



The John Piper window in Nettlebed Church: to mark the Creation Season

A candle in....

THE

WINDOW

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

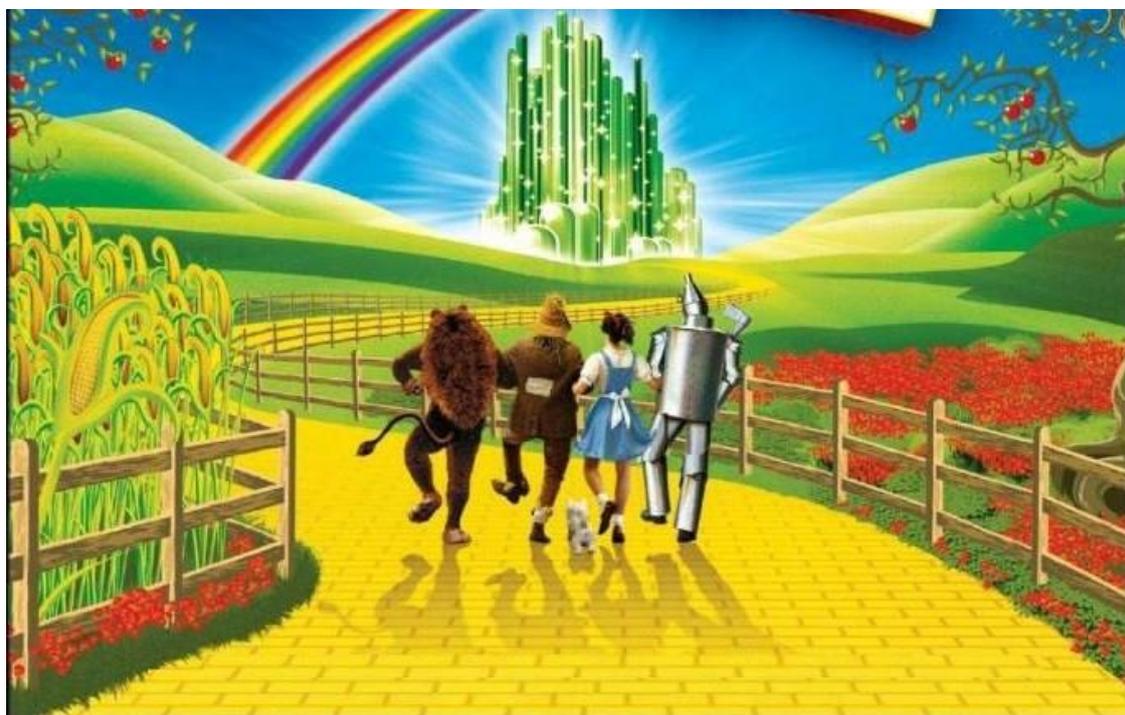
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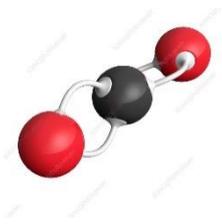
Journeys!

*We are pilgrims on a journey;
We are family on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the miles and bear the load.*

Richard Gillard

The Journey to Net Zero

Rob Rutherford



Carbon Dioxide is an innocent looking molecule but in large quantities it can cause global warming and put human communities at risk. This article is to introduce the task ahead to prevent global catastrophe. As mentioned by Roderick in Issue 6, the last act of the Teresa May government was to amend the Climate Change Act, putting on the statute book the determination of the government to reach the target of Net-Zero Carbon Dioxide by 2050.

The original target from 2008 had been to reduce our Carbon Dioxide output to 80% of the value in 1990 but it was realised that everyone thought they were a special case and were included in the remaining 20%. It is to the credit of the government that it took this issue seriously and pushed the amendment through.

In February 2020, the General Synod of the Church of England debated a commitment to be carbon neutral by 2045. This was amended by the Synod and the date by which the church has committed itself – you and me – to be net zero emitters of carbon dioxide is now 2030. At last the church is ahead of the game! Following the debate, the Bishop of Salisbury, Nick Holtam, the Church of England's lead bishop on Environmental Affairs said:

“Synod has set an ambitious target for the whole Church of England to respond to the urgency of the Climate Crisis. To reach Synod’s target of 2030 will not be easy and requires each of us to hear this as an urgent call to action.”

The passing of the amendment and the whole motion has sent ripples through the Diocese of Oxford which was preparing plans to be carbon neutral by 2035. This is still their stated target, qualified by the statement ‘earlier if possible’ and it states [here](#) that the Diocese will be scoping out the possibility of meeting the earlier target set by General Synod of 2030. You can also read the complete motion put before the Diocesan Synod on 14th March.

What does ‘net-zero’ mean? It is recognised that some release of carbon dioxide is inevitable (for example in the making of concrete) but there should be compensating methods for removing carbon dioxide. If churches don’t reduce emissions to zero, they may have to offset their remaining emissions. The details of this - feasibility and costs - are as yet unclear.

It is now down to each and every church to consider the implications of these motions and to work out how we can respond to the call. It is going to be a challenge. A lot of churches, like ours, are heated by gas and this burning of gas inevitably produces carbon dioxide. We use electricity and despite progress, each unit of electricity still results in the release of carbon dioxide.

Although we know our destination, it isn’t clear how we will get there. What will change? What actions will we need to take? How much will it cost? All of these questions are important but I guess that this is our task - to be disciples and to witness to the Gospel in the present age. We will be helped by structural changes – electric cars are getting better all the time; methods of generating electricity renewably are becoming more cost effective and the hope is that by 2030 electricity will be net-zero. However, we can’t wait for it to happen – we have to take actions ourselves and encourage parliament to take actions too. So as well as being disciples we need to enable those with power to do what is best. The churches are just beginning to get to grips with this. Our starting point is to measure our carbon footprint so that we can judge our progress.

It sounds like a challenging but worthwhile journey.

There are accounts of all sorts of journeys in this issue. We hope you enjoy them!

Landscape with the Fall of Icarus.

This essay is based on a reflection for a Service at Home entitled ‘A service of reflection as we journey towards re-opening our churches’, by Deacon Selina Nisbett of the Wantage & Abingdon Methodist Circuit, and is reproduced, with a few changes, with permission. The accompanying reading was Mark 4 35 – 41. Diaconal Ministers are mission focused; they belong to a pioneering religious Community which is committed to enabling outreach, evangelism and service in God's world.



Take a close look at the painting, some initial questions as you look at it:

- What do you notice first?
- What is it that attracts your attention?
- What story do you see?
- What connections does it have for you?
- Perhaps it has some truths for our time- if so can you name them?

The painting is titled “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus.” It is from the Dutch/ Flemish Renaissance period and was thought to be by Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

It is a pastoral scene, where the sea meets the countryside. There is a farmer ploughing his land overlooking the bay, a shepherd a little lower down with his sheep. At the calm water's edge there is a fisherman laying his line, and a fine ship with its sails at full mast, sailing towards the sun on the horizon. In the distance there is a town that is nestled around a harbour.

The painting purports to be about Icarus, whom you may not even have spotted! If you haven't, he is between the fisherman and the ship (well at least his legs are!) He is a character from Greek mythology who wore a pair of wings made from feather and wax and was told not to fly close to the sun, but to follow his father's path. Icarus was overtaken by his sense of freedom, and impetuously flew too near to the sun. His wings melted and he drowned in the water. Near his legs you might be able to spot some of the feathers too.

Once you see the almost hidden tragedy in the painting, it is no longer a quiet peaceful pastoral scene but becomes a scene that speaks of patterns of human behaviour. The ship and its occupants may have seen the tragedy unfolding, nevertheless it sails on towards the horizon. The farmer is indifferent, caught up in his ploughing, the fisherman does not even look up. The shepherd may have cast a glance towards his sheep lower down, and seen the tragedy unfolding but goes back to tending his sheep; the fate of Icarus seemingly has little or no impact on the people in the painting.

This painting seemed to me to speak into our times powerfully, most especially as we consider how we go forwards, and as we wrestle with the processes of reopening our churches. As part of this discernment, it is important too, to acknowledge people's experiences and responses to the lockdown.

During this period, not all will have faced Covid tragedies at first hand. Like the figures in the painting, many will have been "onlookers" and acknowledged the collective tragedy that has unfolded in our nation and across the world, without suffering personal pain.

For some, this period of lockdown will have offered space and peace; many have mentioned a new awakening to nature as the environment went into a "pastoral "hush." Some have been released from their obligations to interact with the society, which has been a relief, and for them, emerging from lock down may be extremely anxiety inducing.

Then there have been those who have endured excruciating loneliness and others who have experienced a worsening or the start of mental illness because of the enforced isolation. Feelings of despair, anxiety, anger and grief may be more common, and whilst such struggles may have been fought behind closed doors, hidden away, we must resolve to remember to be communities that are mindful of these feelings and experiences as we journey towards meeting together again.

We have discovered new ways of being church, some which have re-engaged with people who have been unable to meet on with us for reasons of health, and of course, there will people who will continue to need to be at home rather than meet together in church.

In the same way that it was vital to see the whole of the painting in detail, in order to understand it's title, it is important to see the opening of our churches on a much wider canvas in order to not leave gaps for people to fall through, unnoticed and unacknowledged, like Icarus.

The distant town in the painting perhaps represents the communities in which we live, and Icarus falling from the sky, could so easily represent the Church, un-noticed by the people "over there" who never hear the "splash of the gospel" because they or we have grown too far apart. Certainly, some of the new technologies have shortened the distance between the church and the community, and we would do well to consider how we keep up that momentum and ever shorten that gap.

The "storm" that this pandemic has created, has swept many people up into their communities, where they have engaged in wonderful new ways, getting to know the names of neighbours they have lived near for years. Others have formed "co-operatives" for shopping, making PPE, delivering prescriptions and so

much more. This has all been kingdom work, and what better time to go on to the next step of sharing the gospel message of hope in these new intentional communities that have grown up around crisis?

Where that has not happened (yet!) we might look upon the fisherman, as the lone representative of the church community, laying a solitary line for new disciples, when it is, in reality, a collective task to put out the nets far and wide.

Yes, we may fear this task- the seas are choppy at times, but in any sort of crisis, people do reach out to God, praying for strength and for peace. Like the disciples in the boat, they may be puzzled who this Jesus is. Nevertheless, they reach outwards, “shaking God awake” in prayer to come to their aid. We may even see some of them in our churches, so how are we going to provide purposeful pathways for them to develop as disciples?

It is right that the re-opening our churches is a gradual process, not only for the health and safety of those concerned, but so that we may reflect upon the bigger “canvas” that is God’s, and address some of the issues that arise.

I invite you to turn back to the painting and to “place” yourself into it and to rest awhile, to listen to the Spirit and just be with God.

Junior Church

Sue Pemberton on behalf of the Junior Church leadership team.

Junior Church has continued to operate via Facebook over the summer. We have been following the Gospel readings. Jemima and Eliza had fun recreating Jesus walking on water on their patio! We also had an experimental Zoom session based on the parable about the Pearl of Great Price. The children did a scavenger hunt in their homes to find things to tell the story with, and we also enjoyed some singing. It was lovely to see everyone and we may meet via Zoom occasionally, but generally people prefer Facebook material to do when they wish.



It has been good to hear that several families are having UK holidays and others are enjoying days out. Northumberland seems popular, but going by the photos it looks as if there is still plenty of room to socially distance! Certainly the beaches look far emptier than Bournemouth.

As Church services have restarted we have been looking at the implications for Junior Church. It is very complicated as the rules for church are completely different from the rules for meeting in the church centre. Not all the leaders would be able to return at the moment and parents feel that the return to school will be a very big thing and they would like to see how that works out before involving children in other groups. We shall therefore carry on with our Facebook activities for the time being, whilst continuing to attempt to make sense of the regulations and work out how we may start when we are ready.

Please remember families in your prayers as they make the big adjustment to returning to school after such a long absence.

A Journey in Uganda

Peter Penfold

On the back of the Ugandan 100 shilling note there used to be a picture of Lake Bunyoni, situated in the south-west of the country near to the town of Kabale and close to the Rwandan border. The whole area is full of beautiful lakes and mountains and is frequently described as ‘the Switzerland of Africa’. I used to love visiting the area when I was serving as the Deputy British High Commissioner in the mid 1980s. The local people, the Bachiga, were exceptionally friendly and hard-working.

Like most Ugandans, the Bachiga had no colonial hang-ups. Many Ugandans would tell you that as a British Protectorate, unlike a British colony, they were not colonised by the British but protected by them. Many of the residents of Kabale were very keen to maintain their links with Britain so I set in motion the plans to twin Kabale with the town of Tiverton in Devon, one of the first occasions that a British town had been twinned with a town in Africa.

On one of my subsequent trips to Kabale I took with me a young lady paediatrician, Dr Heather Lambert, and her partner Dr Peter Farr. Heather was working at the time in Mulago Hospital in the capital Kampala but she was originally from Tiverton. We thought it would be fun to try and find the exact spot from where the artist had painted the picture of Lake Bunyoni on the back of the Ugandan bank note.

We set off in my land rover from Kabale and drove for some time along very rough tracks until we came to the lake. We skirted the lake and eventually found the exact spot depicted by the configuration of the lake and a large flame tree. It was very remote with no signs of life anywhere. There we were taking photographs

of ourselves holding the hundred shilling bank note when seemingly out of nowhere a man came running up to us. His name was Eric Tumwesigye. ‘Can you help me’, he said, ‘my wife is having a baby’.

We followed him through the bush and there in a small clearing was a hut, and there in the hut was a lady obviously in an advanced state of pregnancy. We helped her into the back of the land rover and we all started to drive back to Kabale where there was a small health clinic.

It was a very bumpy ride. The mother’s water broke as we reached the outskirts of the town. It was a very fraught time as only the mother seemed to know where the clinic was. Between screams of labour pains she shouted instructions to me as I drove frantically around Kabale. Heather was in the back taking care of the mother and by the time we reached the clinic the birth had started. It was a breach birth. As we carried the mother into the tiny clinic, one leg had already appeared from the mother’s womb.

Eric Tumwesigye, Peter Farr and I paced anxiously up and down outside the clinic like three expectant fathers until after what appeared to be ages we heard the beautiful sound of a baby crying. What we did not know at the time was that the baby had been born not breathing and the mother had gone into a relapse. There was only one young health attendant at the clinic and the complications were beyond her experience. But Heather revived them, mother and baby. She saved both their lives.

The parents named the baby girl Heather, and for her second name, because she had started to be born in my land rover with the Union Jack flying, ‘Nbjingo’, which in the Bachiga dialect means ‘belongs to the British’. When the Ugandan press later picked up the story, one of the journalists speculated whether she would have been entitled to a British passport if she had been born in the land rover!

I stayed in touch with Heather and her parents over the years. On a visit to Uganda in 2003 I drove down to Kabale and round to the Bishop Kivengere Girls’ High School where Heather was studying with her sister Rebecca. Now 17 years old and looking very beautiful, she said she wanted to become a doctor like her namesake. She subsequently graduated from college and went on to become a fashion designer.

I have often thought back on that eventful journey in Uganda. There were too many coincidences that day. The coincidence that we chose that day to visit Lake Bunyoni, that we just happened to be in such a remote spot, that we just happened to have a trained paediatrician with us. The unseen hand of God was clearly at work that day and beautiful Heather is a personification of that.



Journeying through Nature – TrinityLearning’s Wildlife Safari Walks

Nicola Williams, Education and Development Officer, TrinityLearning

The importance of fresh air and exercise to both physical and mental health is well known. Our new Trinity Learning Wildlife Safari Walks give children and parents the opportunity to go on micro-journeys to investigate nature in their local areas. For many families with limited outdoor space, the parks provide their only access to greenery, peaceful spaces and nature. We wanted to provide a guide to encourage children to look more deeply at their surroundings as the kind of focussed looking required for spotting insects or specific plants can also be helpful in reducing stress.

To create our first Wildlife Safari Walk, Taz Round, TrinityLearning’s Workshop Leader, went to explore the wide variety of trees, leaves, flowers, insects and wild-life in Albert Park in Abingdon. Taking photos as she went round and plotting these onto a map with additional information about each photo, we were able to create a Wildlife Safari Walk for the park which families can follow.

Taz explains, “We hope that families will be able to walk, talk and have fun spotting the different aspects of nature in their local area whilst being out in the fresh air”.

Although our Wildlife Safari walks are designed for children they are suitable for all ages. The sheets can be printed or viewed from a smart phone or tablet, which also allows you to click the links to other insect guides and bird song examples. Why not have a go and see what you think? You can take a look at our Albert Park Wildlife Safari Walk [here](#).

Creating future Wildlife Safari Walks is an activity that we hope Trinity Learning volunteers can get involved in by taking photographs in order as they walk round other local areas, suggesting good areas for us to walk or sending us lists of birds or other wildlife spotted in local areas.

If you have suggestions or ideas for other local Wildlife Safari Walks, we would love to hear from you via trinitylearning@gmail.com



From Tony's memoirs, October 1966

Tony Richmond

At the age of 22 I left my job in South Africa to travel overseas for the first time, having saved just enough to study for a term at the Università per Stranieri in Perugia, Italy. On the next hill was Assisi, and after reading the Fioretti, the "Little Flowers of St Francis", I made up my mind to go there. to do a bit of praying and try to get into the spirit of St Francis.

My idea was to sleep alone under the welkin of stars on Monte Subasio above the town. I wanted to walk alone on the mountain as Francis did, and like him to quench my hunger by drinking from the spring as much fresh Umbrian water as I could hold. I hoped to capture for myself something of the humility and simplicity of the saint.

A friend left me at 2 pm in pouring rain at the walls of the Rocca Maggiore, carrying only three small bread rolls in a brown paper bag, and determined to eat nothing for 24 hours. Of course, I got lost in the mist. By 3 o'clock I was soaked to the skin. I stumbled on upwards, slipping on wet rocks and crawling through thickets, until finally I reached the top, bruised and scratched and very soggy. I knelt down to pray at the rough wooden cross, and suddenly, miraculously, the mist cleared. I gasped at the breathtaking harmony of plains and vineyards, olive groves and villages, glistening in the late afternoon sun. Bastia, Spello, Bettona perched like hens on the hillside, much as they would have done almost 800 years ago when Francesco Bernardone was born. The pink stone of Assisi snuggled into the mountain below me, and in the distance the towers of Perugia glinted golden in the limpid light.

But my ecstasy was not particularly religious. I wondered where I was going to spend the night. As I descended, vaguely hoping to find a cave, a deserted shepherd's hut or some such romantic shelter, a thunderstorm came galloping over the Apennines and in a moment I was again shrouded in blackness and drenched by a new downpour. For an hour I huddled and shivered, and then I thought "the hell with it", headed for town and the nearest hotel.

The receptionist at Hotel Umbria was suspicious and called the manager. Who was this bedraggled foreigner wearing a bush hat, carrying no luggage, and asking for a bed? Eventually they took my last two travellers' cheques as payment in advance, and I sulkily went up to my room, grateful nonetheless not to be out in the storm that seemed to rage all night.

In the morning my clothes were still wet. Guiltily I ate one of my three rolls. St Francis would consider me a washout.

I spent the morning tracing his steps from convent to basilica, from hermitage to chapel, praying at each place. By lunchtime I was down the hill at S. Damiano which Francis restored with his own hands and where he established a convent St Clare and her followers.

The sun was hot now. My head was swimming and I was feeling famished. I still had two little rolls in my pocket. They were hard now but more precious just then than all the treasures of the Vatican. I was tempted . . . but determined to hold out until 2 pm. I had already broken my 24-hour fast once.

As I slowly retraced my steps back up the hill towards Assisi, suddenly an old beggar woman in black rags loomed out of the heat. She held out a gnarly hand as I passed. "Give money," she whined in Italian. I had no money on me. All I had in my pockets were the two, hard bread rolls.

I thought of the story in the Fioretti in which Francis had stopped to give something to a beggar at the side of the road, and when he turned to look back the beggar was gone. He realised that the beggar was actually Christ.

The devil chose that moment to remind me that I was seriously hungry, but I told him to get out of the way. I gritted my teeth, gave the old beggar woman the paper bag, turned and strode away feeling virtuous, my head bowed.

Next moment a shrieking oath rent the air and a bread roll whistled past my ear. The old woman was standing in the road screaming at me. The second roll crashed like a rock against my forehead, followed by stones and a tirade of un-Franciscan screeching.

I turned and fled. . . .

Anyway, at 2.30 pm, my friends Karel and Maria drove up to meet me at the Rocca Maggiore as planned. Maria had bought a bunch of bananas and gave me one. It was utter heaven. I could almost hear God chuckle as I apologised for my posturing and humbly thanked him that despite my effete spirituality he was still kind enough to send me friends who had money for luxuries like bananas.



My friend Abe Berry, cartoonist in Johannesburg, drew this picture when I told him my story.

The Journey

Mary Oliver, suggested by Sue Sheppy

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice--
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do--
determined to save
the only life you could save



The Journey by Morri Sims

Pilgrim Paths

The Revd Dr Sally Welch, Spirituality Adviser for the Diocese of Oxford, Vicar of Charlbury with Shorthampton, Area Dean of Chipping Norton and former Curate at St Nicolas'

I stand at the door of the church, alternately looking along the path to the lychgate and glancing at my watch. Not every erstwhile pilgrim arrives on time, so I usually allow ten minutes after the 'we are definitely leaving at x o'clock' deadline. Two more people turn into the churchyard, one carrying a large backpack, the other a small shoulder bag, together exemplifying the range of pack which individuals deem suitable for a day's walk. I smile to myself – one of them will have everything possible, including a magnificent packed lunch; the other will have to make do with the generosity of fellow pilgrims if they want to eat. However, one pilgrim will become very tired on the uphill, maybe even needing their bag carried, while the other will merrily stride along in the vanguard of the group, keeping up a lively conversation as they go. I conclude that finally all are gathered, and turn to go into the church, offering a silent prayer for the safety of the pilgrims and acceptance of all that the day will bring, before leading the group in songs and prayers for the beginning of the journey. By the time we return to this holy place, some eight or ten miles later, the intervening hours will have been filled with laughter and conversation, prayer and encounter, confession and counsel, energetic exercise and moments of stillness. The group will have learned about themselves, each other and the God whose creative genius has surrounded us every step of the way; painting pictures of such breath-taking glory that we cannot help but stop and marvel before pressing on, in single file or small groups, scattered in a long line or gathered in bunches, sharing a journey which is both physical and spiritual, a journey which is at best transformational and at the very least, recreational.

For the last three years, throughout the summer, a series of one day pilgrimages have been offered by different churches in the Chipping Norton Deanery, with one four-day expedition each year covering different areas of the Deanery. Led by experienced leaders, many of them qualified Day Walk Leaders, the routes are circular, and include at least one other church in addition to that of departure/arrival. Booklets give details of the route followed as well as suggestions for reflection and prayer along the way. The atmosphere is invitational and welcoming; pilgrims arrive as strangers to each other but often leave having connected in a truly profound way with those who have shared the joys and the challenges of the expedition. The Deanery is fortunate in that our churches are placed in truly glorious landscape – rolling hills and green meadows; springs and rivers; stone-built settlements and ancient woodland. This provides an opportunity for spending time immersed in nature, itself a healing activity, but there is more to pilgrimage than simply a good walk in the country. The pilgrim is offered the gift of time and space – freed from the pressures of everyday life, required to do no more than place one foot in front of the other, while the physical self is occupied, the spiritual self can reflect, pray, encounter, heal.

From these small beginnings, the Pilgrim Path Project has spread beyond its Deanery boundary as rural church leaders have seen in the simplicity of the project and the connection between ancient building and surrounding landscape, a way of encouraging those on the fringes and beyond to encounter God in a gentle, open way. Armed with nothing more than a good knowledge of the local walking routes, a circular pilgrim path from church to church can be designed. Reflections can be written from new, or 'borrowed' from existing walk leaflets – whole booklets have been designed which can be used on any route. Even those who cannot make a physical journey can be involved, offering hospitality at the beginning and end of the journey, leading services of 'sending out' and 'welcoming home'. Small rural church communities so often feel as if they have nothing to offer – aging congregations worry that their diminishing energy and the basic nature of their church facilities will be seen as drains upon the resources of the Central Church; their timidity concerning Mission and their fragile financial positions can make them feel scorned by bigger, wealthier urban churches.

The Pilgrim Path Project offers an opportunity to the small, holy places that figure so largely in the British landscape, which is denied to the large city churches. This opportunity is profoundly missional, based as it is on the assumption that a holy place within a God-created landscape cannot but provoke questioning and reflection, thanksgiving and joy. There are no expectations placed upon the pilgrim – just a hope that they will be willing to share in the story of the journey, whatever form that takes – talking to strangers; noticing surroundings; honouring silences. In return, there is the promise of encounter, of insight, of revelation, however that makes itself apparent.

The Christian Pilgrimage Network, a wider development, held its first meeting in October 2019, and was attended by over 20 representatives from six Dioceses in the south and south west of England. Peter Doll, Canon Librarian of Norwich Cathedral and former Team Vicar at St Michael's and St Nicolas', spoke about the East Anglian Pilgrimage Network, and the meeting determined that a similar sharing of resources and ideas would best support those engaged with Christian pilgrimage. On 14 September 2020, Christ Church will host the first Festival of Christian Pilgrimage. It will be a virtual event, but has a fantastic line-up of speakers, including Stephen Cottrell and Graham Usher. Further details from <https://pilgrimage.hymnsam.co.uk/> A brand new website for the Centre For Christian Pilgrimage will be launched on that day, as well as a free VoiceMap audio pilgrimage, taking pilgrims from Godstow Abbey to Christ Church, offering reflections on Psalm 23. Pilgrims in the Oxford Diocese will be able to learn about and experience the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage in many ways – and enjoy the walk as well!

Edited from an article first published in Country Way, the journal of the Arthur Rank Centre, a resource centre for Christians in rural areas <https://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/>.

On-line Pilgrimage

Rosalind Rutherford

Pilgrimages and retreats are times when we leave behind what we know, stripping back anything that isn't essential to leave space for God. I have come to see the last months as an enforced retreat, a pilgrimage which offered me unexpected gifts. As we locked down, I was confused, both welcoming and resenting the restrictions.

Then came the first gift: Morning and Evening Prayer led by ordinands at Cuddesdon. They were unable to meet and so used Facebook for community prayer. Live streamed Morning Prayer was new to me, but I was particularly moved by the intercessions from the whole praying community, now up to 500. I realised I was not alone and experienced powerfully the reality of prayer uniting us.

The next gift: the first Diocesan service, as we gathered in our homes knowing that hundreds, possibly thousands, were also gathering to worship and pray led by our bishop. Holy Week came. I missed the familiar rituals, but rediscovered a reality to Holy Week. Once again, I was on line: Maundy Thursday with the diocese, Good Friday in Liverpool, following the stations of the cross created before lockdown by parishioners. Easter Eve offered an all-night vigil and paschal candle lit outside Canterbury Cathedral at dawn.

More gifts: recently, Rob and I joined one of our daughters in their All-Age Zoom service. It was not as polished as a pre-recorded service but this was a community gathered in time even if not in space, and I realised how much I had missed this, and how important it is for me. I have rediscovered silence, walking or gardening alone. Every morning I join a group on Facebook, studying the bible, and praying for each other and the world, which has grown since March into a very real and supportive community. The Holy Spirit has widened my understanding of what it means to be a worshipping community that welcomes all, wherever we are. I still long to worship in beautiful places, but I also want to continue to discover the riches of worshipping beyond the walls of our buildings.

Edwardian Cycling Adventures

Silvia Joinson

Further delving into the Cross family archive (see issue 4 “No sect in Heaven”) produced accounts of some amazing journeys by bike and raised many questions. What were the road surfaces like and how much traffic was there in the first decade of the twentieth century?

In September 1904 my grandfather had been visiting his family at home in Bristol. He wrote to his girlfriend (they married a year later) saying “I’m going to leave from here tomorrow morning say about 6am to ride to London”. He expected to arrive about 7pm and would call about 8.30pm to go for a stroll. The distance was about 120 miles. He was aged 24 and not a great athlete; in fact a decade later he was the only one of the 5 brothers to fail his medical for military service. (He had asthma)

Two accounts of Bank Holiday tours by his younger brother survive. He went with a friend with the name of Toogood! They often rode on after dark and had to “light their lamps”. They were non-conformists and didn’t travel far on Sundays so they could attend chapel. They used pubs for refreshment and sometimes slept there but drank milk or lemonade – nothing intoxicating!

In 1906 they set off on the August holiday (then at the start of the month) and began by putting their bikes on the train to go through the Severn Tunnel. On the other side they then cycled to Chepstow and up the Wye valley stopping at Tintern for “a good and filling tea”. It was already 6.30pm by the time they moved on to Monmouth and then Ross. Here they stopped for ice and lemon and to light their lamps though the moon helped as they continued on to Ledbury. Here was another pause before “jaded, tired and worn” they reached Malvern. Here the hotel was full so it was down the hill to Malvern Wells where a kindly hostess gave up her own room for the weary travellers; by this time it was nearly 11pm!



A carbide bicycle lamp

The next day being Sunday they only went as far as Worcester and fixed up accommodation and attended chapel hearing a dreary sermon. The day was spent wandering round the city and by the river taking a ferry to the other side and attending chapel again in the evening. On Monday they set off for Brum which they didn’t fancy so moved SW to Stratford where they booked into the Old Red Lion and enjoyed time by the river.

On Tuesday after an ample breakfast it was a long ride home. Evesham they thought “one of the prettiest places in Worcestershire” but could not stay long but continuing on through Cheltenham and on to Gloucester where they ate. Tea was at Berkeley with bread and butter and watery jam but currant cake made up for that. They had a final pause in Thornbury before the last stretch home. (total distance of this tour –about 170 miles) He wrote this as poem in 42 verses.

On Good Friday 1908 they set out for Devon heading SW towards Bridgewater which they found inhospitable so continued to Taunton. Here they paused for a drink and bought oranges which they ate by the roadside later; then on to Wellington and Cullompton, “a clean pretty old village.” In one place they saw a welcome fountain but unfortunately a sign attached read “This water is not fit to drink”. In Exeter they found accommodation at The Valiant Soldier and spent some time in the Cathedral before hearing part of The Crucifixion in St Mary Major from the porch as the church was full. On Saturday they visited a cycle shop for a puncture repair but later heard “a peculiar weird whistle” – another puncture which was soon repaired. They travelled on “through pretty Devon scenery” with glimpses of the river Exe via Starcross, Dawlish, and Teignmouth to Torquay. Accommodation was secured after a couple of enquiries sharing with someone called Joe who had very piercing eyes. On the Sunday they went to chapel and visited Paignton.



An Edwardian
trick cyclist – not
one of Silvia’s
relatives.

Monday was a long ride across the county to Ilfracombe on the north coast. Besides hills there were navigational problem; unhelpful sign posts, locals with thick Devon accents and with only knowledge of their immediate area. As a result they visited Chudleigh twice! They had some splendid views of Dartmoor, had to shelter from a brief snowstorm though the sun shone much of the time, and finally they made the road to Barnstable. One farmer who gave them directions wore an old torn bowler and by his gestures could have been a retired actor! The Portsmouth Arms provided tea but there was no butter on the bread. After Barnstable they had a wash in a clear spring and lit their lamps. They could see lights on Lundy island in the channel. They had a good supper and the next day caught Campbell’s steamer calling at Lynmouth, Penarth and Clevedon arriving home about 9.00pm “Having spent a grand few days, full of freedom and open air, fine scenery and amusing incidents.” (total distance about 120 miles)

Book Review: A Window on Christianity

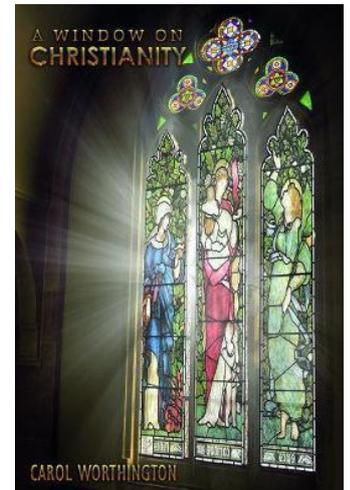
Eluned Hallas

In this slim volume, Carol Worthington, a member of the Parish who usually worships at St Helen’s, gives a quick guide to Christianity and the Church. Starting with the Apostles’ Creed, subsequent chapters include a biblical timeline from Adam to Revelation, a summary of the main elements of Christian worship and the liturgical year, the composition of the Bible, a summary of the three main Abrahamic religions, and some understanding of modern Christian symbolism and practice.

It would not be possible for any one book to give a complete picture of the rich and multi-faceted tapestry which makes up the Church of England, let alone Christianity. But this is not Carol’s intention, as she says ‘this book has been written simply with a view to present a basic background of what Christians believe ...’ as an aid to mutual understanding. As a reference book it would perhaps benefit from an index, and as an introduction some recommended further reading might lead the enquirer further.

Carol concludes with an extract from the foreword to the 2016 Report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education, ‘It is my hope that religious literacy will enable communities and individuals to understand each other better, to communicate with one another on a more informed basis and promote community cohesion within a more inclusive and holistic society.’ To which a Christian can surely only answer Amen, and give thanks for anything, such as this book, which assists in this work.

‘A Window on Christianity’, will be available in the church office from September 1st: Jenny is willing to take money and details of purchasers. It costs £11.99.



A Questioning Journey:

Anon

What do you do when you realise you no longer believe in the God you have believed in since early childhood, but do not wish to leave your church and lose all the friends and support systems which have sustained you for so many years? Do you stay and pretend you still believe in the creed you recite Sunday by Sunday, reading the lesson, leading the intercessions and administering communion? Or do you “come clean” (to whom?) and negotiate a way you can still be a member of the community with honesty and integrity on both sides?

Does a change in what one believes invalidate the many faithful years of service you have given to a community, or is it a natural development of ones thinking, reading and observing and journey of faith? If there is a God - what one believes will make no difference to this fact, but what if God is not actually who or what you have believed and is just a name given to myriad ways of making sense of one’s life. Is this an opportunity to “put away childish things” and come to a new way of understanding of what life is all about and could or even should, the church and more importantly one’s own church community help in this? Or do you leave and abandon friends and a way of being which has sustained and nurtured you for years?

Answers on a postcard please.

A postcard from Keith:

Jesus was not very keen on religion ('the Pharisees'), and his parables seem to suggest that what matters is how you show love and faithfulness in human relations (the Good Samaritan). I think that is the heart of Christian faith. Loving your neighbour is the important thing, and if we love one another 'God lives in us' (1 John 4, 12), whether we know it or not.

So forming communities of love is what church should be about, and that might best be done in small groups within the official institution. I believe 'God' is a word for absolute truth, beauty, and goodness, and to say 'God exists' is to say that such things are the heart of reality, which we might come to know by pursuing them in practice. Most of what the Bible says about God is metaphor; the heart of it is that love will not be defeated. Churches should be much more open and questioning.

I cannot tell you how your hypothetical person in the essay should decide, but I can say that if we are going to love, we need all the help we can get, and we need to bet that love will not be in vain, but might ultimately prevail. To believe in God is to make that bet - 'I trust that truth, beauty, and goodness, will prevail'. Theories about God? Leave that to people who like writing about incomprehensible and abstract things.

That's all I can get in my postcard. Your piece should speak to many. I myself would like to see more questioning and loving people in the church; but we are what we are!

A postcard from Rosalind

“Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God’s love.” * Our life of faith is a journey, and on that journey we will change, and how we experience God will change too. Acts and the epistles are full of people like Peter, Paul, Lydia and Phoebe who found much of what they thought they knew about God being turned upside down. Jesus’ teaching showed them that rules and expectations of religion, and who was in and who was out, had little to do with receiving the gift of God’s overflowing love for us all.

But how do we respond when what we thought we knew is suddenly unknown? There is no single answer. What is sure is that all our service over the years, all the care and support and friendship given to others in the name of Jesus is of lasting value because it is given in love, and God is love. We may move on. More often, we are called to be faithful and remain, but also seek out people who recognise that doubts can be a sign of deep faith and that love and grace are at the heart of what God is offering us, who value each other, and who share doubts, joys and new discoveries.



*From the Pastoral Introduction to the Common Worship Baptism service

The history of my many journeys

Adrienne Compton-James

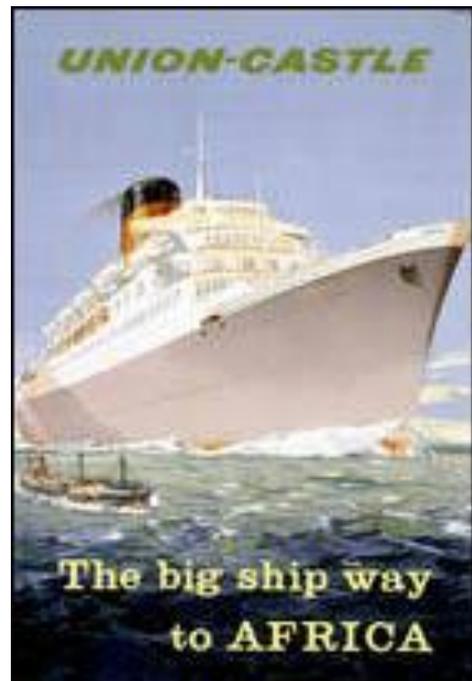
I suppose my life has always been a series of journeys. My father was a policeman in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, and every so often he and all of us were moved from camp to camp as he passed exams and was promoted. I attended, in various forms, nine different schools in eleven years - not easy to make friends.

I married in 1963 and life settled down for a bit, with two girls first and then one I adopted. Things were good for a while. However with the political situation in the now Zimbabwe deteriorating fairly fast and with a rather ugly divorce to deal with, I was on the move again, this time to South Africa, to the Southern coastal city of Durban, with my girls and my mother.

We more or less settled there. The girls completed their education, but there was still a fair amount of journeying, albeit within the city itself, living in seven different apartments in the seventeen years I was there. Despite all the previous years of journeying, I knew that I would not live there forever and that there would be further journeys to come.

Once the girls had left home to follow their own paths and my mother had gone to be with my father and the Lord, I had another decision to make. I had not lived in the UK since I was 13, when I had travelled on a Union Castle boat from Rhodesia to live with my grandmother in Sevenoaks in Kent. But I felt homesick and unsettled here on my own so after eighteen months, back I went on yet another Union Castle boat to Rhodesia. Yet another journey.

I had no family here in the UK other than a recently married elder daughter, but I took the plunge and moved myself lock, stock and not much else, apart from my beloved cat Goodey and my precious British passport which gave me due right of abode in the UK, to Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire because I had my ex husband's sister living in Wootton, who had promised me a home while I found my feet. Goodey was in quarantine at a wonderful cattery near Newbury, for six months, but when the time came for me to bring him home, my sister-in-law asked me to leave as she didn't like cats and was not having one in the house. So I was on the move again to a very small, very cold semi in Abingdon. After two and a half years there, I was wonderfully offered the Almshouse in which I still live, nineteen years later. So with the help of my new found Abingdon church friends, I made yet another move, not very far this time but hopefully for the last time, until I am no more.



Why Travel?

Margaret Horton

“So which war zone are you planning to visit next?” asked a friend of mine quite a few years ago. A little unfair I thought as in the case of most of the countries I’ve visited, the wars have broken out after, not before I’ve been there. “You mean you pay to do this?” was another comment I received once on reading out the trip notes which explained that “on day 6 we return to the hotel for a welcome shower”. So why travel, and why sometimes make that travel off the beaten track?

I think I was born with an urge to travel. I have memories of drooling over black and white photos of “mountains” and “moors” when I was a child, - so exotic when you are growing up in Kent. However, I was 14 or 15 before I made it out of the UK on a French exchange. My first big trip abroad was youth hostelling round Belgium and the Netherlands, staying in a converted Medieval convent in Bruges (full of mosquitoes), watching the diamond dealers in Antwerp with their briefcases chained to their wrists, moving from dark churches filled with decoration and candles in Belgium to the empty, stripped bare churches of Protestant Holland, being offered drugs at the youth hostel in Amsterdam (!), checking out every art gallery I found. What could beat this for excitement and adventure?



Breakfast on Majuli island, Assam

It was another 10 years before I ventured outside Europe, having done as many of the countries behind the iron curtain as I could manage in the mean time. This was a trip to see a friend in Australia, going out via Bangkok and back via NZ, California and New York - it had to be a ‘round the world’ experience!

So why do it? Curiosity, the excitement of seeing places you’ve only ever seen in photos (“Wow! That really is the Sydney Opera House”), a wish to understand the world and its millions of peoples, cultures, religions a bit more. It may be a cliché, but travel really does broaden the mind. I returned from a trip to St. Petersburg in 1983 to tell my school pupils that communism just couldn’t last in the USSR, it was so inefficient. They laughed at me - until 1991!



Children in Madagascar

It also helps you to appreciate what you have. So many times I’ve come home delighted to be able to turn a tap and hot water comes out; even better you can drink that water. No need to take malaria tablets any longer or risk your life as you cross a road. But I’ve also learned that human beings are the same the world over, with the same needs, loves, and concerns, and the same eagerness and willingness to welcome strangers.



A shop in Benin

Ride and Stride 2020

Jeanette Thomas

Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust's annual sponsored Ride and Stride is able to take place this year and is happening on Saturday 12th September. So many sponsored events have been cancelled this year but because Ride and Stride is mainly an outside event it can take place. However, it will be different this year! All the churches have been asked if they are able to take part, whether they will be open, be manned and have toilet facilities available. Many churches have decided not to open but they can be visited and counted as a church visited but sadly refreshments cannot be offered. Additionally, there may be restrictions on toilet facilities. Participants will have to sign their own sponsor forms so need to take their own pen. If you have a previous engagement on Saturday 12th September, you can take part on a different day.

If you do not want to cycle or walk round churches, we will need volunteers to keep the church open. You can also be sponsored for welcoming visitors to the church and in fact this year it has been said that OHCT will accept sponsor money for any reasonable activity for example mending altar linen and polishing the collection plate, just tell your sponsors what you are going to do! Actually OHCT will always accept money for any activity ... Last year we were on holiday and spent a whole week visiting churches in Derbyshire and Yorkshire. There are no restrictions on staying within Oxfordshire or even the UK.

Despite the current restrictions it is brilliant that the event can take place. Further details can be found on the OHCT website at <https://ohct.org.uk/ride-and-stride/>. At the time of writing it is known that Louise Heffernan and Nicola Ng will be taking part for St Michaels, Philippa Randles for St Nicolas and some members of our family will be taking part for St Helens. If you would like to sponsor us please visit our Virgin Money Giving page at <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fundraiser-display/showROFundraiserPage?userUrl=JeanetteThomasOHCT2020&pageUrl=2>

If you want to sponsor Louise, Nicola or Philippa, contact them through church or via this magazine.



Bikes outside St. Michael's Abingdon

On-line donations

Roger Cox, PCC

Back in 2019 St Helen's took the plunge and entered the world of contactless donations! For many people this was as familiar as using a bus card or paying 'contactless' for parking. For others it was novelty... 'will it steal my money as I walk past?' was one comment I heard!

How times have changed! Half a year into the COVID-19 pandemic there's a lot more interest in transacting contactless payments...and contactless 'everything else' to reduce the risk of infection.

The contactless donation unit at St Helen's has raised almost £1,000 in its first 12 months of use and has even been used by a few people when St Helen's reopened for private prayer.

Now we've added another way of contactless giving: On-line donations. It's as simple as using your debit or credit card at the unit when 'in church'.

If you've got a smart phone just point the camera at the QR Code which you'll see on the unit and which is displayed below:



It will take you automatically to the familiar 'Givealittle' screen displayed on the unit in St Helen's.

It allows you select a pre-set donation (£5, £10 or £20) or choose any other sum to donate using your debit or credit card. That's it! Nothing else to touch. You can also gift-aid your donation and get a receipt sent to you by email.

Of course you don't need to be 'in church' to use this system. Just point the camera of your mobile phone to the QR code aboveplease try it! We've also included a web-link to Givealittle at the bottom of the home page of the St Helen's website. If you're using your laptop or computer a control/click on the  sign will take you there.

Please try it!

St Helen's is not the only church in the Parish to feature on-line giving. St Nic's was the first to introduce a QR code system to facilitate donations to their account when they opened for private prayer and were the first to install a  sign on their website.

Please try this one if you would like to donate on-line to St Nicolas church. Here's their QR code:

We're very fortunate in having three churches in the Parish tackling the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought us. We can learn from each other. It will be some time before social distancing and the other measures which have been implemented will no longer be necessary to control infection, and on-line giving and on-line worship may be the 'norm' for many months to come.



The Slow Train

You may remember this nostalgic song by Michael Flanders and Donald Swann regretting the demise of small stations under the Beeching/Marple plan. Hear it [here](#):

Miller's Dale for Tideswell ...
 Kirby Muxloe ...
 Mow Cop and Scholar Green ...
 No more will I go to Blandford Forum and Morteheo
 On the slow train from Midsomer Norton and Mumby Road
 No churns, no porter, no cat on a seat
 At Chorlton-cum-Hardy or Chester-le-Street
 We won't be meeting again
 On the Slow Train.

I'll travel no more from Littleton Badsey to Openshaw
 At Long Stanton I'll stand well clear of the doors no more
 No whitewashed pebbles, no up and no down
 From Formby Four Crosses to Dunstable Town
 I won't be going again
 On the Slow Train.

On the Main Line and the goods' siding
 The grass grows high
 At Dog Dyke, Tumbly Woodside
 And Trouble House Halt.
 The sleepers sleep at Audlem and Ambergate.

No passenger waits on Chittening platform or Cheslyn Hay
 No one departs, no one arrives
 From Selby to Goole, from St Erth to St Ives
 They've all passed out of our lives
 On the Slow Train, on the Slow Train.

Cockermouth for Buttermere ...
 On the Slow Train, Armley Moor Arram ...
 Pye Hill and Somercotes ...
 On the Slow Train
 Windmill End.



Railway Quiz

Kryptonite

Each clue leads to the name of an Oxfordshire railway station
Asterisked clues are anagrams

1. Horse race beneath a forest
2. Eve's temptation crossing the river
3. Here for the regatta
4. Watcha ex US president
5. * Kiddy or cat paw
6. Sir Wiggins loses his first place
7. * Lingers on at tragedy
8. Sail on the second in the first
9. Nursery rhyme riding place
10. Fashionable outlet - spend your money here
11. Old word for a valley gives this station its name
12. Sea Fever and Poirot authors lived in this village
13. Firstly turn the yacht through wind; secondly steer away from the sound of this shore
14. Her Majesty's heir mostly leads soft fruit audibly
15. My difficulty is lip reading inside.



The cat steals the milk during the Dean of Canterbury's morning prayer

The wonders of English Grammar!

RR, who doesn't really know what an Oxford comma is, would credit this if he could.

- An Oxford comma walks into a bar where it spends the evening watching the television getting drunk and smoking cigars.
- A dangling participle walks into a bar. Enjoying a cocktail and chatting with the bartender, the evening passes pleasantly.
- A bar was walked into by the passive voice.
- An oxymoron walked into a bar, and the silence was deafening.
- Two quotation marks walk into a “bar.”
- A malapropism walks into a bar, looking for all intensive purposes like a wolf in cheap clothing, muttering epitaphs and casting dispersions on his magnificent other, who takes him for granite.
- Hyperbole totally rips into this insane bar and absolutely destroys everything.
- A question mark walks into a bar?
- A non sequitur walks into a bar. In a strong wind, even turkeys can fly.
- Papyrus and Comic Sans walk into a bar. The bartender says, "Get out -- we don't serve your type."
- A mixed metaphor walks into a bar, seeing the handwriting on the wall but hoping to nip it in the bud.
- A comma splice walks into a bar, it has a drink and then leaves.
- Three intransitive verbs walk into a bar. They sit. They converse. They depart.
- A synonym strolls into a tavern.
- At the end of the day, a cliché walks into a bar -- fresh as a daisy, cute as a button, and sharp as a tack.
- A run-on sentence walks into a bar it starts flirting. With a cute little sentence fragment.
- Falling slowly, softly falling, the chiasmus collapses to the bar floor.
- A figure of speech literally walks into a bar and ends up getting figuratively hammered.
- An allusion walks into a bar, despite the fact that alcohol is its Achilles heel.
- The subjunctive would have walked into a bar, had it only known.
- A misplaced modifier walks into a bar owned a man with a glass eye named Ralph.
- The past, present, and future walked into a bar. It was tense.
- A dyslexic walks into a bra.
- A verb walks into a bar, sees a beautiful noun, and suggests they conjugate. The noun declines.
- A simile walks into a bar, as parched as a desert.
- A gerund and an infinitive walk into a bar, drinking to forget.
- A hyphenated word and a non-hyphenated word walk into a bar and the bartender nearly chokes on the irony.

Answers to the Railway Quiz:

1. Ascot-under-Wychwood
2. Appelford
3. Henley-on-Thames
4. Heyford
5. Didcot Parkway
6. Radley
7. Goring and Streatley
8. Shiplake
9. Banbury
10. Bicester Village
11. Combe
12. Cholsey
13. Tackley
14. Charlbury
15. Islip

<p>I still can't believe people's survival instincts told them to grab toilet paper.</p>	<p>I'm going to stay up on New Year's Eve this year. Not to see the New Year in, but to make sure this one leaves.</p>	<p>If I had only known in March it would be my last time in a restaurant, I would have ordered dessert.</p>
<p>At the store there was a Big X by the register for me to stand on... I've seen too many Road Runner cartoons to fall for that one.</p>	<p>Having some states lock down and some states not lock down is like having a peeing section in a swimming pool.</p>	<p>Until further notice, the days of the week are now called, thisday, thatday, otherday, someday, yesterday, today & nextday.</p>
<p>THEY SAID A MASK AND GLOVES WERE ENOUGH TO GO TO THE GROCERY STORE</p> <p>THEY LIED, EVERYBODY ELSE HAD CLOTHES ON</p>	<p>The dumbest thing I've ever purchased was a 2020 planner.</p>	<p>When Does Season TWO of 2020 Start? I Do Not Like Season ONE.</p>
<p>Keep in mind, even during a pandemic, no matter how much chocolate you eat, your earrings will still fit.</p>	<p>The buttons on my jeans have started social distancing from each other.</p>	<p>I never thought the comment "I wouldn't touch him/her with a 6 foot pole" would become a national policy, but here we are</p>

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

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

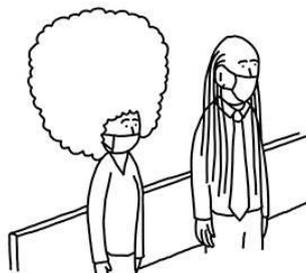
For details of services, see the church websites:
<https://www.abingdon-st-helens.org.uk/>
<https://www.stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk/>
<https://www.stnicolasabingdon.org.uk/>

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.** Their 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.

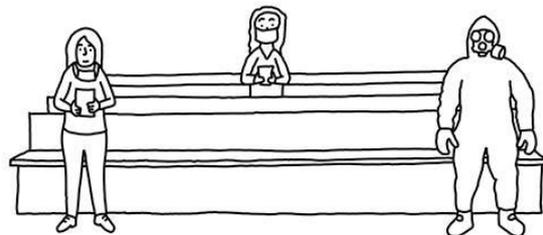
And finally, from Dave Walker..

THE FIRST SERVICE

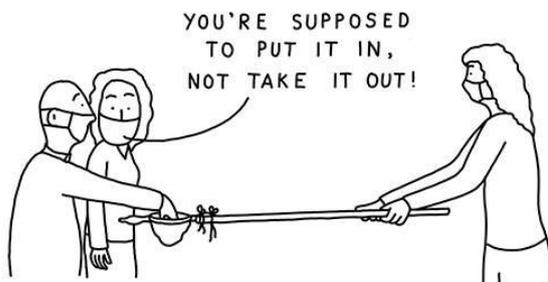
AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS AWAY



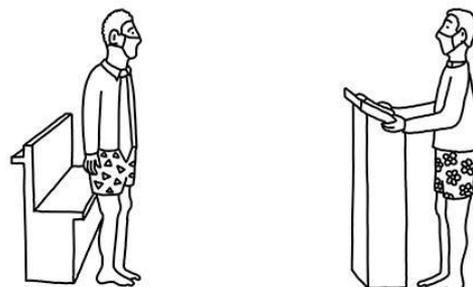
LOCKDOWN HAIRSTYLES



A VARIETY OF LEVELS OF COMMITMENT TO MASK-WEARING



PEOPLE WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN THE WAY WE DO THINGS



THOSE WHOSE ONLY INTERACTIONS HAVE BEEN VIA ZOOM

Thank you to all contributors and to you for reading.
 Please email ideas and contributions to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk