

A candle in...



THE WINDOW

News and Views from the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames



Christian Aid Week
10-16 May 2020

75th Anniversary

Mary Anderson

a member of St Helen's Church and of the local Christian Aid Committee:

As I write, I have just been listening to the [UK Blessing](#) that has been shared by family and friends. What a wonderful, uplifting song, bringing together people from across social divides and blessing us all. Christian Aid does something very similar, but with an even wider remit: to bless the world, and especially the poor.

One of the things the corona virus has brought home to us all is how we are interconnected: another's poverty lies on the reverse side of my coin of wealth. So how does that impact on us, as Christians?

For much of my professional life I have been involved in educational projects for global markets, but in the last ten years or so I have gone back to my 'African roots'. Having started as a volunteer teacher in Côte d'Ivoire, then as a research linguist, writer and editor, now 'in retirement' I have taken up the baton of literacy issues, both locally as a volunteer reader-helper and also, with friends and colleagues, to support projects centred on issues of mother-tongue literacy, mainly in Nigeria.

Christian Aid exists to create a world where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty. But what does that mean in practice? You can find more about their work [here](#). Many development agencies espouse a top-down approach, believing that educated westerners can bring solutions to problems. But that is not how Christian Aid works. Rather, it is a matter of supporting initiatives that have emerged from 'the bottom up'. Often people's needs are closely bound with the earth and resources, in which climate change plays a huge part. It is crucial to respect the local perspective, and to recognise wisdom and lore that has been handed down over generations. However, with the advent of a globally-driven economy, people often need support in making informed decisions about their lives in order to engage meaningfully in their own development.

This is where education and literacy are crucial, and it is this aspect of Christian Aid's work that I most admire. In the last ten years I have had the privilege of visiting several Christian Aid projects. One, in Nigeria, aimed to develop people's awareness of their human rights, which in turn empowered them to challenge

This issue was shaped by:

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corruption and poor governance. Other projects, in Mali and Burkina Faso, empowered women, especially, to start their own businesses such as soap-making or developing the economic potential of locally-produced shea-butter and neem oil.

Christian Aid is super-aware of the interconnectedness of our worlds, and the fact that our interpretation of development may change, in line with ‘the energy of the age to come’ (Hebrews 7.16). **Let us therefore unite in the prayer for Christian Aid Week:**

Love never fails

Even in the darkest moments,
love gives hope.
Love compels us to fight against
coronavirus alongside our sisters
and brothers living in poverty.
Love compels us to stand
together in prayer with our
neighbours near and far.
Love compels us to give and act
as one.
Now, it is clear that our futures
are bound together more tightly
than ever before.

As we pray in our individual homes – around the nation and around the world – we are united as one family.

So, let us pause and find a moment of peace, as we lift up our hearts together in prayer.
Amen



Please donate to Christian Aid at this crucial time by clicking [here](#). However, we would love you specifically to support the Abingdon Christian Aid committee’s efforts. This year, there will be no house-to-house collection or market-place event, but we are organising a **Christian Aid quiz**. Join us at **7.30pm on 16th May** via Zoom for a fun Saturday evening!

Christian Aid Quiz Night!!

What are you doing at 7.30pm on Saturday 16th May?



No you’re not going out! ... so join us for a Christian Aid Quiz Night on Zoom

Puts the FUN in FUNdraising!

Puts the QUIZ into QUIZtian Aid! (sorry – not my pun!)

We suggest a minimum donation of £5 to support the work of Christian Aid.

To take part email Abingdon.CAQuiz2020@gmail.com . Do this soon so we can see how many screens there will be. Zoom allows 100. Nearer the time we will then send you an invitation link, which you simply click on just before 7.30 on the night. We will take a sociable break after about 40 minutes, then restart for the second half - about 90 minutes in total.

If you haven’t used zoom before we can try a 1 to 1 Zoom session to help! Ask.

Thank you to all contributors. The next issue will come out for Pentecost. Can you contribute a relevant image? Also I wonder if we can put together lines from the Lord’s Prayer in as many languages as possible and in as many forms as possible! Over to you.

From the Christian Aid Annual report

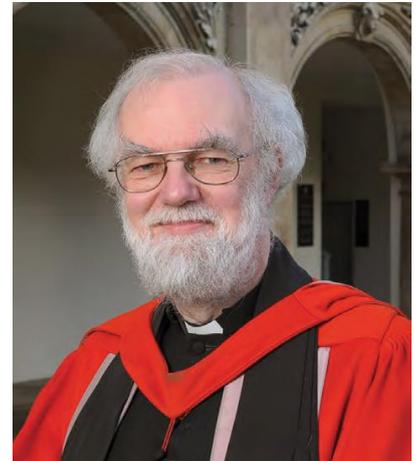
This was written before Coronavirus. Remember that time?

Reflecting on the past year, it is easy to be drawn into the negative narratives that dominate our news headlines – the polarisation of our societies and politics; the surge of far-right radicalism; increasing attacks on activists; a steady rise in the debt burden of the poorest countries; the catastrophically dangerous effects of our changing climate, of which Cyclone Idai was but one example; and the hostility faced by many refugees. But whereas before these headlines might have been greeted with apathy, there is now a sense that the tide is turning. We may be heading into greater uncertainty, but so many communities are also responding with growing awareness and a renewed sense of what action is possible. People are speaking out for what they believe in, across the globe. Extinction Rebellion, school strikes, the Me Too movement, and the consciousness that all these issues are really part of the same struggle – all this speaks of a longing for a better way. We at Christian Aid need to echo this urgency, with and on behalf of all who live in extreme poverty.

We have a moment of opportunity to harness this energy. We can lend our strength to movements that highlight the inequality at the heart of so many of the issues of our day. Particularly as people of faith, we have a role in bringing people together, so that all recognise how our human destiny and wellbeing are interrelated. The Church is a body, with all parts contributing different gifts but working together, animated by the same Spirit of Christ. In the same way, we must work coherently and cooperatively to achieve the transformational change we want to see.

We are living through interesting times. I look back on 2018/19 with a sense of satisfaction and gratitude, having now completed a full year as Christian Aid's CEO. It has been incredible to meet so many staff, volunteers and supporters, and to witness their energy and passion. From sponsored walks, to the renowned book sale in Edinburgh and ceilidhs at Greenbelt Festival, I have felt inspired by their commitment and creativity. In rural Ethiopia, in the slums of São Paulo, Brazil, and even in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, I have been humbled by the resilience and dignity of the many communities I have visited. I am proud of the transformational work that our partners carry out to support them, every single day. Each of those meetings and conversations has been a reminder that our world is still unequal and unjust. On current trends, at least 800 million people will still be living in extreme poverty by 2030. While in Ethiopia this year, I was struck by the level of awareness in the community, by their understanding of the issues they have to grapple with every day.

While policy makers and politicians debate the issues of climate change, a woman in South Omo spoke of its impact, and of their lived realities – climate change has left their land barren, causing crops to fail and livestock to die. Their sources of income have been further limited; it is now harder for them to access healthcare or send their children to school. Their poverty is not an accident. They are being left behind because of their gender, ethnicity, religion or social status, race, caste and historical burdens, to mention a few. Our economic system and the way we manage our natural environment allow those with more power to exploit those with less. As a result, we are witnessing a climate crisis and levels of extreme poverty and inequality that are unacceptably high. These systemic issues have created high volatility and uncertainty in a significant number of the countries where we work. The lived realities of the people and communities whom I have visited and spoken with reaffirm for me the need to amplify our prophetic voice – speaking the truth of the impact of economic and climate policies and practices on some of the most vulnerable groups in society.



Rowan Williams Chair of the Trustees



Amanda Khozi Mukwashi
Chief Executive

Windows

Our photographic theme this issue is windows. The articles that we publish here are windows in themselves: windows into the writers' minds and hearts, windows looking out to the natural world, the creation of God, windows looking out to the needs of others. Windows come in all shapes and sizes, upstairs and downstairs, kitchen and picture, all of them valuable - as are these articles, we hope you agree.

Thoughts at this Time

Beryl Clements, Authorised Preacher

Usually at this time of year I would be at my "spiritual bolthole" in Cumbria, where, in the words of Psalm 121, I would lift up my eyes to the hills, these days enjoying not only the view but also the memories of when I could lift not just my eyes but my feet and my whole body to the hills (or, at least, to some of them). There is something both awesome and reassuring about that landscape – its beauty, its variety, its space and timelessness all give me a sense of perspective and stability. These fells and lakes have been moulded over thousands of years, and although there's great variation within them, and they've suffered the effects of more recent extreme weather, such as storm Desmond, there is so much that is predictable and unchanging about them.

I'm so grateful to have had these experiences, and to be able to recall them; these memories of the landscapes and the people who've shared them with me there are helping to sustain me at the moment, as I negotiate the relatively minor inconveniences of our current restrictions, which in turn are a reminder of the privileged life so many of us have come to take for granted. There are many analogies between our current situation and journeys in unknown landscapes, particularly when we find ourselves on a route not of our choosing – the fear of uncertainty, facing the unknown, being lost, not in control, the relief of discovering that others are sharing at least some of the journey with us (I can't be the only person who's followed someone only to find that they have a totally different destination in mind). There's the warmth of shared encouragement, of fellowship with strangers, of having the courage to trust and rely on others. As with today's crisis, there are times to simply follow instructions, and other times to ask questions and learn from the experience.

I am grateful for so much in my life today, and I'm working on the late Dag Hammersjold's words, "For all that has been, thanks". Being grateful doesn't prevent me from having difficult times, when loneliness and lack of social contact loom large, but as a Christian I have the one thing for which I'm most grateful, the gift of faith and hope, especially in this Eastertide. And that helps me face uncertainty, to get through the increasing weariness and decreasing motivation, the balancing of tragedy and suffering with the many good things that are happening. I do believe that we have a loving God who cares for his creation, and that somehow good will come from this, maybe with an increased awareness of the inequalities within our society and the world and a will to address them, and a willingness to work together to protect our planet.

As the Psalmist says, "My help comes from the Lord...who will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and for evermore."



A Conversation by the Compost Heap

Andrew Coker, Churchwarden at St Nicolas' Church

I am retired and a keen gardener, which is a good thing seeing as we are all confined to home and with nothing else to do. The warm weather is encouraging me to go out and tackle the weeds, there are enough of them, but this also keeps me in contact with other people.

We live by the side of a much-loved Abingdon pathway, currently inundated with families and solitary people taking their daily stroll for exercise.

But, whilst some people have company, many do not.

Our cat, my constant gardening companion and a terrible show off, was doing one of his many ridiculous poses a couple of days ago, when a lady stopped and could not help laughing.

It led to a lovely ten minute conversation, she on the pathway, me five metres away in the garden at the safe social distance.

As she left to continue her walk she thanked me and said it was the first conversation she had had with anyone in three days, as she lived alone.

I encouraged her to have another walk and hopefully I would be back at the compost heap to cheer her on.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta said many wise things... but this one stands out for me.

“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”

I am one of those classed as being at a higher risk of the virus and I feel very helpless, not being able to play my part in collecting from Tesco, driving people to hospital or supporting older people

Unlike my many NHS friends, I cannot help in a practical way, but I can do my bit, at a safe distance, by chatting to strangers, saying positive things, and distracting them by talking about my garden and the cat.

Just recently I have gone through our phone book and identified people I have not spoken to for ages and given them a call. Old friends of many years standing who normally communicate by Christmas cards have all had a call with family news and reassurance that they are not forgotten. Some of them are elderly former work colleagues who enjoy a good reminiscence about our days together.

Not all of us can do the magnificent work of our NHS, emergency services, post men and women, or refuse collectors who all keep calm and carry on, but we can all do small things with love.

I have dug up some parsley for a friend to collect by agreeing a place in the garden where she can collect and wave at us from a distance.

You never know what impact your smile or friendly wave may have on a vulnerable lonely person.

We may not be given to communal singing as they do in Italian flats, but as witnessed from the positive interaction I heard about from friends in East St Helen's street with the NHS applause, we can all show our common solidarity and common decency, and do small things with great love.

Keep smiling.



Entrapment or Freedom

Eileen Duckett, a member of St Michael's Church

Retirement was not what I thought it would be.
There are grandchildren and elderly parents to care for.
There are friends to visit
Cakes to be baked for church fairs and other events
And committee meetings to attend
Because after all I am retired and therefore have nothing else to do
Or so it is assumed.
That is entrapment.
But suddenly it is lockdown
Bringing me freedom.
Freedom to get up when I like
Do the housework when and if I feel like it
Bake a cake just for us
Make that pie for my husband that I have been promising to do for a long time.
I can do just what I want to do for a change.
I can knit, crochet, read my book
Talk to my husband
Or simply sit in my garden and enjoy the birdsong and the flowers.
I can simply just be and not feel guilty.
This is freedom.
Of course I miss my grandchildren and my mother
But I speak to my mother on the phone each day
Something I don't usually have the time to do
And I can FaceTime my grandchildren.
I admit I wouldn't want it to be like this for ever
But for this brief moment in time
I am enjoying every minute of it.
What is entrapment for many is freedom for me.



What is it? - not obvious at this scale.
See the last page for the answer

‘Twin Realities’

Louise Heffernan

In his diocesan sermon on Sunday 26 April, Colin Fletcher, Bishop of Dorchester discussed the very different feelings that Cleopas and his friend must have had on their way to Emmaus before and after their transformative meeting with the risen Christ. He went on to say that ‘excitement and joy and disappointment and fear run very close together’ as the ‘twin realities’ of our life as Christians.

These words have helped me to understand how varied is the experience of lockdown. Many people are using their time in positive ways, seeing it as a freedom from the usual cares and routine, a chance to reflect and evaluate. Many are extremely positive about the opportunities that lockdown has created, the chance to be creative, to catch up on jobs or to experience nature in all its spring beauty, clearer and quieter than usual. And that is wonderful: to be able to celebrate the upsides of hard times, to find the silver lining, is surely what we must do.

However, I know from discussions with others that lockdown is presenting a great challenge. Some of us cannot use zoom or any other technology and so feel marooned, cut off from the fellowship of coffee mornings or from the supportive online resources that our clergy have put together for us so that we can continue to worship as a church. Some of us live alone. My husband and best friend, Patrick, died 5 years ago and I know that isolation can feel like solitary confinement at times. How blessed to have someone to talk to over the breakfast table and at numerous occasions during the rest of the day. We know too that some parents are struggling with home schooling alongside trying to work from home themselves. And I cannot even begin to imagine how difficult it must be for key workers who put themselves in danger every day, or for the newly bereaved who contend with loss as well as loneliness. Or for the sick or disabled. Or for those whose financial security is threatened. So, these are the twin realities of lockdown: much to enjoy and to celebrate and much to mourn, to fear or to resent.

Bishop Colin concludes with these words which provide understanding, reassurance and hope: ‘Yet alongside the excitement are the leaden feet walking to Emmaus. Feet overwhelmed by the present pain and difficulties of financial insecurity, or bereavement, of that experience of being cooped up and, above all else, I sense, the fear of an uncertain future and the nagging question of ‘When will this come to an end?’ or, to be more realistic, ‘When might things begin to get better?’. Such fears are real and they cannot and must not be denied.

But, with them, in the light of the twin realities of joy and sorrow that Christians have experienced down the centuries, comes the footfall of the one who walks with us both in the green pastures and in the valley of shadow of death, the one who says to us ‘When you pass through the waters I will be with you; when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through fire you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour (Isaiah 43: 2,3).

Amen.’

A link to the service on Sunday 26th April which includes Bishop Colin Fletcher’s sermon can be found here:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/6945351> Church at Home, the third Sunday of Easter

The “Joys” of Lockdown

Linda Hobbs, Churchwarden at St Helen's Church

As we all stay in our homes, a situation about which we have no choice, we need to look at some of the positive gains from our plight, whilst still being aware of the negative issues this situation has meant some people are facing.

This enforced freedom from “normal” tasks, (no commute to work, no shops open, less demand on our time) gives us the opportunity to re-evaluate our priorities. This virus has made us aware that it's the health of our families, friends, colleagues that's important, not how much money we earn, or where we plan to spend next year's holiday.

However, this lack of routine, contact through work, commuting etc, has for many presented challenges; without opportunities for human contact, many feel lonely, isolated, forgotten. Despite the fact that communities have swung into action - cards pushed through doors, offers of shopping, collection of prescriptions - kind and generous outpourings may only serve to make isolation feel keener. It may be that whilst wanting to help and join in this outpouring of assistance, for many it's impossible, it may be issues with mental health, age or infirmity, but people are still left feeling marginalised from society, increasing those feelings of isolation, inadequacy.

It is to be remembered, that whilst to the credit of society many volunteered to man food banks, the fact that there is any need for food banks “normally,” needs to be seriously considered. Currently, the increased need is due to many being plunged into financial uncertainty. Those who were already struggling now have new demands on available money; children no longer receive school meals; there is the loss of hope that next week they will find a job.

Whilst society has to some degree become more aware, there is still a hidden need, a need that is not visible. No-one wants to be viewed as “being in need”; they feel shame that help is needed.

Eyes have been opened, people are seeing those around them as real people, people in need, but who previously were unnoticed.

The threat of a virus affecting anybody and everybody, regardless of age, ethnicity, social standing, has seen many re-evaluate priorities. The realisation that we need to be responsible, not just for ourselves, but all in society, has awakened a sense of community, appreciation of family and friends. We telephone those to whom we send the annual Christmas card, friends almost forgotten in the hurly burly of everyday life, suddenly we have a need to make contact, reaffirm friendships. Daily emails to family and friends, news shared, problems solved through collective knowledge.

We are valuing the time to sit and talk to family, play with children, read bedtime stories to grandchildren via Zoom; pleasures we overlooked whilst busying ourselves with the “important” issues of our previous lives.

Please give a thought to those living alone, perhaps without the technology to contact others. Each day brings increased solitude and challenges not being faced by others.

The garden has taken on a new importance, with time spent in the fresh air, watching the growth of spring plants, listening to birds' song, we must consider why we didn't stop and observe the miracle of spring before.

Again, remember those in our town not fortunate enough to benefit from a garden or outdoor space; an hour a day to leave the confines of your home, whilst beneficial, also emphasises the restrictions imposed upon you, both personal and from the government.

We are being forced to slow down, appreciate what is important. Is it really important that this year we earn more than last year? We have learnt that human contact is vital, to know that family and friends are safe is what makes us happy.

As Christians, the closure of churches, the cessation of services is difficult, but new ways of

participating in worship have arisen. The embracing of technology means we “see” each other on iPads, computers, keeping the contact that is so important to us all.

We hear that pollution levels have lowered, presumably due to fewer commutes to work, holidays cancelled. Can we learn from this alone? Our planet is suffering from the neglect we exercised in our abuse of the environment. Surely we have lessons to learn about how we use cars, aeroplanes etc. Maybe this period, when the world as a whole has stopped travel, will teach us that we can reduce our carbon footprint, that pollution levels can be reduced, that we can give our environment a chance to recover.

The big question is, “when all this comes to an end, will life return to normal?”

I hope and believe, that communities have learnt new values, to appreciate that everybody contributes, whether old or young. We are showing care for the less fortunate in our society, the homeless, the unemployed, those with a health conditions that normally marginalise them, suddenly we have an appreciation, a respect for all.

I hope and pray that we have “grown” not just personally but as a society and a country.

Let this virus teach us to care for each other, appreciate each person for who they are, learn to enjoy what we have without wanting yet more.

Junior Church

Sue Pemberton on behalf of the Junior Church leadership team.

Junior Church at St Helen’s continues to meet using our private Facebook group, basing our activities on the Gospel reading. On 26th April we explored the Road to Emmaus and Catherine suggested the children might like to disguise themselves as strangers and then gradually reveal their true selves. A video of two extremely shady characters appeared on our Facebook site – what a relief to discover they were Eliza and Jemima! We also had another Brown family musical production – He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands. The children were invited via their parents to suggest people/things for inclusion in the song. Julia summed the whole thing up by saying ‘Everyone’ but this got expanded to include parents, grandparents, NHS and key workers and Junior Church.

Last Sunday was Good Shepherd Sunday. In order to practice listening and obedience, families did an activity where one person directed a blindfolded partner to draw a simple object – some interesting pictures resulted! The children also decorated ‘sheepfold’ biscuits with green icing, an enclosure and sheep. We really love the jelly baby Jesus as a gatekeeper!



A family working on St Nicolas Junior Church activities.
(included with permission.)

An Unprecedented Challenging Time

The Revd. Sok Han Yong

What a privilege to write and share how we continue doing church in the present situation. Around the world, the Mandarin language is being used more and more. This means there is a growing need to do Christian ministry in the Mandarin language.

Mandarin Ministry Year has seen significant growth and marked our renewed ministry in an imaginative way with purpose driven in all areas of its ministry.



Over this Church year, in services from Advent to Christmas, including Carols by Candlelight, congregants left as the service finished, as transport was suspended earlier.

In response to COVID-19, in accordance with Anglican Provincial requests: from mid-January no children or youth ministry; no greeting of peace; and no communion. Otherwise we took measures to minimize personal contact. Face masks and hand sanitizer were made available. Sunday Bulletins were placed in seat pockets and offertory bags were not passed around but boxes made available.

Public services have been suspended since 16 February. *Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday services were conducted on-line via Zoom.*

The political unrest, together with the spread of COVID-19, is like a double suffering – an unprecedented challenging time that everyone in Hong Kong has had to face in a number of areas:

Spiritually: no physical public worship, from a weekly Eucharist to none over these last three months. Even children are asking when can Sunday School resume?

Socially: Gatherings restricted to ‘four-people’, and social distancing. Across the City, visitations are banned, patients, the elderly and families are suffering. Children miss seeing their grandparents.

Economically: the uncertain economic circumstances and economic downturn are affecting many and have made the past financial year very hard for individuals and families.

Fear, uncertainty and worries overwhelm hearts and we feel swallowed up by the ‘shadow of death’. Since 1st March we have introduced on-line Zoom groups to connect with congregants. To name a few: Discipleship Course, Prayer Training, Women’s Prayer Meeting, Growth Groups Training, Family Book-Share, Children’s Sunday School, Ministry Meeting. Gathering restrictions made it hard to do audio-recording, particularly Easter Choir recording. We are seeking opportunities to provide pastoral care and teaching through our Connect Stories, on-line Zoom and intercessions.

The love of God surpasses all boundaries. Through on-line services and courses we continue to support one another. Let us fix our eyes on the hope and peace that Christ assured us: “My peace I give to you.” The wonder of God’s salvation - the delight that the Father has in his Son is given to us. These blessings are ours through faith. Our prayer is that God will turn the fear of the virus into hunger and desire in seeking to know Jesus Christ and the meaning of life. Your ongoing prayer support for the mission work among the Mandarin people in Hong Kong is greatly appreciated and we pray that you will be blessed as you seek to support the Gospel work of the church and beyond. We are confident He will provide as we seek to proclaim the great news of the gospel.

The Revd Sok Han Yong was associate priest in the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames before taking a post as minister to the Mandarin congregation at St Andrew’s Anglican Church in Hong Kong in 2014.

Coronavirus in Sierra Leone – Update

Peter Penfold

Sierra Leone had its first confirmed case of COVID 19 on 31st March. Now a month on the number of cases has risen to 140 and the number of deaths to 8. These figures appear insignificant compared to what we are experiencing here in the UK or elsewhere in Europe. Nobody yet knows why Africa generally so far has not experienced the worst of the corona virus, but what is certain is that if it does take hold it will spread like wildfire.

During the ebola crisis in 2014-16 Sierra Leone had 10,000 cases and 4,000 deaths in a population of just under 7 million. It took two years to bring it under control and attempts are still being made to develop a vaccine against the deadly virus. Last time significant assistance came from outside, especially the UK, in terms of financial aid and manpower. Dozens of doctors and nurses flew out from the UK to help. This is most unlikely this time given our overstretched resources. Sierra Leone will effectively be left to its own resources to deal with the corona pandemic, and those resources are meagre. For example, there are only two ventilators in the whole of the country and only one facility capable of testing for COVID 19.

The country was quick to close its borders and it is presently in its second 72 hour lockdown. The key at this stage is public awareness and sensitisation. As before it will be persons with disabilities (PwDs) who are most at risk. With half a million PwDs Sierra Leone has one of the highest ratios of PwDs per capita in the world. Getting the message out is a mammoth task.

This is where the Dorothy Springer Trust, the charity which St Helen's has been supporting these past few years, is presently active. Through the efforts of the DST's chief executive, Dr Abs Dumbuya, himself a PwD, DST is in the forefront of all the efforts to sensitise and assist the government's efforts to raise awareness. A COVID 19 song, composed and sung by one of DST's young blind boys, and an educational video have been produced which are now being played on all TV and radio stations. Hand sanitisers, buckets and bars of soap have been purchased and are being distributed to the 30 disabled persons' organisations in the country, along with 1,000 face masks which have been made by the residents of the Cheshire Home in Freetown.

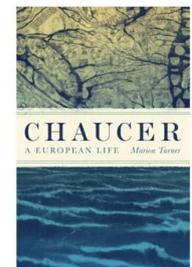
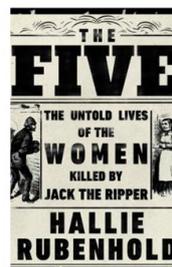
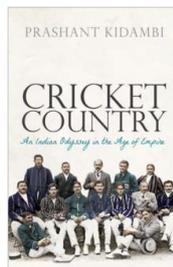
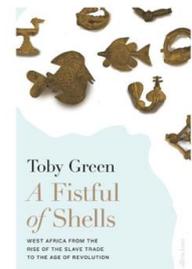
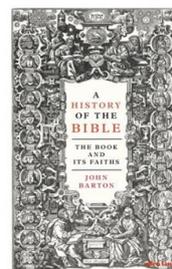
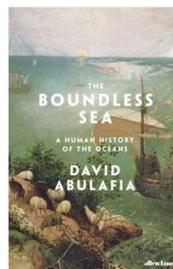
All this has been done thanks to the recent donations from members of St. Helen's and the Easthampstead Baptist church in Bracknell, DST's main benefactor. More needs to be done but Abs has asked me to pass on the sincere thanks of himself and the PwDs of Sierra Leone to all those who have been supporting DST's efforts. Thank you.

For more information visit www.dorothy-springer-trust.org.uk

Hot off the press!

John Barton's book 'A History of the Bible' has been shortlisted for the Wolfson prize.

Awarded by the Wolfson Foundation annually for over forty years, the Wolfson History Prize is the UK's most prestigious history prize. It recognises and celebrates books which combine excellence in research with readability. Read more [here](#):



Education!

Eluned Hallas

There are 10 schools in the Parish of Abingdon on Thames, and a further 8 in what might be called Abingdon Town. Then there are the schools in the villages just outside Abingdon which act as ‘feeder schools’ for the Abingdon secondary schools.

The Parish’s schools include state and independent provision, two church schools (one Anglican, one RC), two secondary schools and two that provide 4-18 provision for pupils with special needs.

Among our congregations (and the congregations of the rest of the Church in Abingdon) are teachers, governors, support staff and volunteers who help with reading, singing, gardening etc – and of course parents and pupils.

The following articles offer different perspectives on schooling in Abingdon in the current situation.

A school, like a church, is not just a building. It’s a community.

A community of staff (teachers, teaching assistants, office staff, specialists, cooks and cleaners) pupils and their wider families – coming together to support children and their learning.

So what happens when schools are forced to shut?

Well, much like a church, school is open even when it is closed.

Teachers and support staff put together Learn Packs and supporting materials for home learning. They take to the internet to teach online. They continue to mark work, give help and advice, support and encourage.

Buildings stay open to provide a safe and structured environment for vulnerable learners and children of key workers. Staff, themselves often carers, take it in turns to come into school to teach multi-age classes, including during school holidays. Or revise lesson plans, plan new material and take to Zoom to teach in new and different ways.

The individual needs of all learners are carefully considered, and age / skill appropriate resources are offered.

Breakfast clubs for vulnerable families continue to operate, school meals are provided to children in school, and Government Vouchers distributed to all eligible families.

The duty of care continues – school pastoral teams work hard to stay in contact with vulnerable families, working closely with social services for families with especial concerns.

During the day there will always be someone to talk to or to give advice via an email.

Planning for the future continues.

When will schools be open again? Full or part time?

How can we ensure our pupils are prepared for the next stage in their education life – entering into Foundation (aged 4); moving class; moving school; leaving for work or university?

Will children return enthusiastic and ready to go, or worried, confused, unused to social interaction?

Can we help our school families in these difficult times?

What can we be doing now, to help our young people in the future?

Please pray for our schools, our young people and their families, teachers and all who work in education, and governors and other volunteers who give their time to support the future.

Education, Education

Mike Collins, a member of St Michael’s Church and its Treasurer

I am what is known as a Local Authority Governor at Carswell School which is situated at the junction of Conduit Road and Bostock Road in Abingdon. The school has 252 children on roll of which 52 children have been either classified as having special educational needs or have an education, care and health plan in place.

Since lockdown the school has been open for vulnerable children and children of key workers. The strategy the school has developed includes 5 daily teams of teachers, teaching assistants and a member of the senior leadership team. Children and staff have their temperatures taken and use hand sanitiser on entry to the school and throughout the day. Parents stand outside the school gate and

socially distance using school guidelines. Children and staff watch social distancing videos on the school website and are reminded regularly of expectations around social distancing. The teachers plan physical health, craft and other activities as well as using learning portal lessons.

Looking at how children not attending school are catered for, the learning portal on the school website is used by teachers to upload a personal message and activities for English and Maths along with material on physical health, personal challenges and audio files for children to access over the course of the week. Where families don't have access to the required technology paper learning packs are offered that can be picked up from the school office by parents or dropped off at the home by staff. Teachers e-mail each child/parent and encourage them to respond and each child will receive a phone call from their teacher once a fortnight. All special needs children receive an extra phone call a week from the Special Educational Needs team or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Realising the pressure on parents there is a support page on the school website with ideas for activities during the lockdown, dealing with stress, community support links, advice helplines and social care/safeguarding contact numbers.

A number of food boxes are delivered or picked up each Monday containing food for vulnerable children made up by the school meals contracting team and the school is used as a hub to make food boxes for other schools.

This is a snapshot of how the school has reacted to lockdown since March 23 with the priority being on the education, welfare and health of its children and their families. The school has lost much needed funds from their before and after school clubs, that usually run from 8am to 6pm, due to the lockdown. This is on top of, like other schools in the area, the tight funding arrangements imposed by government. Bearing this in mind the school is to be congratulated for the efforts made for its children over the lockdown.

Education, Education, Education: Trinity Learning

Nicola Williams

Trinity Learning began in October 2009, when **Trinity Church, Abingdon**, appointed an Education & Development Officer to explore ways in which the church could use its time, talents and space to enhance the quality of life for all those working in local schools – both students and staff. In 2019 Trinity Learning was established as a Charity, independent from, although still with close links with, Trinity Church.



Since its start, Trinity Learning has worked with over 22 local schools. Projects include “Putting Yourself First” - inset sessions for staff teams; Supported Work Experience for students who might not otherwise have the opportunity to participate; encouraging student confidence through small group work; emotional literacy support; Experience Easter.

Qualified staff are supported in their work by over 80 volunteers, who come from almost every church in the town – including congregation members.

Trinity Learning staff are currently furloughed in order to best preserve our grant funding to enable us to support schools at the time we think they will need it the most - on their return to classroom study. We are still monitoring email, phone messages and social media so please do get in touch if you would like to know more about our work, have some great ideas for us or would just like to say hello! Email: nic.trinitylearning@gmail.com Website: <https://trinitylearningabingdon.wordpress.com/>

Here is an example of a recent project:

Patience – Trinity Learning DiY assembly project at St Nicolas School

Back before the lockdown began, in March, which now feels a very long time ago, Taz (Tazmin Round) and I went to St Nicolas School to help support a team of six 8-9 year old (Year 4) children deliver an assembly to the whole school. The children had been trained through a series of Trinity Learning workshops.

The DiY Assembly workshops began with presentations from us on two Bible stories, from which the children chose the Parable of the Mustard Seed, to fit with the assembly theme of patience. Working over 6 sessions the children first learned the story so they could tell it independently:

Then Jesus asked: "How can we describe the kingdom of God? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed. The smallest seed in the world. One day someone plants it. After a while it grew and grew until it becomes the largest plant in the garden and all the birds of the air came to shelter in it."

Luke 13:18-19 also Mark 4:30-32 & Matthew 13:31-32

They thought about which part of the story referred to patience and chose the phrase 'after a while'. Thinking about this, and growing seeds, led to watching film clips of seeds growing (much faster than in real life!) from which the children developed a dance of plants slowly emerging from their seeds. The following week saw the team investigating examples of patience in their own lives by becoming roving reporters, interviewing each other for their patience examples. We talked about active patience, for example when you have to work hard to learn something difficult and passive patience when you just have to wait for something to happen. Interestingly most of the children's examples seemed to apply a definition of patience as waiting for something whilst not being annoying to those around you! A valuable insight at the moment!

Finally the group both applied and illustrated patience by creating short stop-frame movies of a drawing of a seed growing into a tree. Working in 2 teams, each team had to draw and photograph around 45 images to create around 20 seconds of film.

The final assembly was a credit to the team's hard work throughout the project and hopefully left everyone with some useful thoughts and reflections on patience.

I include an excerpt of the group's closing prayer:

Thank you for being patient.
 Help us to be patient more often.
 Sorry for when we have not been patient in the past.
 Thank you for letting us have patience in our lives.
 We will always love you in our hearts.
Amen

Blessing For The Mitzvah Of Putting On A Mask

Baruch ata, Adonai Eloheinu, בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 Melech ha-olam, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
 v'tzivanu al shmirat hanefesh. וְצִוָּנוּ עַל שְׁמִירַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ

Blessed are You, Eternal our God,
 Sovereign of the world,
 who has sanctified us with commandments,
 and commanded us to protect life.

Suggested by Charles Miller who was sent it by Susan Halstead who said it was composed by Rabbi Michael Knopf and posted by Kath Tillinghast....

Windows inside and out ..



Pictures contributed by:
The Hoskings
Gill Titcombe
Marian Ward
The Rutherfords
David Duce
Margaret Horton
Susan Scott
The Masheders
Jennifer Morris

God's Grandeur

Gerard Manley Hopkins

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Taken from the Silent Reflections material on the St Michael's Church website [here](#):

Perspectives on the Parables

Further thoughts on the series of reflections by Keith Ward.

Helen Owen, a member of St Michael's Church

Many thanks to Keith Ward for providing us with his series of reflections on "Perspectives on the Parables". In them we are given a refreshing view widening our horizons on Christ's teaching of the parables. There is a strong focus on the nature of God and the Divine Qualities, connecting these with the spiritual unfoldment of the human personality, thereby creating a kingdom of God on earth. A people serving God and humanity, accepting one another, regardless of backgrounds, and encouraging the unfoldment of a universal loving kinship and so fulfilling the Divine Purpose.

"The Perspective on the Parables" outlines throughout that being in attunement with the Spirit, and being aligned to God's Will, not our will, offers possibilities of true transformation in the human heart. This transformation expresses itself in the manifestation of the Divine attributes and a new way of being. Such transformation reveals a reflection of God's Kingdom on earth.

The reflections challenge and inspire us to ways of applying our spiritual ideals to the challenges and opportunities of everyday life.

Keith Ward succeeds in bringing together the Divine and the human, the spiritual and the practical, creating a unity which is complete and has a ring of truth about it.

I have enjoyed reading these perspectives immensely, and on reflection have gained further insight into the parables in a more dynamic, expansive and liberating way.

A link to Keith Ward's "Perspectives on the Parables" can be found [here](#):

The Circle Dance in Lockdown

Sue Pemberton

You may well wonder how circle dancing could be done alone, but the group which meets on Thursdays at St Michael's have proved this is possible. We normally meet for an hour on Thursday mornings and on the first Thursday of each month there is an additional hour of 'Dancing into Stillness' to Taize music. Circle dancing is for people of all faiths and none but has a strong spiritual element and many of the dancers are Christians based in Abingdon or further afield. At St Michael's we have the gift of using the labyrinth for our circle. We always have a centrepiece of material with candles and flowers or a plant. At the end of the session we come together in the centre of the circle and think of people and situations we can send our energy and light out to as we extinguish the candles.

When lockdown came we agreed that those who wished to would light a candle on a Thursday morning, try some dancing at home, think of each other and send the light out. Our teachers Mary and Elizabeth have been brilliant at sending out simple instructions for dances, links to YouTube videos of dances and music, and modifying dances to make them easier at home. Members also suggest dances they have found and we are grateful to other circle dance teachers who have produced teaching videos on YouTube for all to use. Dancers are dancing in living rooms, conservatories, garages and gardens. The picture shows Andrew's labyrinth drawn on his garage floor. We can't all manage circles - for some of us it has become more of a line dance!

In more conventional circle dancing, taking part in a shared experience is more important than getting everything exactly right. In this new situation, we do what we can and improvise where necessary but the important thing is that the group is keeping together and has found a new closeness both through dance and our email list where we share poems, pictures and thoughts as well as dance experiences.



Rogation Sunday Near and Far

Charles Mashedor

As you may know, much of my ministry has been in rural parishes and yet even here in the beautiful town of Abingdon, we are surrounded by the countryside. Easily within walking distance, we can find ourselves with fields all around us and we quite often see a tractor, making its way through the town.

In most rural churches, what is now the 6th Sunday of Easter (this year May 17th) is treated as Rogation Sunday with its various traditions. Beating the bounds, when children were shown forcefully the boundaries of the parish are probably very rare or not even extant. However, going out in to the fields to bless them is far more common.

When we were in Essex, after a short service in church we went out and thanked God for the trees, reminding us of our heritage and how our predecessors had cleared the land so that crops could be sown. Then we visited a lake or reservoir and thanked God for the essential gift of water. A walk through the fields and being informed what crops they were (at that stage, it is hard to recognise the difference between wheat and barley) would be followed by a blessing not only of the crops we could see nearby and in the distance, but throughout the world. Finally we returned to the farmyard, where we would thank God for animals, especially dogs and other farm animals; not often livestock as Essex is largely arable farms. We would look at tractors, combine-harvesters and other machinery, before thanking God, and praying, for farmers and their families.

We moved in 2007 to the Ray Valley Benefice, between Bicester and Headington, where various observances of Rogation continued. In Woodeaton (population about 80) come rain or shine we (about 20 people) would undertake the walk along an ancient track where there were places to observe wildlife and farm animals and thank God for the very old trees and finally view and bless the crops.

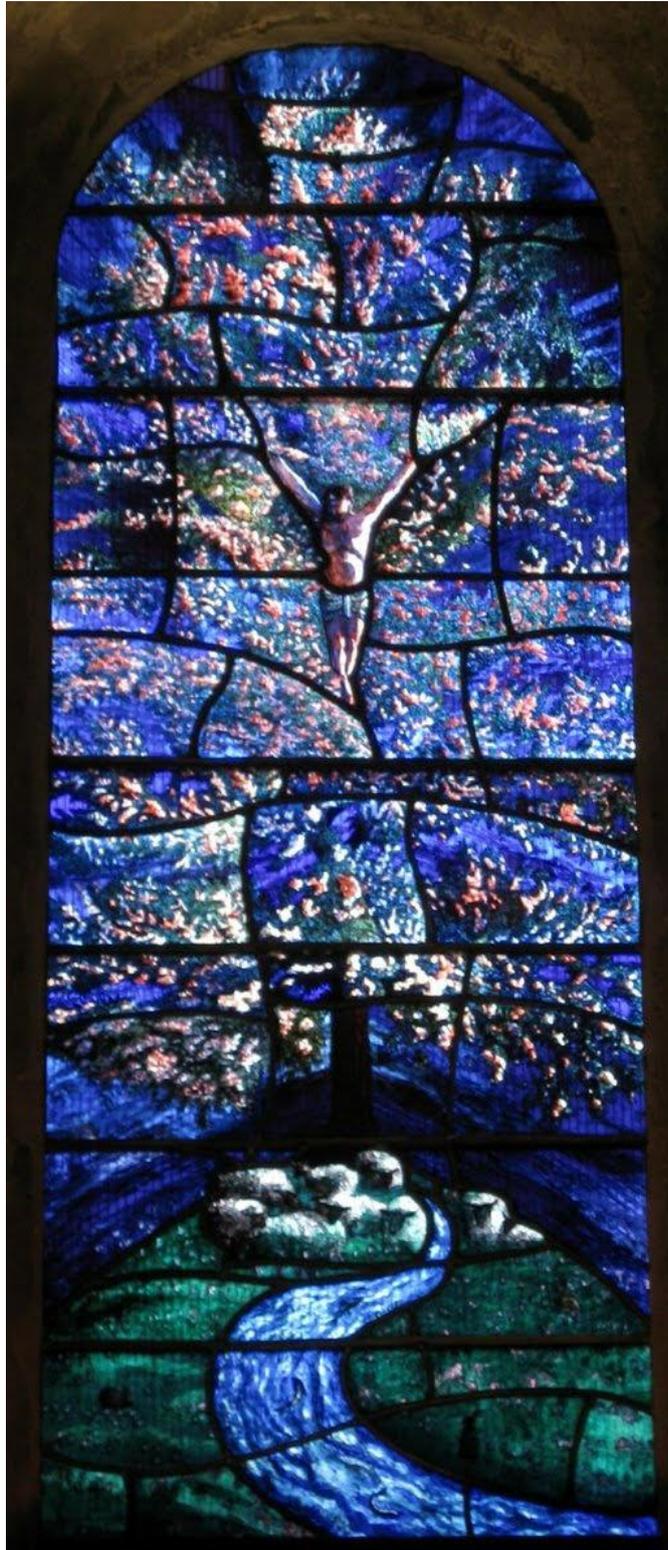
When we moved to Dorset, we found four observances of the farming calendar: Plough Sunday (early January); Rogation Sunday; Lammas (early August) representing the first harvest, and eventually the Harvest Thanksgiving more widely observed. All these occasions remind us of two vital truths; our dependence on God and the need to value those who work the land and provide much of our basic food.

It always struck me how helpful it was that Rogation Sunday occurred near Christian Aid Week. Once we welcomed one of their speakers and usually donated the collection. We are so blessed, even in these challenging times of the lock-down, to have such a rich variety of food to enjoy. In this coming week, it would be so good, if we do nothing else, to ponder our fortune and then to respond in love and deep concern for those who struggle in other countries just to have enough food to survive. It is those countries which will probably be the worst hit of all by the corona-virus. Thank God too for our own farmers!



Art in Absentia

Rob Rutherford



I hadn't heard of Roger Wagner until February.

Rosalind and I were attracted by a session on poetry with Roger Wagner and Malcolm Guite at the Faith and Literature Festival at Bloxham School. It is a literary festival with a theological slant. This was Roger Wagner the poet. At the book signing afterwards I discovered that Roger Wagner had co-written a book called 'The Penultimate Curiosity' about religion and science. It was written jointly with Andrew Briggs, holder of the Chair in Nanomaterials at the University of Oxford (do you hold a Chair?!). A Physicist and a Poet? This sounds interesting.

In an interval we went to see an exhibition of paintings in the chapel: Roger Wagner the artist.

Then, in Holy Week, I discovered some videos on the Canterbury Cathedral website, one of which was a set of three meditations by Roger Wagner inspired by works of art. It is still available [here](#): The third of his meditations featured a stained glass window that I later discovered was designed by Roger himself. To my surprise it is in Iffley church. Here is an image of it and I look forward to seeing the original as soon as it becomes possible.

It is based Revelation Chapter 22. It shows Jesus surrounded by the tree of life with spring blossom and leaves for 'the healing of the nations'. Flowing from Him is life in all its abundance. What a wonderful image!

Can you see some examples?

If there is a work of art that has moved you or which has illuminated the world in some way for you, why not write about it?

Codeword

This is probably best done if you print out this page.

If you've not done one before, every letter of the alphabet appears in the crossword at least once and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid. 3 letters are given to you for starters.

It will help to cross off the letters as you guess their codes.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
		Q										
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
		G									N	

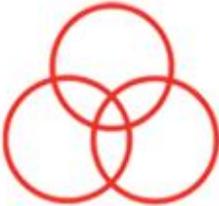
24		19		5		19		12		26		20		20		
23	17	5	19	2	14	5		15	4	2	26	26	5	19		
12		15		19		8		5			G	12		5		
20	26	5	15	15		5	N	24		23	17	5	19	2		
14		2				7				23				6		
15	10	19		15	2	14		14	10		N		17	10	5	
		7		23								19		19		
5	22	9	2	12	15	14	5	24		5	11	10	26	15		
15				26		9				11		1				
7	19	23	15	15		5	2		G	26	5		5	19	2	
2		20				19						N			26	
17	23	14		15	14	5	4	15		14	9	19	5	18		
10		2		14		23		5		21		2		2		
N	23	10	15	5		21	19	5		Q	12	5		N	7	13
G		N		4				4		26		6				15

Answers on page 22

Name that School!

Eluned Hallas

Can you identify the schools from their badges?

Useful Weblinks:

To take part in the Diocesan services led by the Bishops and to find live streams from other churches:
<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/coronavirus-covid-19/livestream/>

Parish Resources: for worship and for reading
http://www.abingdon-st-helens.org.uk/Parish/P_resources.html

The Abingdon Blog with its thought for the day:
<https://www.abingdonblog.co.uk/>

Page for Church of England links: services, daily readings after Easter etc
<https://www.churchofengland.org/>

FOOD BANK. The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support even though churches are closed. **Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm.** Our immediate need is tinned meat & vegetables (not tomatoes), long-life milk, fruit squash or juice, jam and sugar. You can also make donations by sending a cheque made out to *North Abingdon PCC Christ Church*, clearly marked 'for Food Bank', you can also donate via CCA website at <https://cca.churchsuite.co.uk/donate/fund/njbejebi/foodbank> or the Parish office have details if you want to donate via online banking.

Thank you for reading.

Finally, this is a reminder of some of the skills you'll need when we meet again...

The picture was a close up of an Allium flower!

SKILLS

GAINED OVER A LIFETIME OF CHURCHGOING

