

THE MINISTER WRITES ...



Dear All,

²In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. John 14:2-3

In these few words from the Gospel of John, we find a wonderful reminder of the infinite love and grace of God. Jesus spoke these words to his disciples during the Last Supper, just before his arrest and crucifixion. Here, Jesus was preparing them for his departure and he wanted them to know that they did not have to be afraid. So, what better way to reassure them than to tell them that he was going to prepare a place for them in his Father's house.

I do wonder, what are we to make of this today? Well, I think these words are deeply reassuring as they remind us that we too have a place in God's kingdom. They tell us that no matter what challenges we face in this life, we have the assurance of abiding in the unending presence of God. They speak to us of how we have a hope that not only sustains us today but also transcends this world and all its limitations.

But what are these "*many dwelling places*" or, as often translated, "*many mansions*" that John's Jesus speaks of? This is often interpreted as a literal description of heaven. And that is a legitimate and understandably comforting thought for many Christians, and I fully respect that. But I do just wonder if the reference to the 'Father's house' is actually a beautiful continuation of the theme of hospitality so poignantly seen in the foot washing in John 13 and also, we think of 14:23: *²³Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.'*

So perhaps we could understand this as a metaphor for the many different ways that God shows his hospitality, love and grace to us. Today, tomorrow and always, we abide in God, we live in God, this is where we belong, this is where we are loved; there is always a loving, welcoming home for us in God. And may I add the 'many' can also speak to us of the wideness of God's love, the inclusiveness of God's love. There is room for all in God's grace and love. Let us work for a just and peaceful world where all, whoever they are, are free to abide, to live in the love of God and enjoy life in all its fullness.

Every blessing,

Neil

Generous God,

whose way is love, whose truth is searching, whose life is freely given in Jesus Christ our Lord: as you have opened for us your house of many rooms, so may we make a place for the rejected and unloved, and share the work of peace; through Jesus Christ, the image of God. Amen.

THANK YOU!

This is just to let you know that I recently posted off all the pyjamas that you kindly bought for the children in Ukraine. I very quickly received an email from the secretary at Christ Church URC in Marlow.

This was her reply:

"Your parcel has just arrived! Thank you so much. What a lovely collection of pyjamas. They will be greatly appreciated in Ukraine. Thanks also for your lovely letter. I will ensure your love and greetings are passed on to the Ukrainian people we are supporting with our donations."

Many thanks also from me for your generous response to my request. I will let you know any more news, if it comes, in due course.

Netty

MIDDLE GROUP

Thank you so much David and Julie for taking us on such a lovely evening walk around their home village for our Middle Group activity on 6th June. The weather was kind to us and even warm enough to enjoy a glass of something outside the pub at the end of the walk. We were only a small group but we all thoroughly enjoyed our time together.

Alan and Netty



HOLIDAY AT HOME

On the 4th and 5th July, between 10.30am and pm, we have a full programme for our Italian themed Holiday at Home. At time of writing we are still awaiting funding with a local councillor is working on our behalf.

Our programme is as follows:

Thursday 4th July

- 10.30am Welcome and Coffee, Getting to know you picture quiz
- 11.15am Illustrated talk on the Italian lakes with Chris Parfitt
- 12.15pm Learn some Italian with Ann Fox
- 1pm Lunch
- 2pm Bingo
- 2.45pm Seated Zumba
- 3.30pm Tea and biscuits

Friday 5th July

- 10.30am Welcome and coffee
Craft morning, to include art table, including pasta art, colouring and water colours, flower arranging. card making, jigsaw puzzles.
- 12.45pm Lunch

1.45pm Game/quiz

2.30pm Concert by The Belstead Singers.

It is not too late to book. If you know of anyone who would like to come, there are flyers and registration forms at the back of the church.

You are warmly invited to any of the sessions. It is good to have members of our congregation to mingle with our guests. Please let us know if you will be staying for lunch.

On Sunday 7th July, Holiday at Home will finish with afternoon tea in the Langston Hall at 5pm followed by Songs of Praise in the church at 6pm. This will include requests. Everyone is warmly invited to tea and Songs of Praise. If you would like your favourite hymn, reading, prayer or poem included in the service there are request slips at the back of the church. Please return as soon as possible by Friday 5th July at the latest.

Offers of cakes for tea on Friday afternoon and Sunday afternoon would be most welcome.

We are looking forward to a lovely time of friendship, fellowship and outreach.

Anne Durnford, on behalf of Church Life Committee

BIG DAY OUT

I attended the URC Eastern Synod Big Day Out held at Trinity Park on Saturday 8th June. The opening worship was accompanied by The Woodbridge Excelsior Brass Band and after a welcome from our Moderator, Revd Lythan Nevard, we had the Parable of the Prodigal Son told with shoes.

We then dispersed into workshops. I attended a Bible Reflection on discipleship led by the Revd Alex Jacob. Packed lunches were provided in the price of the booking and lunch was a good opportunity for networking.

After lunch I went to a singing workshop led, with much humour, by Revd Nigel Uden. He rehearsed us for Jonah Man Jazz (written by Michael Hurd). The closing worship included a complete performance of Jonah Man Jazz which was great fun if not necessarily a great performance. Songs and prayers were accompanied by Makaton Signing which was one of the other workshops. This was a very moving experience with the signing beautifully expressing the meaning of the words.

The weather could have been warmer and drier, but the fellowship was great. We left the venue to the sound of *We shall go out with Joy*.

Rob

OPEN GARDENS



Our Open Gardens are always popular and very enjoyable to occasions. Once again, we are inviting people to open their garden to raise funds for our chosen charity for the second half of the year, Poppies Care Farm. It would be lovely to have three or four gardens over the next three summer months. We are not looking for show gardens, a few weeds make everyone feel at home! Just a warm welcome, a cup of tea and a piece of cake. If you feel able to open your garden, there is a sign up list at the back of the church.

Many thanks from Church Life Committee



CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

Thank you to everyone who supported our Christian Aid Week Fayre in May. The plant stall and barbecue on the front lawn were particularly popular with passers-by.

The following was raised – Books: £31.10, Barbecue: £76.50, Plants: £224.90, Cakes and Refreshments: £178. Additional generous donations meant the splendid total of £1,607.30 was sent to Christian Aid. A thank you email has been received.

CHRISTIAN AID

“Palestinian children create stunning pictures of bombed historical buildings in attempt to keep Gazan culture alive”.

In a bid to keep Palestinian culture alive, children sheltering in Rafah, southern Gaza, have created stunning pictures of historical buildings destroyed in the war. The youngsters - whose smiling faces belie the horrors they are experiencing - pose with their artwork at a Christian Aid supported shelter in Al-Mawasi, northern Rafah.

Amal, 11, beams as she displays her image of Qasr Al-Basha in Gaza City. Also known as Pasha Palace, it previously housed a museum of antiquity and Al-Zahraa Secondary School for Girls before being reduced to rubble.

Ibtisama, who is 13, stands holding her vibrant picture of a red and yellow Omari Mosque under a brilliant blue sky. The oldest mosque in Gaza, based in Daraj, Gaza City, is also known as the 'Great Mosque of Gaza'. It too lies in ruins.

Hundreds of youngsters have flocked to art sessions run by artists and volunteers and organised by the Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA), Christian Aid's Palestinian partner. For many children, the sessions are the first opportunity they have had to pick up a pencil or crayon in months. William Bell, Christian Aid's Head of Middle East Policy & Advocacy, said: “No child should ever experience what Gazan children are experiencing; seeing their parents killed, friends maimed, and homes destroyed.” For a brief moment, when they are colouring in, they are able to put the horrors of war to one side and just be children again. Their artwork consolidates the cultural identity of Gaza and keeps it – and their hopes – alive. But only an immediate and permanent ceasefire will deliver them from the hell on earth they are experiencing.”

Muhammad Abu Lihia, a visual artist who is helping to deliver the project for CFTA, said: “I felt that the children had cultural and artistic awareness and sensitivity with the recolouring of each archaeological landmark of Gaza. “Their integration, love, and awareness of the importance of what they were doing greatly alleviated the difficulties of displacement and supported them psychologically.”

CFTA Community Mobilizer, Buthaina Al-Faqawi, said that when the children arrive at the art sessions “The first look is despair and misery. The second look is hope. The third look is love of life and childhood. Please...we deserve life, we deserve better.”

As of early April, UNESCO had verified damage to 43 sites – including Pasha Palace and Omari Mosque – since 7th October. They include 10 religious sites, 24 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, two depositories of movable cultural property, three monuments, one museum and three archaeological sites. The organisation has expressed “deep concern” about the impact of the ongoing conflict on cultural heritage.

Article taken from the Christian Aid website

PRAYER CALENDAR FOR JULY

7th July

We remember the people who attended our Holiday at Home on the 4th and 5th July and pray for the lasting relationships made. We also remember all who are alone or feel lonely and pray that You draw close to them and make Yourself known.

14th July

We pray for our new government following the election on 4 July, that they will govern with integrity and wisdom and that they will build a fairer society.

21st July

We think about the children and young people who have just finished their school year; some who have now left the security of their primary school and some who have left school altogether. We ask you to fill them with hope, strength and courage as they move onto the next stage of their lives.

28th July

Many of us plan to travel this holiday season to visit family, friends or to see new places. Please grant us safe and successful travel and that we may be kind and helpful to any we meet on our journey.

ECO-CHURCH CREATION CARE

As we continue with our efforts to make our church grounds more wildlife-friendly, an update as to what we have achieved so far and what we are planning might be helpful.

Last year we trialled a “Pictorial Meadow Mix” in the front garden beds, which looked good and gave us flowers good for pollinating insects throughout the summer and into November. It was nice to receive a number of appreciative comments during the summer from passers-by. This year we have extended two of the beds slightly, while leaving the central bed for spring bulbs, the roses and some summer planting. The germination of the meadow mix seeds has been slow and disappointingly patchy this year – presumably something to do with the weather – but the beds are now beginning to flower so we hope for a good show as the season progresses.

We observed No Mow May and have been pleased to see butterflies amongst the flowers that some might think of as weeds! We are making sure that the grass is never cut too short, allowing it to provide a habitat for small invertebrates and some low-growing plants. There are a number of bird boxes. The new crab apple tree that was sadly vandalised last year is producing some regrowth, but we will have to wait and see if it can flourish.

Unfortunately a couple of bird feeders installed on the trees in the front garden quickly just disappeared. Do we try again?

Anyone passing along Tacket Street will have heard the swift calls intended to encourage migrating swifts – a species on the “red list” as their numbers are threatened - to make use of the swift boxes installed on the schoolrooms building, but it doesn’t seem as if any swifts have yet taken up the invitation.

In the back garden the rear section is being left wild, to allow nature some space. We are following advice from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust on the management of this wild area and it will be cut back in August, once any flowers have set seed.

A major step forward on our progress towards being an “Eco-Church” has been the installation of PV panels on the roof of the schoolrooms building. Even in a less than sunny early summer they are generating electricity well. If the church is not using electricity generated during the day it will be stored in the battery and used later as we need it. A win for the church and the planet. *Kate Helleur*

PRAYER CALENDAR FOR AUGUST

4th August

We pray for the Olympic Games taking place in Paris, and for the many nations meeting together to compete. May they have a fresh understanding of each other’s cultures and backgrounds and respect their common aims and ambitions. We pray also for those responsible for the organisation and management of the Games. Be with those competing in the Paralympic Games and their families and supporters; we thank you for their determination in overcoming difficult circumstances and ask for your blessing on them. Amen

11th August

We pray for teachers and students, and for all those taking a break from their normal routine, that they may be renewed and refreshed, with a greater appreciation of your wonderful world. We know that we often do not take time to ‘stand and stare’, giving our full attention to the flora and fauna all around us. Help us to be aware of the beauty of your creation every day. Amen

18th August

Lord, we pray for the street we live on – for those we know and for those we don’t know. We pray for an opportunity to deepen our relationships with our neighbours. Wherever we go and whatever we do help us to be aware of your love surrounding us and those we meet day by day. We pray for this town of Ipswich and for all those working, both professionally and voluntarily, to improve the lives of its people. Be with them and give them the compassion and understanding they need in their work. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

25th August

We praise and thank you for all your blessings to us; help us never to take these for granted.

Lord, you are my hiding place.

In you I find a safe haven from every storm.

I have confidence in you.

May all who need it find rest and safety in you.

Amen



SUFFOLK HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

RIDE & STRIDE/HERITAGE DAY 2024

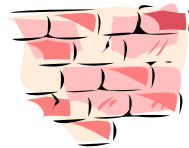
On Saturday 14th September, the church will be open once again to receive visitors taking part in the annual Ride & Stride and as one of the buildings open for the Heritage Festival. A rota will be available at the back of the church and I would ask that you add your name agreeing to sit for an hour to welcome cyclists and walkers. There will also be sponsor forms available from mid-July for those wishing to participate by walking or cycling around the churches. Mike has kindly offered to be on duty all day to receive visitors for Heritage Day and answer any questions. Proceeds are divided between the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust and our own church.

Many thanks.

Margaret

OVER THE GARDEN WALL

... from our neighbours at St Pancras



Dear Friends,

We always have a lot of activities at this time of year, including the Feast of Pentecost. In my home area of Lancashire it was called Whitsun, and Sunday School children used to be dressed in their finest as they marched through the streets, with their church banner, on three Sundays: Anglican, Catholic and then Free churches! They even went through the centre of Manchester and I think it was on Whit Friday that some group or other could be heard with their band as I sat in an exam of the Finals of my degree. Here, we celebrate Pentecost as the Birthday of the Church, but without any exotic happenings. Trinity Sunday is, of course, in all denominations, quite a challenge for a preacher – it isn't easy!

I remember always, on 22nd June, the Feast of St John Fisher and St Thomas More, martyrs, because, as Doc Heley always reminded me, that was the day in 1977 when we first met, at her house, to discuss what became the ecumenical Guild of Our Lady of Grace. Last summer, members of the Guild visited the Catholic shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham. Next year we shall visit the Anglican one, but last week we had a most interesting visit to the Anglican and Catholic shrines at Willesden. There is evidence of devotion there before 1000AD. Ours is not so old but it became, after Walsingham, the second most important shrine in the country. A pilgrimage of both Anglicans and Catholics from Walsingham will visit us this year, on Election day, although of course it was planned long before that day was announced. They will visit St Pancras for Mass then in the afternoon walk along the Pilgrimage Walk route, as described by Cardinal Wolsey, continuing to the site of the original shrine in Lady Lane, and so to our ecumenical shrine in St Mary Elms church, concluding, we hope, with tea in the vicarage garden. You would be most welcome to join us at any point.

Reverting to summer happenings, these always include First Holy Communion for primary children and also Confirmation by the Bishop of those in their early teens. It's an increasing problem, in this secular age, of trying to encourage children to continue coming to church. Some churches take a register, for the few months leading up to the event, of those attending Sunday Mass, and one Ipswich parish has required at least one parent to attend an Alpha course. In this context, last week I attended a Catholic Renewal Conference in Harrogate. It was a wonderful experience, with around 1,000 participants, including representatives of 230 parishes here and attendees from many countries, from Lithuania to New Zealand, and many more. I was delighted that one main speaker was a priest who had been for several years in my Birmingham parish! Another speaker was Nicky Gumbel, Founder of Alpha. I'd heard of him, of course, but never seen him in person. It made so much sense to

realise that the founders of our Catholic endeavour had worked with him and other well known evangelicals, sharing ideas on how to bring new life, and then new members, to our churches. We pray that this event and the ideas shared will bring more to know the joy of the Gospel.

Your Catholic friend,

Jean

DIARY DATES

Tuesday 25 th June at midday	Prayer Lunch
Thursday 27 th June	Thursday Forum visit to Bury St Edmunds
Sunday 30 th June at 12.30pm	Junior Church Picnic
Thursday 4 th & Friday 5 th July	Holiday at Home
Sunday 7 th July from 5pm	Tea, followed by Songs of Praise at 6pm
Friday 12 th July at 7.30pm	Graham Kendrick at Colchester Road
Thursday 1 st August at midday	Forum Lunch at the Key

There will be no Service on Sunday 22nd September due to the Ipswich Half Marathon.

Our Harvest Parade Service will be held later than usual on Sunday 6th October.

Emmaus Groups

Please check with leaders for the summer break dates.

Mondays at 10.30am in the Lounge

2nd & 4th Wednesdays at 7.30pm (evening group)

1st & 3rd Thursdays at 10.30am in the Lounge

SERVICES FOR JULY

All Services will be led by our Minister, Revd Neil Coulson unless otherwise stated.

Sunday 7th July

10.45am Family Worship with Holy Communion

6pm Songs of Praise Service for our Holiday at Home guests. All are welcome.

Sunday 14th July

10.45am Family Worship led by Mr William Glasse.

William is a URC Lay Preacher and Methodist Local Preacher

Sunday 21st July

10.45am Family Worship led by Mr John Gillett

John is a Lay Preacher

Sunday 28th July

10.45am Family Worship

SERVICES FOR AUGUST

Sunday 4th August

10.45am Family Worship with Holy Communion

Sunday 11th August

10.45am Family Worship

Sunday 18th August

10.45am Family Worship led by Revd Martin Camroux

Martin is a retired URC Minister and was Convenor of Church and Society for the URC and is chairperson of Free to Believe, the URC liberal network

Sunday 25th August

10.45am Family Worship led by Canon Roy Tricker

Roy is a retired Anglican Vicar

Sunday 1st September

10.45am All-age Worship with Holy Communion led by Neil
