



A candle in...

THE

WINDOW

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

Recreation – or Re-creation?

Charles Masheder

July and August are, for many of us, months when the pace of life slows down and we have time both to rest and to have recreation. That will of course vary from person to person – it could be fascinating to hear the variety of ways we may spend our ‘leisure days’. For some it might be sun-bathing on the beach while others might be involved in demanding sporting activities. Our bodies become tired (do we notice that more as we become older?) and certainly need to be refreshed – so I wish you all a truly relaxing holiday whether away or at home. Some, including us, find recreation in walking – oh yes and talking as we go!

The word recreation got me thinking about re-creation, being renewed, being created again; obviously not a physical creation but a spiritual one. Like Nicodemus (John 3) we might be sceptical about a physical rebirth but need to hear again the words of Jesus that we need to be born again (or born from above, the equally valid translation I gather). Paul writes to his friends in Corinth “If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; the old life is gone, the new life has begun” (2Corinthians 5:17). This is not necessarily a once-off experience but a gradual process. It tells us something too about the age-factor; as we get older we have so much longer and probably more interesting memories and I love a little phrase that Felicity has shared with me from her Counselling diploma studies: “older and growing” the title of a paper by Carl Rogers..... why not take that to heart?

I have recently been much moved by Bishop Desmond Tutu in what he writes about forgiveness. He was at the centre of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, formed after the removal of legal apartheid in South Africa in the early 1990s. Perhaps instead of seeking blame, that could be a way forward for our country. He writes “Each of us can find a way to transform a painful past into a hopeful future. We can develop compassion for others and for ourselves. We can tell a new story of ourselves. The new story admits that yes, I have caused pain and suffering. The new story also recognises that the harm I have caused in the past is not who I am today. Self-forgiveness is truly at the core of peace-making and we cannot build peace with others if we are not at peace with ourselves”.

One of my favourite forms of recreation is cricket – not playing (I was never any good) but following county and national teams. The short forms (T20 and the soon to be launched 100) certainly have an excitement but I have to admit I prefer the longer forms of 4-day or even 5-day Tests. During those longer periods there can be so much more surprise as first one team is in the ascendant and then the other. Following them means excitement and disappointment are all part of the game – as indeed they are of life itself.

Let’s hope we can find re-creation in our recreation and thus renewal and a new dimension and value in life. Have a great holiday season!

This issue was shaped
by:

Rob Rutherford
Eluned Hallas
Louise Heffernan

Ideas for future
content to:
Candle@
abingdonparish.org.uk

Parish Office:
St Helen’s
Court,
Abingdon.
OX14 5BS

Tel:
01235 520144
07395943957
E-mail:
administrator
@sthelens-
abingdon.org.uk

From the Methodists:

Dcn. Selina Nisbett

As I write, I am looking forward to a short break beside the sea. It is something that I really feel the need to be beside at least once a year; maybe because I need to check it is still there; or maybe it has more to do having vivid and happy memories of times spent on beaches, or perhaps it is just because I am in need of a rest and I find being beside lapping water as restful? I suspect the latter! Society today, on the whole, is not very good at resting. There always seems to be a need to press on, to not waste precious time and to pack too much into a single day, but for us as Christians, rest is part of our theology rooted in the Old Testament scripture firstly in Genesis, and later, exemplified in the life of Jesus, as he encourages his disciples to “come away to a quiet place.”

Anne Lewin, whose work I have been reading, meditates on the first day of rest. She writes:

“Thus heavens and earth were finished, and were good. But in the middle of the night, God woke. ‘It might be burdensome,’ he thought, ‘to give dominion over all created things to earthling folk: lest they should take themselves too seriously, I’ll give them music and a sense of fun, to lighten duty and enliven praise.’ So in wise mercy did Creator God, and all the seventh day he rested, well content.”

If you turn to the book of Psalms, some bible translations have the word “*Selah*” at the end of some of the lines, which is thought to be an indication to pause in preparation for the next verse. The Amplified bible interprets it as “pause, and calmly think of that.”

These past two years the Methodist Diaconal Order has been conferring and has now altered the rule of life by which we are called to live, and rest and relaxation and the setting of days apart to be with God, remain firmly within it. In many Monastic traditions, and in some church traditions too, there is a practice of saying the daily Office, a time when the community stops what it is doing, so that they may reorientate themselves towards God in prayer.

Within that rhythm is the practice of “*statio*” which is the commitment to stop one thing and pause, before beginning another, to rest in the moment in order to allow the soul to “catch up with itself,” much as we do when we prepare ourselves for worship. Whilst a frenetic society might regard such times as wasted moments and an inconvenience, Celtic monks saw these pauses as sacred thresholds and moments of possibility. I have been trying to put this into practice, so that I might leave what I have just completed in thankfulness, and to be better prepared and more fully focussed on and committed to, the next “task” whatever that might be.

My prayer for you all, is that whether or not you take a break away from home, that you will be able to find some “*statio*” moments where you can rest in thankfulness and just “be.”

I leave you with another of Anne’s Lewin’s poems, as she reflects on the hymn “Father hear the prayer we offer” .

*Not for ease? Why not?
What’s wrong with ease?
For most of us the
Problem is not self-indulgence,
But that we allow ourselves too little.
Prohibitions, counsels of perfection,
Drive us and load us up with guilt.
Time enough for courageous living
And all that rock-smiting.
Let’s rest and wander in green pastures
When we find them, make the space*

*To let ourselves be loved;
Build up our strength
And grow in confidence;
Drink living water springing in
Great fountains;
Feed on the Bread of Life which
Satisfies.
Then we shall have provision
For the journey, and at last
Arrive, not too unpractised
In the art of resting In his presence.*

By Ann Lewin from “Watching for the Kingfisher”: Poems and Prayers

It all began in a rose bush...and in other places too: The Journey to Priesthood

The Revd Paul Smith

It doesn't seem twenty years on 1 July that I was ordained priest in St Mary's, Aylesbury, by Bishop Mike Hill, then Bishop of Buckingham. It is a day of great thanksgiving for me to have reached this time in my life and ministry. I was blessed to serve my title in Holy Trinity, Prestwood with St Mary Magdalene, Great Hampden in a beautiful part of Buckinghamshire, in the Chilterns. It had been a long journey getting there. But often the longest journeys make for the best destinations.

I had sensed a calling to be a priest over many years. If I traced it back to the very beginning, interestingly, it was in fact my headmaster who, on bidding me farewell when I left school at the aged of sixteen, suggested that I should become a priest! Seventeen years later it actually happened. My initial conversations with the Diocesan Director of Ordinands, (DDO) did not go well. There were two things in play. First, I was just entering my twenties and for a man of that age, I was not untypically immature. I did not have the insight, or the humility, to grasp that this was not the right time for several reasons. Second, the DDO had not encountered anyone with a disability coming forward before, and he therefore found the prospect of my selection, training and potential ordination difficult to imagine.

Some years passed and I had given up on the idea. It was in making new friends in my then secular employment, that the question of priesthood came around again. To my dismay, it wouldn't go away. So, my parish priest sent me back to the DDO and conversations resumed. There was still some difficulty and I found myself feeling disappointed. On one visit to the DDO I realised that I had to help him; getting cross would serve no purpose. I would need to help him imagine – as far as I could – what it was like to be me. That seemed to happen naturally, even miraculously, at the end of that particular evening. As I was preparing to leave the house, the DDO suggested some reading matter and went to collect a book from his library. We agreed that I should walk to the car while he collected the book. I managed to stagger with my usual gait across his deeply gravelled drive. As I got closer to my car, I began to lose balance, and found myself doing a spectacular 'nose-dive' into (what was as far as I was concerned) one of the most beautiful rose bushes in his garden! As the thorns pressed into my forehead, arms, and legs, I awaited his return with the book. On his arrival, he went to my car and found me missing. Soon, he heard my cries for help, and all he saw were my feet sticking out of the beautiful rose bush. My chief concern was the damage I may have done to this part of his stunning garden. He would have none of that concern and called his wife to help him drag me safely to my feet. I felt during those moments that I had surely blown it, once and for all! I was wrong. I went back into their house, was given the typical cup of sweet tea after such a fall and shock, and received the loving concern of an experienced pastor and his wife. Did we need to get any help? Was I really all right, as I was saying? How would I manage to drive home? I did drive home, arriving later than anticipated and having to explain to my parents, (with whom I was still living at the time), exactly what had happened.

The next morning I felt a little bruised, but I went to work as usual and did my stint of just over eight hours. Later that evening the DDO rang my home to enquire how I was. He was both pleased and surprised that I had managed to go to work. When we next met, we didn't labour the event of the spectacular fall into the rose bush, but it got a passing mention. What was significant, however, was that the event produced a very noticeable 'turning point' in our relationship; we began exploring my vocation differently; we took seriously together what it may mean for me and where to go next. I think the DDO saw in me a resilience and ability 'to overcome'. 'Falling around' in many ways was something I had become used to. We agreed that it would be helpful for me to meet with a priest who had experience of disability in his ministry. The priest to whom he sent me had developed Multiple Sclerosis during his parish ministry and had needed to retire early. Rather than stopping completely, he began an exceptional ministry of Spiritual Direction and I was fortunate enough to have him in my life at a point where together we talked about priesthood from the experience of two people who had very particular 'issues' or 'challenges', as I think people tend to put it these days (and even then).

I began to discern that if I was going to make this journey I would have to place myself in the hands of God and be ready for anything. That would be far from easy, and that's indeed how it turned out. Despite my initial enthusiasm, even in residential training where I was seriously disadvantaged, I discerned that I had a different perspective. I began to see more and more the importance of those words of Jesus in John's gospel: "You did not choose me, *I chose you*". (John 15.16). In the way that the rose bush seemed to be a turning point for the DDO (with whom I formed a lasting friendship to this day, based on mutual understanding and respect), those words of Jesus became absolutely pivotal for the journey. They were words I chose for my ordination text which appeared on my Ember Card.

Over these twenty years those words still remain dear to me and have a sustaining effect, day by day. Amidst some of the struggles over the years, I have had to turn to the question of what lay at the *heart of being a priest*. It is on this anniversary, surrounded by great thanksgiving, that I need to address that question as I ask for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on my life and ministry.

In the Ordinal for Priests just before the laying-on-of-hands, the Bishop says these words:

In the name of our Lord we bid you remember the greatness of the trust that is now to be committed to your charge. Remember always with thanksgiving that the treasure now to be entrusted to you is Christ's own flock, bought by the shedding of his blood on the cross. It is to him that you will render account for your stewardship of his people. You cannot bear the weight of this calling in your own strength, but only by the grace and power of God. Pray therefore that your heart may daily be enlarged and your understanding of the Scriptures enlightened. *Pray earnestly for the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

I want to reflect briefly with you on three aspects of the priest's life which seem to me to be central. They are: pastor; person of prayer; presider. They each lie at the heart of what it is to be a priest. And, at times, they are doubled-edged: they are both challenging and rewarding.

Those words of the bishop make it abundantly clear that the people, '*the flock*', are very precious: they are 'the treasure' and 'Christ's own flock'. The pastoral work of the priest is first and foremost. I sometimes wonder whether the pastoral role of the priest has been somewhat sidelined and ask whether it has become buried among the myriad strategies and the administration that now flood the daily task. I don't necessarily want to suggest that I pine for a bygone age. But, I do want to emphasise that one of the beautiful things about being a priest – of which one should never lose sight among the distractions – is indeed 'the flock', the people of God, 'the treasure entrusted to me'. That cannot be underestimated: the needs of the people of God, bought by Christ's own blood. Indeed, my stewardship of them I will have to give account.

Secondly, the work of the priest is to *pray*. In his classic, *The Christian Priest Today*, Michael Ramsey makes this very clear. The priest is called to be diligent in prayer. That requires the obligation of saying the Daily Office, that one might be immersed in the scriptures and the practice of prayer. But also, to join with Christ, the great High Priest, in making intercession. The word 'intercede' literally means to be *with* someone. Ramsey makes the key point that priests '*....are called, near to Jesus and with Jesus and in Jesus, to be with God with the people on our heart*'. [p.14]. That life of intercessory prayer continues to be at the heart of what it is to be a priest.

The other beautiful gift is presiding at the Eucharist. It is both a joy and an awesome task. To be Christ's representative at the altar, in order that the people of God may be fed by Christ's body and blood, is the greatest privilege. One of the things that Ramsey draws attention to in writing about the Eucharist is that part of the priest's role is to remind the people that it is more than '*table-fellowship with one another, for it is their sharing in the worship of heaven with Blessed Mary and the Saints.*'(p.17) It is a glorious truth that our worship is not simply about how we are gathered in one

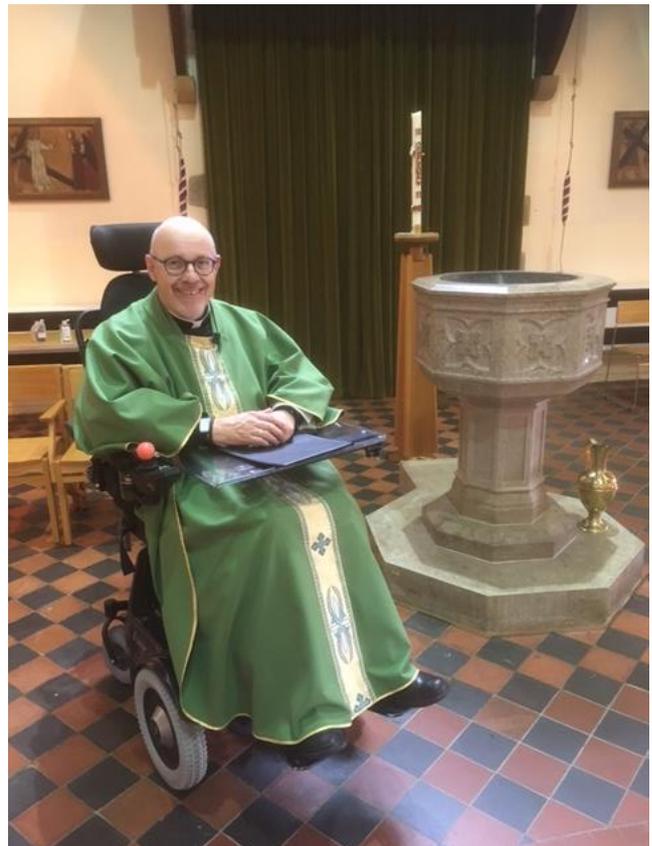
place at one time, but that we are joined with the whole company of heaven. It can be very easy to forget that and to simply turn up and go through the motions. What is happening is something far greater than we can imagine.

I guess that my priestly ministry – among both the roses and the thorns to go back to that bush again – would have been incomplete without a sense of humour. It has been a sustaining gift and grace as I have found myself laughing at the ironies of life, and moreover, myself. I was fascinated, therefore, to note in re-reading Ramsey's book that he says this:

'Use your sense of humour. Laugh about things, laugh at the absurdities of life, laugh about yourself, and about your own absurdity. We are all of us infinitesimally small and ludicrous creatures within God's universe. You have to be serious, but never solemn, because if you are solemn about anything there is the risk of becoming solemn about yourself.' p.81

What reassuring and refreshing words; words which are a gift to me as I celebrate this twentieth anniversary. It is almost as if Ramsey was speaking to me directly!

Just over half of these twenty years have been spent in Abingdon and I will be spending the anniversary thanking God for each of you; for those priests and faithful lay-people (living and departed) who have shaped me and helped me on my journey. And I will be thanking God! I will be thanking God for that rose bush in the front garden of the DDO and the many other places where my vocation unfolded. Above all, I offer my thanks to Jesus, the great High Priest, who said: 'You did not choose me, I chose you' (John 15.16).



Photographs: Rosalind Rutherford. Taken on 1st July to mark the 20th anniversary of Fr Paul's ordination

On Long Mynd

Susan Gee

Beneath the hazy, cloud-studded sky,
contained within folding hills which
stretch to the horizon, then turn
to mist,
the land flows wide, unbroken,
save for paths tracing their ways
through all that grows.



Out of the dark earth
humps of bilberry are newly-sprung, relieving
the bristle-brown clumps of heather
yet to leaf.
Bracken unspools from the ground. to
unfurl and stretch in
everlasting fractals,
emerald-fresh, vibrant,
a shout of early summer.



Skylarks erupt from the heather,
rising fast, to swoop and soar,
painting parabolas in the sky,
then diving, then rising again,
and all the while their song
echoes and re-echoes
in glittering, rapturous cadences,
bright as silver,
pure as light.



Photograph courtesy of Norman Gee

Restart of bell ringing at St Nicolas' church, June 2021

Susan Read

Ringling church bells is one of those hobbies which can become a part of one's whole life. It started for me when I was 12 years old, learning to ring in a church near my home at their practice night every Tuesday evening. Then when I went to university, there were other student ringers, practice nights, outings, holidays, etc. and we students became the best of friends. In fact, I married one of them! We have kept in touch with some of our student ringing friends for our whole lives. We enjoy the friendship, the physical pleasure of handling the moving rope, the beauty of the sound of good quality change ringing as the bells weave their patterns into the air. And perhaps we enjoy a certain pride in being able to ring better than many other ringers.

Apart from two years living abroad, ringing has been our main activity outside home, family and work. Ringers have been our primary friendship group. The only time it was not possible to indulge our love of ringing as much was in those years when parenting was our main occupation and someone needed to stay at home to babysit. And even then, we used to get up early on a Sunday in order to go and ring at Durham Cathedral where we lived at the time, even though it meant climbing over 250 steps up helical staircases, carrying our small children!

In normal times, it is easily possible to spend most evenings of the week out meeting up with other ringers and ringing the bells at a variety of different bell towers. And as we have matured, we have taken on responsible roles associated with ringing in the area (Tower Captain, Training Officer, ringing association treasurer, teacher of ringing, and running ringing activities for children).

In September 2019, one Sunday morning, a chunk of masonry fell from the tower into the path of the people we were calling to church. It was serious! We had to stop ringing at St Nicolas' church immediately while the problem was investigated. We rang less (only at St Helen's) every Sunday. And then COVID-19 arrived. And in March 2020 we were locked down and everything stopped. Almost no going out except for that daily walk. Absolutely no ringing! Practically all of our normal recreational life stopped! We were desolated!

Gradually we are being allowed back into our ringing chambers and we have been able to restart ringing at St Helen's in a very limited way. But things are different from before. We do not wish to complain, but as with everywhere indoors, we have to wear face coverings. You can imagine how puffed we feel after climbing the equivalent of three stories to reach the ringing chamber at St Helen's with a face covering limiting our breathing! And the face coverings mean the instructions called out to the ringers while they are ringing are muffled and difficult to understand. We must of course sanitise our hands before ringing but find that the gel makes our hands so dry that the ropes slip unless we grip so tightly it hurts our hands.

The most difficult restriction of all is the need for ventilation: St Helen's ringing chamber has just one air vent in just one of the five windows. We tried leaving it open to ventilate the ringing room, but some pigeons got in and you can imagine the terrible mess they made! The ringing chamber at St Nicolas' has no air vents at all, so ringing will be more limited in duration there. In the past we often had between fifteen and twenty ringers in the ringing chamber at St Helen's but are currently limited to just six ringers. This Sunday (27 June 2021) will be the first time we have rung the St Nicolas' bells again for nearly two years. At last we can begin to rebuild our ringing lives again! There is a feeling of release and joy at the prospect of ringing properly again. It may be a while before we can crowd into the ringing chamber with as many ringers as wish to be there again, but we hope that won't be too far into the future. We hope the congregation at St Nicolas' will also rejoice in the recommencement of the loudest instrument played for the glory of God!

A long time silent ...

Eluned Hallas

On Sunday 27 June the Market Place once again echoed to the sound of the bells of St Nicolas sounding out, in full circle ringing.

The fall of plaster in September 2019 was the first inkling we had that all was not right with our tower. Ringing stopped immediately and architects were called. They recommended a structural survey which lasted several months (to check movement) and included measurements while the bells were being rung. The results showed some significant cracks in the stone work and considerable movement of the tower when the bells were rung. No more ringing 😞. We acknowledge with thanks a grant from Abingdon town Council towards the costs of these initial surveys and immediate safety works.

So we were faced with a reasonably major repair bill to make the tower safe and allow ringing to restart, including: stitch repairing cracks; repointing and packing large joints and voids; installing ties at floor and roof levels; and filling insets at bell chamber level with solid masonry. We were incredibly lucky to be eligible to apply for, and even more lucky to receive, a grant from the Government / Historic England Culture Recovery Fund towards the costs.

The project was scoped, faculties obtained, invitations to tender issued, and contractors approved. The ringers helped to make ready the bells so that they would not be damaged by any works around them. We were almost ready to start 😊. Successive Lockdowns, coupled with activities for which we needed access to church, pushed the start date back to 2021.

The 2021 lockdown, coupled with a restricted work space in the tower, meant work was delayed again, but we were delighted when work finally started after Easter 2021. Access to the church was restricted during the works, but the contractors very helpfully arranged for us to be able to worship each week, although with most of the tower glass protected by hardboard the back of the church was quite dark.

Then, just after Pentecost, the works were complete 😊. The bells were checked, and the ropes restored. We were advised not to ring full circle until the mortar had set, but the bells were chimed for the wedding in early June.



Then finally - the bells ring out again.
We give thanks to all who made this happen.



Historic England



HM Government



The government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund is designed to secure the future of Britain's heritage sites as well as museums, galleries, theatres, independent cinemas and music venues with emergency grants and loans. Read more: <https://hereforculture.campaign.gov.uk/>

Drumming – Solos and Ensembles

Edmund Kimber

Playing a percussion instrument, such as the drum kit, I regard as a creative and intellectual pursuit worthy of my own spare time. My hobby might seem absurd. However, if someone were to say to me, “What? You spend your allocated free time whacking things?” then I would respond with, “Correct, but it is the permutation of the objects I whack that makes it such a fun and enjoyable activity.” By this I mean that, even with a relatively small drum kit, there are endless possibilities.

Not only the order and variety come into play here though, since note values determine how long a hit lasts. On most percussion instruments, a strike cannot be held for very long. This is the case for the “drums” section of a drum kit. Cymbals, unlike the drums, can be choked at the point the composer wants the sound to end, and if not left to ring for seconds longer.

For the majority of a typical rock song, a drummer would play a beat, and these can be very varied. However, something all rock songs share in common is having a strong backbeat when a snare drum is struck, but an experienced player shouldn't be afraid to implement ghosted notes into the beat. These hits are barely audible, but really add to the feel of the song.



Transitioning to another section is indicated on the drum kit with the use of drum fills. Often small fills on the snare are played every eight bars, but every sixteen bars or so, a drummer may want to play a little more, going round all the toms.

Sometimes a drummer, instead of playing alongside other instrumentalists and singers, will want to play on their own. People wouldn't exactly call these songs, but rather drum solos. Whilst these are harder to pull off, drumming solo for forty minutes nonstop can really spark creativity, as well as the tendency to include more fills and metre changes, when a song changes tempo or time signature. A lot is still to be said, however, for the more complex drum beats with a lot going on in them, which is why they're still prevalent in rock drum solos.

Whilst it's always fun to play drum fills, making use of our two hands and two feet, with loads of sounds being created over the top of each other, sometimes a technique which is seemingly rather simple can be super effective. Linear drum fills, as the name suggests, only consist of a single drum being hit at a time. The bass drum is usually excluded from this definition, as fills can feel linear, without technically being 'linear'. However, this technique is not solely used in fills. Some beats, usually involving toms, are linear and work well in intros of songs.

Some examples and demonstrations can be found at: <http://www.t8q.org.uk/drums.html>
Edmund recently gained a distinction in his Grade 8 drum exam.

Recreation: cross-stitching and its benefits

Susan Halstead

Before lockdown I commuted from Oxford to London on the Oxford Tube every day to work at the British Library. On bad days the journey by bus, coach and Underground could take up to three hours, and I would use the time to embroider or knit while listening to audiobooks. Now that I am working from home I try to find time to continue making cards, which I see as another kind of 'translating'. The thought that goes into choosing a design and the time spent executing it convey, I hope, the message that the recipient is also unique and special and deserves something that reflects this.

It has also been proved that cross-stitching not only benefits mental health but lowers blood pressure and slows heart rates - very useful when stuck in the traffic outside Hillingdon!

Here is the card which I stitched to mark Jenny's retirement recently. I have done many more, but this one has a special link with St. Helen's, so I chose it to illustrate one of the crafts which I practise.



Sport is exhausting

Rob Rutherford

I'm putting pressure on myself. It's the afternoon of Sunday 20th June; tomorrow is the summer solstice and it's not warm. It calls for some sport.

The trouble is there is quite a lot of choice. There is the cricket match between New Zealand and India, the final of the World Test Championship; the tennis final at Queens Club featuring Cameron Norrie in the men's singles against Matteo Berrettini; the French Grand Prix featuring the ongoing battle between Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen for the lead in the Formula 1 championship; the Euro 2020 football match between Wales and Italy and the final round of the US golf championship - can Rory McIlroy come through from 5th place. Since the golf comes from the US West coast, the body clock may not cope!

Do I have the stamina and the ability to focus? Will my physique stand up to the challenge?

One by one the body blows came in: Cameron Norrie won the second set tie break only to lose the final set. Max Verstappen won the grand prix. Italy then beat Wales 1:0. I go to bed with the headphone in to listen to Rory McIlroy's promising start to the fourth round. He is looking good. I wake up to discover that he fell back to 11th. Only the cricket didn't disappoint but then, as a neutral, I am not really 'invested' in it and anyway bad light stopped play. The match will extend into a sixth day. What idiot designs a game that lasts six days?*

I think the Tour de France will have started by the time you read this and Wimbledon and you never know, the England football team might make it to the final. When do the Olympics start? HELP!!

*I feel duty bound to admit that the 6th day was gripping. Well done New Zealand!

Walking the Cotswold Way

Louise Heffernan

The Cotswolds are just a stone's throw away from Abingdon but I have never really explored them so I readily agreed to join a group of friends to walk the Cotswold Way, a 102 mile walk which meanders between Chipping Campden and Bath. We decided to do the northern part of this trail, finishing in Painswick. The trail website tells us that 'the Cotswold Way incorporates some of England's prettiest villages and passes historic sites such as... the Neolithic burial chamber at Belas Knap, Sudeley Castle, Hailes Abbey and many churches and historic houses. One minute you will be in wildflower meadows, the next shaded woodlands.'

So one recent sunny Sunday we drove to Chipping Campden, fortified ourselves with coffee and croissants and set off. It was 26 °C and by the time we had climbed the first hill we were gasping for breath. Yes, the Cotswolds are 'rolling hills' but someone seems to have stuck the odd mountain in there recently. Luckily day one was a relatively short walk of 6 miles or so finishing in the beautiful little town of Broadway. The last mile or so included the climb up to Broadway Tower, a folly built by the 6th Earl of Coventry on Broadway Hill for the express purpose of allowing Lady Coventry to complete her knitting whilst contemplating the estate. And also perhaps to lure walkers up an extra 312 metres to admire the views, which admittedly are wonderful. The tea shop is also excellent. Tea and lemon drizzle enabled us to complete the walk into the town and collapse.

Day 2 saw us climbing out of Broadway and trekking towards Winchcombe. A mile or so later we were puzzled by the absence of signs, but no matter, the farmer waved us off to the right and in fact off the route entirely resulting in adding an extra mile or so onto the planned journey. But eventually we arrived in Stanton, a Cotswold village not to be missed. One of our group, noting that it was 3 miles by road and 7 miles by CW, decided to take a lift at this point. The remaining purists walked on to Stanway and Hailes – both gorgeous little villages. Carrot



cake at Hailes Farm shop was well- deserved and delicious. Eventually we all arrived in the lovely town of Winchcombe which has beautiful almshouses and of course Sudeley Castle, where Katherine Parr lived, following Henry VIII's death. The gardens at Sudeley are memorable, especially the Queen's Garden, planted with 80 different varieties of rose, and the Elizabethan Knot Garden.

Next day we walked from Winchcombe to Charlton Kings on the outskirts of Cheltenham. Passing Belus Knap Long Barrow, we struggled up Cleeve Hill, the highest point on the Cotswold Way. But at the top, we were rewarded by stunning views over Cheltenham, its racecourse and GCHQ and right over to Wales and the Brecon Beacons. Cleeve Valley Golf course provided us with a lunch stop and despite tangling with an electric fence and going off-route yet again we managed the 14 miles or so of this longest day's march with no cake.

Not so on day 4 as we came upon the Cotswold Diner conveniently parked in a layby for our morning coffee and repast, then having dived with death crossing the A435, went up Leckhampton Hill and eventually to Crickley Hill Country Park, one of many nature reserves on the walk. One of the great

pleasures of the walk was the number of flowers, butterflies and birds we saw including less common species such as spotted orchids and a roman snail (*salve helix pomatia*). Birdlip was our destination this day. The afternoon was getting humid so we were exceedingly pleased to find this pretty village and a rainbow to greet us.



The last day's walk was more temperate after a night's rain. Most of the walk was through beech woods so lovely and cool – quite delightful. Resisting the temptation (not very great) to imitate competitors at the annual cheese rolling competition at Cooper's Hill, we successfully avoided flying golf balls at Painswick Golf course, sited on top of Painswick Beacon and surely the most challenging golf course in England. That afternoon, we enjoyed a visit to the Rococo Gardens and a walk around Painswick itself which is absolutely lovely. The highlight here is the Church of St Michael and All Angels which has 99 yew trees in its graveyard. Rumour has it that the devil has forbidden the planting of the hundredth tree (though one, which apparently still stands, was bravely planted to mark the Millennium).

We celebrated the end of our walk with a delicious meal and lots of self-congratulation. It did seem an achievement. Was it 'recreation'? Probably not since parts of it were quite challenging. But 're-creation' I think yes. Walking is a tonic in that though we chatted quite a bit, there were other times when we walked with neutral minds, enjoying being outside in such a beautiful part of the world. We had to watch where we put our feet so were focused only on the present, not concerned with past regrets or future fears and the rhythm of walking confers a benefit of its own. The countryside was as beautiful as promised, every turn offering nature at its most gentle and most lovely. It was hard at times, but aches of feet and knees subside whereas memories will stay forever.

Junior Church

Sue Pemberton on behalf of the Junior Church leadership team.

Junior Church continues to meet via our Facebook group. The first week of June was half term and it was good to hear of families enjoying the fine weather on holidays or days out.

On the 6th June our story was about the occasion when Jesus was busy healing and teaching and his mother and brothers went to visit him. When Jesus was told his family was outside, He said that everyone following God was His family. We thought about our families, and if we have people who are not related to us that we regard as part of our family. The children were invited to model or draw their family, or to investigate their family tree with their parents

On 13th June we had two parables about growing seeds. The themes were Growth, Patience and Hope. We learned that developing faith is like growing seeds – it happens gradually and needs to be nurtured. We thought about how we learn best, again, patience and perseverance are needed, just as for growing seeds.

By 20th June the fine weather had faded and our story was Jesus calming the storm! The disciples needed to have faith that Jesus would help them. We wrote out worries on pieces of paper and then turned the paper into boats. 20th June was also Fathers' Day so our material included a special prayer for fathers.

We ended June with the story of Jesus healing the unclean woman on His way to heal Jairus' daughter. The woman was an outcast of society but Jesus still healed her and transformed her life. Jairus also needed Jesus' help as all his wealth couldn't cure his daughter. We all need help from others, and from Jesus, at times. The activity was to create a decorated prayer jar, and then to write things we need help with on papers or lolly sticks and place them in the jar. We can return to these in quiet moments.

St Sigfrid's Way

Rosalind Rutherford



A group of five pilgrims stood outside St Helen's church ready to start day 32 of walking St Sigfrid's Way, a pilgrimage route from York to Växjö in Sweden (a diocese linked with Oxford diocese) which you may have read about last month. Two of the group, Hugh and Bethany, had walked from York; Gwen and David Bevington and I were joining them for the day as the route continued along the Thames path to Dorchester.



One of the joys of walking a "pilgrim route" that is relatively straightforward, is the chance for walking in silence and enjoying the colour and variety of wild flowers along the bank and in the fields. At other times there was space for conversation, hearing more about the story of Sigfrid, what we share with the Lutheran church in Sweden, the churches dedicated to women saints in the area and, as we arrived at Days Lock, Poohstick championships.

After our own game of Poohsticks, it was over the fields to Dorchester in time for cakes and tea in the Cloister Gardens.

At the moment, it's not clear whether Covid restrictions will prevent the two pilgrims from reaching Växjö, but as you read this they will be on the final stretch of the journey to Rochester and Ramsgate.

If you want to follow the daily travels of the pilgrims, they are posted on Face book

<https://www.facebook.com/StSigfridsWay>



A Pause at Culham lock



Pilgrims, including Barley the dog, arrive from Witney on day 31

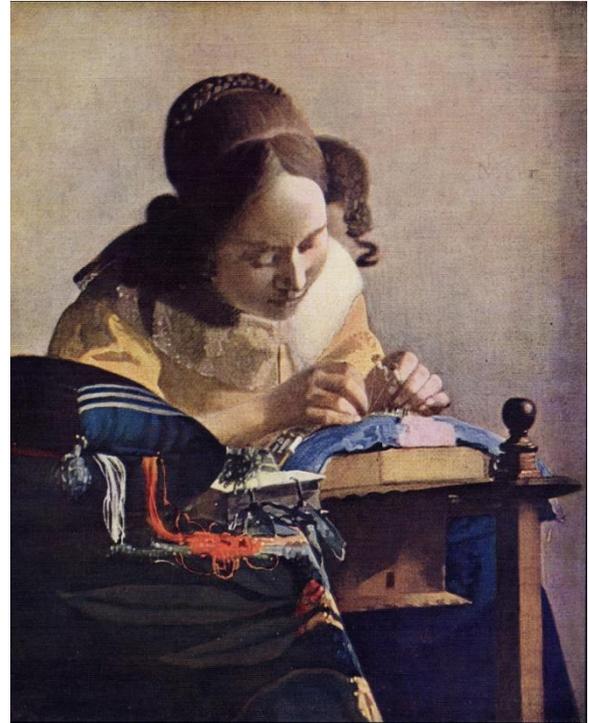
Photographs: Thanks to Gwen, David and Rosalind

Vermeer's Lace-maker speaks

When I was small, my parents shook their heads –
 a sallow scrap no man would care to take –
 so they apprenticed me. With fragile threads
 my fingers laboured for my living's sake.
 The waning yellow light bathes swollen eyes
 grown dim; my face is heavy, thick lips pursed
 in concentration as this worn hand tries
 to shape a mystery. Am I accursed?

My ugliness, my talent, were my fate;
 And yet my plainness sculpted me a shell
 in which my gift lies guarded to create
 a web of beauty. From a silent well
 of solitude I draw this shining dream
 of filaments fine as the glistening mesh
 whose scuttling makers rouse a startled scream
 when scuttling limbs brush unsuspecting flesh.

Arachne's weaving lost her human life;
 mine, day, by day, is shadowing my sight.
 The veil I never wore as wedded wife
 flutters before my eyes to mask the light.
 Yet I was consecrated, like a bride,
 and as the darkness gathers, I perceive
 the loveliness I made in modest pride
 was more than carnal beauty could conceive.



Picture from [here](#):

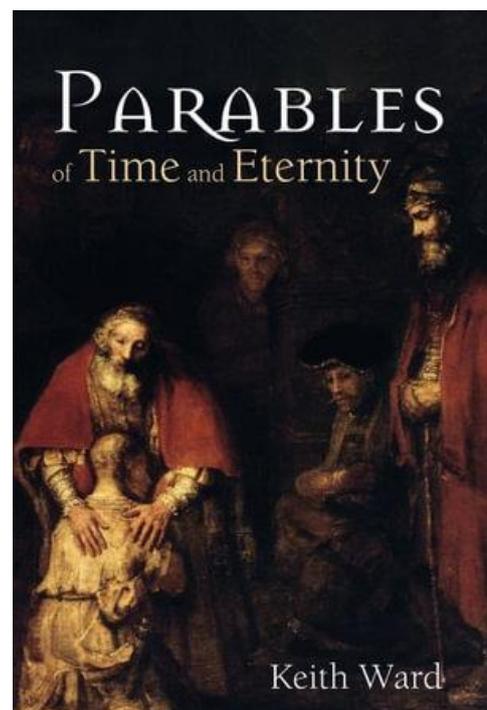
© Susan Reynolds (Susan Halstead's professional name)

Parables of Time and Eternity

You may like to know that Keith Ward's latest book, excerpts from which were published on the St Helen's website during lockdown, is now out.

In a new survey of Jesus' parables, Keith Ward proposes that they imply a theology of the universal and unlimited love of God.

We hope to say more about it in September.



Seafood Fever

Eileen Duckett

John Masfield's Sea Fever has been a favourite of mine since I was a child. On a recent holiday to Northumberland, which had been delayed for a year because of Covid, I wrote my version of the famous poem. As you can tell my holidays are very food orientated!

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is some fish and chips or maybe a Pukka pie,
And an ice cream and a cream tea or maybe a stick of rock,
To eat somewhere safe and far away from where the seagulls flock.

I must go down to the seas again for the call of the running tide
With its fish and crustaceans is a call which shan't be denied.
So to Craster for kippers, smoked salmon and some crab,
And prawns for a cocktail, our dinner will be fab.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
So a barbecue in the sand dunes with no need for a fork and knife,
And all I want is a hotdog and a cold glass of wine,
And then I have eaten my favourite foods on this longed-for holiday of mine.

Three men in a boat

From Chapter 18 suggested by Roderick Smith

"At Abingdon, the river passes by the streets. Abingdon is a typical country town of the smaller order - quiet, eminently respectable, clean, and desperately dull. It prides itself on being old, but whether it can compare in this respect with Wallingford and Dorchester seems doubtful. A famous abbey stood here once, and within what is left of its sanctified walls they brew a bitter ale nowadays. In St Nicholas (*sic*) Church, at Abingdon, there is a monument to John Blackwall (*sic*) and his wife Jane, who both, after leading a happy married life, died the very same day, August 21, 1625; and in St Helen's Church it is recorded that W. Lee, who died in 1637, 'had in his lifetime issue from his loins two hundred lacking but three'. If you work this out you will find that Mr W. Lee's family numbered one hundred and ninety-seven. Mr W. Lee - five times Mayor of Abingdon - was, no doubt, a benefactor to his generation, but I hope there are not too many of his kind in this overcrowded nineteenth century. From Abingdon to Nuneham Courtenay is a lovely stretch, Nuneham Park is well worth a visit. . . ."

I wonder what Jerome would make of 21st century Abingdon? The town has grown considerably. How respectable it is now I couldn't say. But the visitors who make their way into our ancient church buildings (a good number of whom still arrive on a boat) say how delightful, lively and interesting the town is - definitely not dull!

Recreational Maths

Selected by Rob Rutherford

Really? Recreational? Maths?
Yes it is a 'thing'.

So in the absence of other puzzles, here is your homework.

Q1 Five men, a monkey, and some coconuts

Five men crash-land their airplane on a deserted island in the South Pacific. On their first day they gather as many coconuts as they can find into one big pile. They decide that, since it is getting dark, they will wait until the next day to divide the coconuts.

That night each man took a turn watching for rescue searchers while the others slept. The first watcher got bored so he decided to divide the coconuts into five equal piles. When he did this, he found he had one remaining coconut. He gave this coconut to a monkey, took one of the piles, and hid it for himself. Then he jumbled up the four other piles into one big pile again.

To cut a long story short, each of the five men ended up doing exactly the same thing. They each divided the coconuts into five equal piles and had one extra coconut left over, which they gave to the monkey.

They each took one of the five piles and hid those coconuts. They each came back and jumbled up the remaining four piles into one big pile.

What is the smallest number of coconuts there could have been in the original pile?

For a hint or the answer see <http://www.qbyte.org/puzzles/puzzle01.html>

Q2 Farmer's enclosure

A farmer has four straight pieces of fencing: 1, 2, 3, and 4 yards in length. What is the maximum area he can enclose by connecting the pieces? Assume the land is flat.

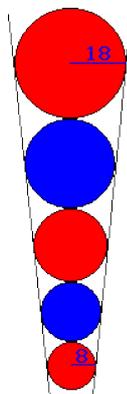
For a hint or the answer see <http://www.qbyte.org/puzzles/puzzle01.html>

Q3 Making 24

Using only the numbers 1, 3, 4, and 6, together with the operations +, −, ×, and ÷, and unlimited use of brackets, make the number 24. Each number must be used precisely once. Each operation may be used zero or more times. Decimal points are not allowed, nor is implicit use of base 10 by concatenating digits, as in $3 \times (14 - 6)$.

As an example, one way to make 25 is: $4 \times (6 + 1) - 3$.

For a hint or the answer see <http://www.qbyte.org/puzzles/puzzle03.html>



Q4 Five marbles

Five marbles of various sizes are placed in a conical funnel. Each marble is in contact with the adjacent marble(s). Also, each marble is in contact all around the funnel wall.

The smallest marble has a radius of 8mm. The largest marble has a radius of 18mm. What is the radius of the middle marble?

For a hint or the answer see <http://www.qbyte.org/puzzles/puzzle04.html>

Messin' about on the river

Since no-one has, apparently, messed about on a river, I thought I'd indulge myself by including the lyrics of this song by Tony Hatch and Les Reed and performed by Josh Macrae.

When the weather is fine you know it's the time
For messin' about on the river
If you take my advice there's nothing so nice
As messin' about on the river
There's big boats and wee boats and all kinds of craft
Puffers and keel boats and some with no draft
With the wind in your face there's no finer place
Than messin' about on the river

There are boats made from kits that'll reach you in bits
For messin' about on the river
And you might want to skull in a glass fibred hull
Go messin' about on the river
Anchors and tillers and rudders and cleets
Ropes that are sometimes referred to as sheets
With the wind in your face there's no finer place
Than messin' about on the river

Skippers and mates and rowing club eights
All messin' about on the river
Capstans and quays where you tie up with ease
All messin' about on the river
Outboards and inboards and dinghies you sail
The first thing you learn is the right way to bale
In a one man canoe you're both skipper and crew
Messin' about on the river

Moorings and docks, tailors and locks
All messin' about on the river
Whirlpools and weirs that you must not go near
Messin' about on the river
Backwater places all hidden from view
Mysterious wee islands just waiting for you
So I'll leave you right now, go cast off your bow
Go messing about on the river

You might enjoy hearing it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYULNB-Lu7w>

Useful Weblinks:

Services: for the latest news see the church websites:

<https://www.abingdon-st-helens.org.uk/>

<https://www.stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk/>

<https://www.stnicolasabingdon.org.uk/>

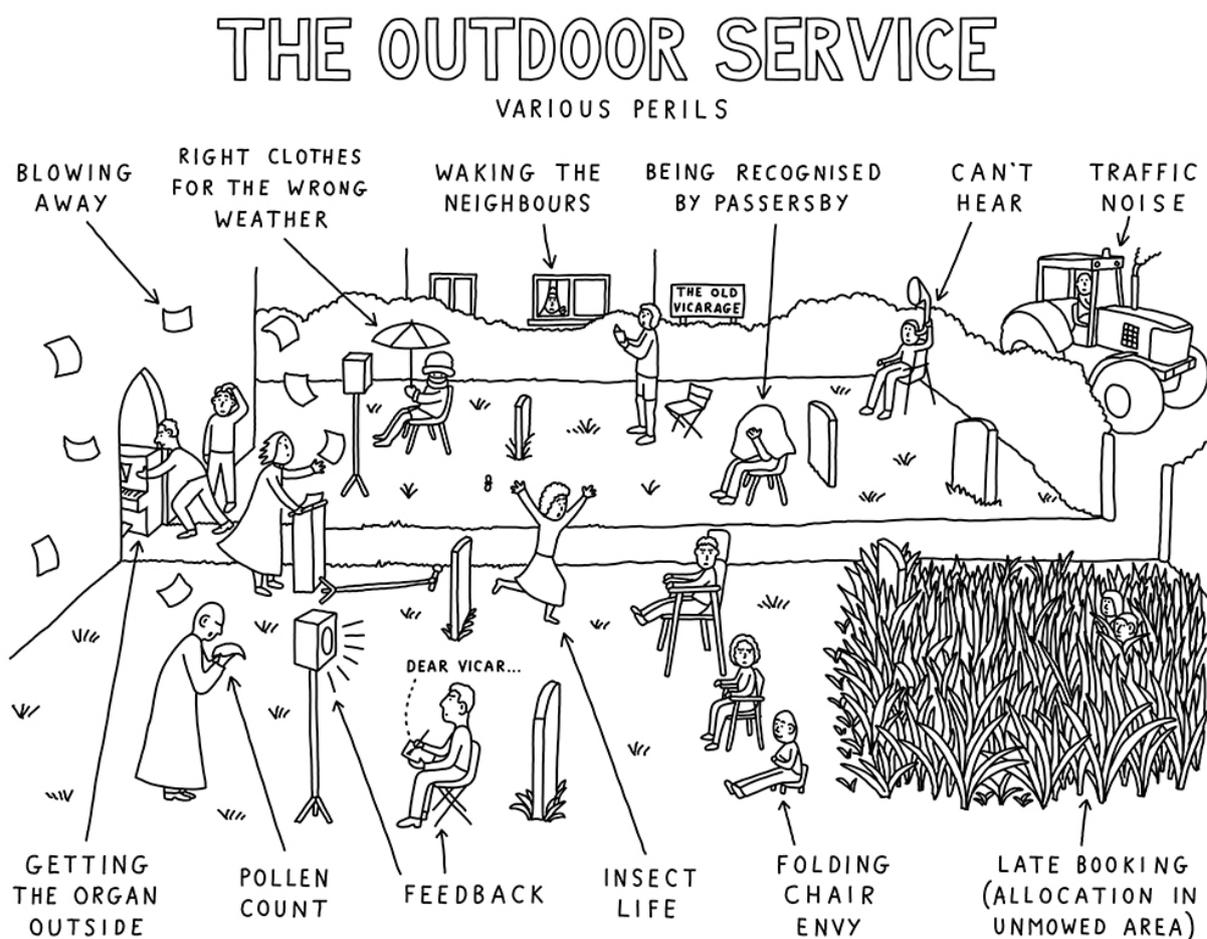
Page for Church of England links: services, daily readings etc

<https://www.churchofengland.org/>

FOOD BANK. The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support. **Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm.** Their main long-term needs are:

Long life milk (not soya), sugar, fruit squash, tinned meat and vegetables. They also give out a lot of washing up liquid, bleach and toilet rolls. 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 the Foodbank website <https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/> or the Parish office have details if you want to donate via online banking.

And finally, from Dave Walker of Cartoon Church:



Thank you to all contributors and to you, the readers.

The next issue will be published in September. We need some 'Recreation and Re-Creation'.

Email ideas and contributions to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk

We would also welcome responses to any articles published here or in previous issues.