people began to write other things. People who had seen and listened to Jesus began to write accounts of his life and teach-

ing. Later, other people interviewed them, and wrote their own accounts. The early church began to decide what it believed (such as whether non-Jews could be Christians) and the leaders of the early church wrote letters, teaching the church. Letters were called 'epistles'. People within the church basically chose which of these letters and writings they regarded as sacred. So, there were the letters written by Paul, as well as letters written by Thomas...and the 'Shepherd of Hermas' ... and the 'Apocalypse of Peter' ... and the 'Epistle of Barnabas'...and so on. Some of these writings contradicted what Jesus had taught, and some had a definite bias. Gradually, over several years, the early church began to accept some writing as being from God, and disregard other writing.

Then, in AD 325 (so rather a long time later!) the church decided to state, once and for all, which books should be included as 'scripture'. They formed a committee (because churches, it seems, have always liked committees) called the Council of Nicea. As far as I can tell from my research, they didn't actually decide very much about what should be scripture.

Now things get tricky, as different sources contradict each other. One source states that in AD 381, the church had another try. They formed the First Council of Constantinople and set out clear criteria for which books to accept, and which to reject. The criteria for inclusion was:

^{*}The book was written by a first-hand witness of Jesus, or someone who had interviewed witnesses (such as Luke).

^{*}The book was written within 100 years of Jesus (which meant, if it had been wrong, people alive at the time would have said so).

^{*}The book should be consistent with the other books of the Bible.

I read that this Council decided which books should be part of the Bible. They chose the books we have today, including the books of the Apocrypha.

However, other sources disagree, stating that no Council ever stated which books should be used, and it evolved over time, with respected leaders gradually ignoring certain books and relying on others.[4]

Several sources agree that Athanasias, in AD 367, listed the books he considered should be scripture. He was the influential leader of the day, and others followed him, limiting their theology to this selection of books.

In AD 393, the Western Council of Hippo specified that the Church accepted 27 books as a canon. (We have ancient manuscripts, such as the Codex Sinaiticus, which includes 'Barnabus and the Shepherd' thus showing that not everyone accepted this ruling.) In AD 400, St. Jerome assembled the books of

the Bible, in Latin. It was called 'The Vulgate'.

In the 16th century, a man called Martin Luther was studying the Bible, and trying to discern what it meant. He decided that actually, the Apocrypha should not be included as Scripture. The protestant church follows Luther on this. The catholic church formed another committee



in 1546 (the Council of Trent) who decided that Luther was wrong. This is why today, the Catholic Bible contains different books to the Protestant Bible.

Okay, that's the end of the history lesson (interesting, huh?) There are implications that arise from all this—but that is for another blog. My final observation is that it is relatively recently that all the books of the Bible appeared together as a single book, and we do not have any original manuscripts from the individual books.

Anne E Thompson

- [1] More details in an article by Kim Phillips (Genizah Research Unit; Tyndale House, Cambridge).
- [2] See Stephen Chapman, The Law and The Prophets for more details.
- [3] See Gregory R. Lanier, The Septuagint (II: Crossway, 2021).
- [4] R. A. Baker, How the New Testament Canon Was Formed.

A visit to the Holy Land

On Wednesday 31st March 1971, I went to the Holy Land on a Boeing 707. We landed at Tel Aviv and spent the first week in Christ Church Hospice in Jerusalem. This is adjacent to the first Anglican Church in the Holy Land and has a wonderful atmosphere. 31 people were on this holiday, led by Canon Houghton, the Vice-Chairman of the Keswick Convention.



We toured the Old City, meandered through the colourful market streets and visited the Wailing Wall, the Dome of the Rock and El Aqsa Mosques, the Garden Tomb and Gordon's Calvary, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Via Dolorosa, the Last Supper room,

David's Citadel and his Tomb. We saw the Kidron valley and wandered around the Garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives and saw the Church of the Ascension and the Church of the Pater Noster, where the Lord's Prayer is painted in 32 languages on panels around the Church Courtyard.

We visited the Church of St Peter-In-Gallicantu. We also saw the Potters' Field

One of the highlights of the tour for me, was visiting Bethlehem, for here I was able to stay overnight at the Mary Lovell Home for the Blind. I had read the letters from my Aunt, who had worked there since November 1970, describing the home and the area, but to visit was far better. We had a supper, then sat in the Sitting Room. It was interesting to see a knitting machine used by one of the girls, to hear of the story of the Mary Lovell Home and to hear them singing, with great feeling, an English and two Arabic Hymns.

The next day was Palm Sunday, some of us went to the Lutheran Church and others to the Baraka Church in Bethlehem, while four of us went to St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem.

In the afternoon, my Aunt took me on a walking tour of Bethlehem, we visited the peaceful Shepherd's Fields and saw the Market where fruit and vegetables for the Home are purchased.

Back at the Mary Lovell Home, gardening was in progress and I had time only for a brief look at the houses and grounds, before leaving for Jerusalem and the tour again. The views from the Home are very fine and I was impressed by the cheerfulness of the girls.

During our first week, we also visited Emmaus, Jericho, the Dead Sea and Qumran Caves, where the Scrolls were found by a Shepherd Boy in 1947. We also visited Nazareth, Hebron and the newer side of Jerusalem, the Knessett (Parliament) Building and the Shrine of the Book, the Museum where the Dead Sea Scrolls are housed.

One of the loveliest places in Israel is Galilee and here we spent our second week at the Church of Scotland Hospice in Tiberias, overlooking this splendid gem of blue water set amidst green hills. An episode that will long stay in my mind occurred at Galilee on Easter Sunday night. Whilst we were worshipping in the lakeside Church of Scotland, a violent storm



whipped across the lake, it gave us a vivid lifepicture of how great the disciples' fear must have been as they tossed in their tiny fishing boat and yet how relieved when Christ stilled the storm.

From Galilee, we were able to visit the Ein Gev Kibbutz, the Golan Heights, Capernaum, the

Mount of Beautitudes, Tabgha, where the feeding of the 5,000 is commemorated by lovely mosaic pictures inside the Church there. We also went to Masada and travelled to the top in a cable car.

By the 12th April, the tour was almost over, but we had the chance to see Megiddo, Caesarea and Tel Aviv and the miraculously cultivated desert-land, on our way to Beersheba, where we spent our last two nights in a hotel. On 14th April, we arose at 4.30am for an early start, back to Lod Airport and the plane to Heathrow.

Margaret Scorey

Our Grandson, Joshua, asked for a bible for his 12th. Birthday last month. I was delighted to oblige. He attends a C of E school and RE is a core subject. However, there was one condition! The bible must have a black cover. I asked why.

Joshua was having his bedroom redecorated - black and white theme! The book had to match. !!! I think the "GOTH" stage has begun. It made me smile. Patricia Pass

In what language was the Bible first written?



The first human author to write down the biblical record was Moses. He was commanded by God to take on this task, for Exodus 34:27 records God's words to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." And what lan-

guage did he use? He wrote in his native language, called Hebrew.

Hebrew is one of a group of languages known as the Semitic languages which were spoken throughout that part of the world, then called Mesopotamia, located today mainly in Iraq. Their alphabet consisted of 22 letters, all consonants. (Imagine having an alphabet with no vowels! Much later they did add vowels.)

During the thousand years of its composition, almost the entire Old Testament was written in Hebrew. But a few chapters in the prophecies of Ezra and Daniel and one verse in Jeremiah were written in a language called Aramaic. This language became very popular in the ancient world and actually displaced many other languages. Aramaic even became the common language spoken in Israel in Jesus' time, and it was likely the language He spoke day by day. Some Aramaic words were even used by the Gospel writers in the New Testament.

The New Testament, however, was written in Greek. This seems strange, since you might think it would be either Hebrew or Aramaic. However, Greek was the language of scholarship during the years of the composition of the New Testament from 50 to 100 AD. The fact is that many Jews could not even read Hebrew anymore, and this disturbed the Jewish leaders a lot! So, around 300 BC a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek was undertaken, and it was completed around 200 BC. Gradually this Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, was widely accepted and was even used in many synagogues. It also became a wonderful missionary tool for the early Christians, for now the Greeks could read God's Word in

their own tongue.

So the New Testament authors wrote in Greek. They did not, however, use really high-class or classical Greek, but a very common and everyday type of Greek. For many years some scholars ridiculed the Greek of the New Testament because many of its words were strange to those who read the writings of the great Greek classical authors such as Plato and Aristotle. But later many records were uncovered of ordinary people, and amazingly there were the same common terms used in everyday speech! The ridicule dried up accordingly.



The earliest copies of parts of the Hebrew Old Testament were discovered in 1947. They are part of the famous Dead Sea Scrolls and actually date back to the first century BC. Even though they are at least 900 years older than any parts of the Bible we had before this, they are not the originals. They are copies. The originals have all been lost or destroyed. But this is not a cause for dismay. We're almost certain what the original text said. Copying by scribes was done with great care in those days and because the text was regarded as sacred, the copyists were extremely painstaking. Today some 5000 hand-copied documents exist of all or part of the Bible, and they agree in 98% of the text! No other ancient writing has this amount of underlying support with such amazing agreement as to the text.

Yes, we do have what God wanted us to have! By way of translation, we now have His revelation in our own language and in 2300 other languages, too. Today we have the very Bible that comes to us from the three languages used in the original. Truly we can say, "God speaks my language, too!"

Taken from Biblica

Once upon a time

I love stories. I'm currently working my way through Harry Potter (on Volume 5 out of 7 at present) in order to keep pace with my 8-year old grandson, who has read all of them.... twice!

However, I do have concerns that I didn't used to have about the line between 'stories' or 'being economical with the truth' – a phrase currently used to describe Peter Mandelson's account of his relationship with



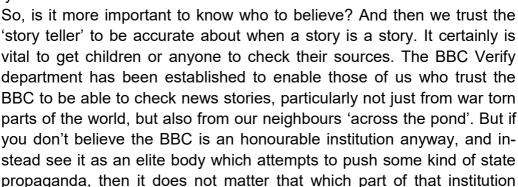
the convicted paedophile Jeffrey Epstein. Are stories joyous childlike feats of the imagination or are they dangerous untruths?

Is the biblical account of Jesus walking on water a 'story' or a historical account? Is the Nativity story just that or did it actually happen? Did Daniel walk unscathed from a lions'

den or is it just a story? Does it matter? Different branches of the Christian Church certainly have different opinions and different theological bases which result in very different views of Bible stories.

Where is the line between fiction and truth? In an age of social media and world-wide examples of wonderful cultural resources, when

newspapers and news sites talk about a 'good story', the definition of a 'story' certainly isn't as clear to me as it used to be.



says anything.

The current growth of hard-right populism across many parts of the world and now increasingly in the UK, demands that we should all be willing to challenge those who deliberately don't let truth get in the way of a good

'story'. According to a recent YouGov poll, almost half of the population (47%) believe that immigration to the UK is primarily "illegal" rather than legal, when actually irregular immigrants are just 4% of the total. (Full details of sources available on request!) So who are the 47% getting their information from?



Is it also important to be aware of context when listening to 'stories'. Not just who is telling them, but where, when and why they are telling these stories. Bible stories, based on ideas of a heavenly kingdom, often refer to the dangers of love of money, of rich men (always men) storing up wealth on earth which will exclude them from Paradise and of the need not to put your trust in earthly goods. Yet if you do not believe in an afterlife, these are just stories and have no bearing on terrestrial behaviour. According to Oxfam the top 1% have seen their wealth surge by over \$33.9 trillion since 2015 - enough to end global poverty 22 times over.

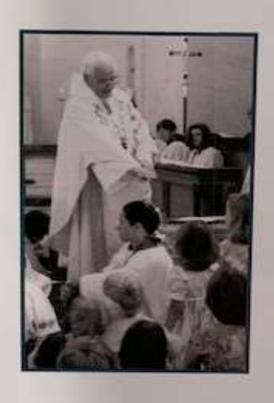


And yetthe best stories can take you outside yourself, provide empathy for situations you have never experienced, lead you to think thoughts that you have never considered before, demonstrate positivity when all around you seems to be leading to despair.

Of course there's a place for stories, but we have to recognise when a story is just that.

Helen Gale

A Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Revd Cannon Keith Withington



Tuesday 18th November 2025 at 2:00pm St Francis Church Bournville

Foodbank

We received in 1232Kg of food and gave out 2252Kg feeding 243 clients on 124 Vouchers

Urgently Needed

Rice (500g),

tinned spaghetti,

tinned soup,

tinned meat/meat products,

tinned rice pudding,

tinned fish (mackerel, tuna, sardines, salmon),

baked beans,

UHT semi-skimmed milk,

UHT whole milk,

chocolate bars,

long-life juice (not needing refrigeration),

liquid/bar soap,

toothpaste,

gender neutral shower gel



Lower in Stock

Low stock

Tinned/carton instant custard,

tinned vegetables (peas, carrots, sweet corn)

tinned tomatoes,

tinned fruit (not rhubarb, prunes or grapefruit)

jam/honey,

small jars instant coffee (not decaffeinated),

tea bags (40's or 80's),

instant hot chocolate (not cocoa powder),

pasta sauce,

instant potato,

instant noodles,

squash,

cereal (not greater than 500g),

tinned/packet vegetarian meals,

sweet biscuits (not multi-packs, as they often

have no ingredients listed on the packs inside),

sugar (500g),

toilet rolls.

laundry powder/liquid (not family sized),

washing-up liquid,

gender neutral shampoo.

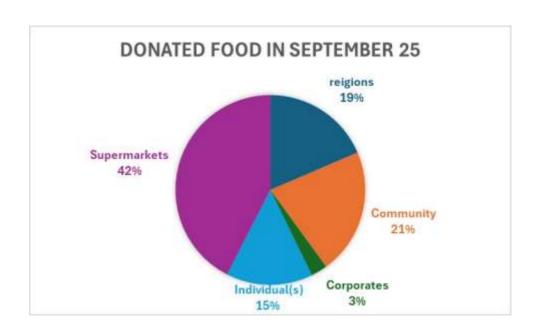
Donations welcome

B30 and South Birmingham Foodbank Charity Number 1197620 Lloyds Bank Sort code 30 - 98- 97 account no. 68010562 Research has revealed the concerning signs of hardship deepening and becoming normalised in communities across the UK. 14.1 million people in the UK, including 3.8 million children, faced hunger in 2024 simply because they didn't have enough money to afford the essentials.

Clients needing food are referred to the foodbank by e voucher through a referral agent or Citizens Advice 0808 208 2138 or call Birmingham City Council on 0121 216 3030

Distribution of food, Clients or their representatives will need to collect the parcels from B30 Foodbank Quaker Friends Meeting House 23a Watford Road B30 1JB on Tuesday and Friday between 1.30 and 3.30 pm Enquiries info@b30.foodbank.org.uk Donations to the B30 Foodbank at the Warehouse 17 Castle Road B30 3HZ on Tuesdays and Fridays between 2.00 and 4.00p

Phone lines for clients 07582 143 972 and for donations 07985 629 201



BOURNVILLE QUAKER MEETING

SHOWING OF THE 2025 SWARTHMORE LECTURE

A Testimony of Community by Emily Provance, or

"How does God call humanity to live in community?"

7.00-8.00 pm on Friday 3rd October.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Preceded by a finger buffet from 6.00pm,

With discussion after the lecture.

The Swarthmore Lecture is given annually at Friends House, London during the weekend of Quakers in Britain annual gathering – Yearly Meeting. It was given this year on May 24.

In her lecture Emily engaged with the challenge of how people can live and cooperate in community, especially when those communities are not ones that we have chosen. Emily presented a testimony of community drawn from books of discipline used across Friends' theological spectrum and in many parts of our global community. She offered a "sense of the meeting," using the collective wisdom of our immensely diverse Society to suggest how all people — Quaker and not — can survive and thrive as an immensely diverse humankind.

Bournville Quaker Meeting House - 65 Linden Road Birmingham, B30 1JT

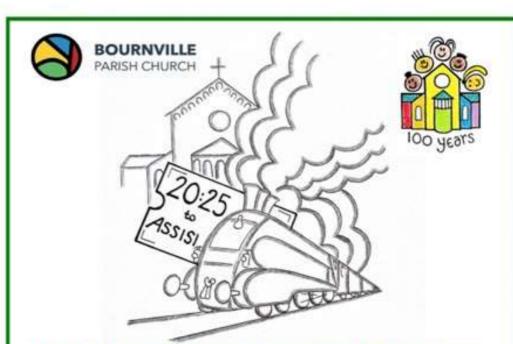
Accessibility: There is a ramp up to the entrance and there are accessible toilet facilities in the Meeting House.

Getting here:

By bus: No. 11 and 27 bus routes stop outside the Meeting House at the junction with Linden Road and Woodbrooke Road.

By train: Get a local train out to Bournville station (Cross City Line), half a mile from the Meeting House and then walk up or get a 27 bus.

By car: Limited car parking on site with extra parking alongside Bournville Green. We provide safe storage for those on bikes.



As part of our centenary, we are delighted that a new play with original music about the life of St Francis will be performed in St Francis Church, Bournville on Friday 14th November 7.00 pm and Saturday 15th November 2.30 pm.

Suitable for 12+

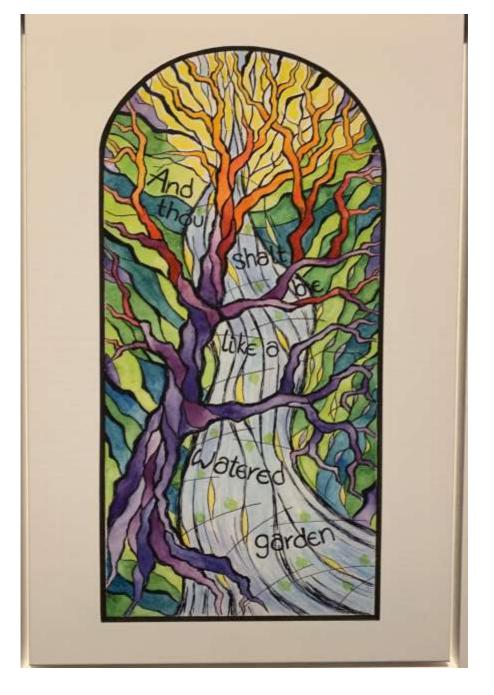
Admission : Over 16 £8, under 16 £5, family 2 adults 2 under 16s £20. Payment by card possible at the door.

Information about tickets from Carol Glynn at the church office 0121 472 7215 option 2, between 8.30 am - 4.00 pm Tuesday to Friday.

You are welcome to leave a message about obtaining tickets with your contact details and we will get back to you as soon as possible

email: parishadmin@stfrancisbournville.org.uk

Tickets available at the door for each performance.



The new stained glass window to celebrate the 100th anniversary of St Francis Church. Created by and Catherine Pinnock a local artist and member of the congregation.

Join us for a cup of tea on World Quaker Day

Sunday 5th October

Get to know the Quakers in your community, and find out more about what we do

Bournville Quaker Meeting House

65 Linden Road

Worship begins | Tea and coffee

at 10.30 am from 12 pm

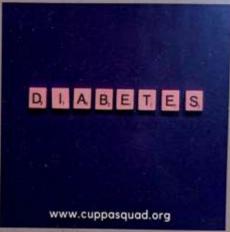












LET'S GET MOTIVATED TO MANAGE OUR HEALTH & WELLBEING

Every 3rd Thursday from 12:30pm - 1:30pm

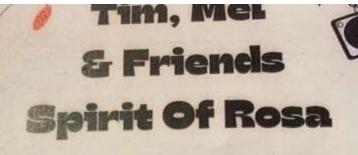
VISIT US AT

THE HUB ON THE GREEN
27 SYCAMORE ROAD, BOURNVILLE, B30 2AA

One More Challenge one More Challenge of Cuppa Squad



acqueline.boraston@gmail.com



Are you interested in having a musical group play at your Community space or venue?



If you are interested please contact:

Tim - 07708382391

Place of Welcome

Pavilion has a session every Friday morning with refreshments in the Rowheath Terrace Room.

There's lively conversation, drinks and snacks every Friday morning in Rowheath hall.



How do you join?

You just walk in anytime between 10.30 and 12.00 on Friday! But for Covid safety you must give contact details.

Why is this group happening?

The Places of Welcome network was set up in 2012 because of concerns about loneliness and isolation. We are proud to be part of this great initiative.



THE BOURNVILLE SOCIETY

PROGRAMME FOR 2025/2026

Meetings held in Dame Elizabeth Hall, off Oak Tree Lane, B30 1UA, Bournville on Wednesday evenings

1 Oct 2025	7.30pm John Billingham	Life in the 1950s
5 Nov 2025	7.30pm Michael Harrison	Bournville between the Wars
3 Dec 2025	7.30pm Nigel Metcalf	The Victorian Christ- mas
4 Feb 2026	7.30pm Paul Standford	Cadbury's Railways

4 Mar 2026	7.30pm	A.G.M
	Henrietta Lockhart	A History of Winter- bourne
1 Apr 2026	7.30pm Liz Palmer	Born in Birmingham 1914-24
6 May 2026	7.30pm Richard Cook	Roman remains in the area
ask.		Visit to the Cadbury Archive

Membership £15 Visitors Welcome £5 per meeting

For details contact

rosemaryshutt@talktalk.net or jenny.shardlow@gmail.com



The Cotteridge Church

You are invited ...



Warm Spaces

where people can gather for free in a warm, safe, welcoming place and enjoy a hot drink and some company.

Cotteridge Church Monday -Friday 9.30 am -1.30 pm



Click on the different links below to find out what's happening in your church

(Crl + click on link)

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https://ssjandh.org

https://bournvilleparishchurch.org.uk/

https://www.facebook.com/BournvilleParishChurchStFrancisOfAssisi/

www.ascensionstirchley.com

https://www.facebook.com/share/1AcRNVQWxJ/?mibextid=LQQJ4d

 $\underline{https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Religious-Organization/Bournville-}$

Quaker-Meeting/

https://www.facebook.com/Cotteridge-Quaker

https://cotteridgequakers.org.uk/

https://www.thecotteridgechurch.org.uk/

https://www.facebook.com/TheCotteridgeChurch/

 $\underline{\text{https://www.birminghammethodistcircuit.org.uk/church-page/st-andrews-b30}}$

https://www.weoleyhillchurch.org.uk/links.php

https://www.birminghamvineyard.com/

https://www.facebook.com/vineyardbham/

https://b30.foodbank.org.uk/

https://www.birminghamchurches.org.uk/news/

https://ctb30.org.uk/

CHURCH CONTACTS

For further details of worship and/or activities at any of the churches please contact the people below:

- St. Andrew's Methodist Church Rev Ping Ting Chen 448 9619
- Society of Friends, Bournville Claire Bowman - 07753 635438 Room Hire, bqmroombookings@gmail.com https://centralenglandquakers.org.uk/ room-bookings/bournville
- St. Francis Church, Bournville Rev Canon Richard Wharton - 472 7215
- Rowheath Pavilion Church Rev Dave Price Office - 458 1711.

- Society of Friends, Cotteridge Chris Martin - 475 2088
- The Cotteridge Church

 433 5176

 Revd. Roger Collins 459 4009
 or Church Office 433 5518
- Ch of the Ascension Stirchley Revd Tariro Mukoja - 443 1371
- Catholic Church of Ss Joseph and Helen
- Catholic Church of St Paul's Father David Barry - 458 1236

"Points" is published by Churches Together in Birmingham 30 for the exchange of ideas and news. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the churches as a group or individually.

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Roger Bunce

Linda Mann

Gill Broadhead

Margaret Scorey

Editorial Committee:

Next Issue's Focus will be

Our Eating Habits

All are invited to submit an article. If you wish to do so please send to the Editor by:

15 November