

Keeping in Touch..... Number 19

Thank you as always to those who have sent in contributions this week. They are much appreciated! - do keep them coming please. Deadline each week is noon on a Wednesday—please send to c.a.curtis@ntlworld.com

If you are not nifty with a keyboard simply ring 01480 350787 and let Alan or Chris know what you want to say!

It has been a delight over the last few weeks to discover Irene Carter's poetic talents. They are always apt, sometimes funny, and written specially for us. Thank you Irene!.

This week's poem reflects on VJ Day, an often neglected moment in our history. Both transmissions from the BBC, in the morning from the National Memorial Arboretum, and in the evening from Horse Guards Parade were very moving. If you have never been to the arboretum please do try to visit—it is a most extraordinary place.

VJ 75

75 years, a tribute on screen,
We heard of their bravery,
Seldom told, never seen.

Their stories poured out
As we watched our TV,
Heroes from all walks
Of life, we would see.

Times long ago when
War years took their toll,
Victory o'er Hitler
The popular goal.

VE celebrations
At home were full swing
But over the seas
'gainst Japan, different thing.

We heard of the trauma,
The cruelty, the stress
Filth, hunger and torture
Such tales of distress.

Heat and starvation,
Abuse and disease
Men, women and children,
T'was hard to believe.

And when they returned
Most just bottled the pain,
But the nightmares kept coming
Again and again!

We pray they'll find solace
And night terrors will cease,
God bless them, and keep them
So they will find peace.

cc IRENE CARTER

The Kohima Epitaph

***When you go home tell them of
us and say
For your tomorrow we gave our
today***



Celebrating the long ministry of Revd. Derek Alan Newton—Part 2

In 1980 the Moderator, Michael Davies, asked Derek if he would consider a move to Adeyfield Church, Hemel Hempstead. He needed a 'bridge-builder', a reconciler.

A large group had left the church, taking Elders, Youth Leaders, Sunday-school teachers – and their families. Many of the remaining members felt hurt and abandoned.

Derek accepted the challenge and we moved to Adeyfield Church in 1981, where he worked slowly and patiently to bind up wounds and keep dialogue open with the break-away group.

However, the urgency of the move meant that a certain essential had not been addressed.

Hemel Hempstead, registered as a New Town, along with Wewyn Garden City, had allocated land for the building of premises for both the Catholic Church and what was known as The Free Church.

A house for the clergy was also part of the generosity of the Commission. What the Elders had failed to realise was, this generosity would not be repeated. The previous minister had left, and the tenancy of the house used as the Manse, was terminated.

For the first few months we lodged with various church members while the URC District Council launched an appeal. Through gifts and promises, plus a fortuitist grant from the recent sale of a Manse in another area, enough money was raised.

Adeyfield was charismatic in style of worship, but not wildly so. Under the banner Mission 80's, Baptists, Pentecostal, Methodist, Anglican, Catholic – and Free Church - shared many joint services, inviting 'top' preachers of that time to events held in the Civic Hall. We saw an increase in attendance across all denominations – including in the breakaway group, and praised a mighty God for many miracles encouraging our faith.

This was a time of special blessing for Derek – to work and fellowship with clergy from all denominations, all pulling in the same direction.

It was about this time that 'the Beard' appeared. A very bad bout of influenza had confined Derek to bed for eight days and slow recovery resulted in his absence from view for some time. Deciding he enjoyed the freedom of not having to shave, on his first Sunday back at work he smiled through his new whiskers at the startled congregation and assured them they would soon get used to it.

Remaining sensitive to God's call, we moved in 1987 to Roffey Place Bible College, Horsham, in a residential post as chaplain. Living in community was a new experience and we enjoyed this, and the many activities of the College. Money was raised to enable the building of a church and small college in Chociwell, Poland. Derek's knowledge of the building trade helped in this enterprise and both of us were included in the many trips to Poland, encouraging the small band of Christians there. This was before the Berlin Wall was demolished. We paid one short visit to Checkpoint Charlie – a sobering sight.

Part of the programme for the students was a trip to the Holy Land in which we were thrilled to be included.

During our three years at Roffey Place we were visited regularly by our Moderator, who also enjoyed time spent with the two men responsible for the College – Rev. Bob Gordon, URC and Rev. Colin Urquart, an Anglican vicar.

In 1990 Derek felt called to return to pastoral ministry within the church, and to help in this move, we were offered the use of a vacant manse at Earl Shilton, Loughborough. During our time there we were involved in a major car accident. When we eventually emerged from hospital the members of the church were kindness itself, but the medics warned we might never be able to walk unaided.

Watch this space!

Hazel



The Lull before the Storm..... from Sally Runham

Based at the school with Nev's job as caretaker, we are awaiting the storm of children returning after the holiday. Although busy with contractors installing new mobile classrooms, servicing boilers long overdue for replacement, and fixing leaking roofs, this is a relatively relaxing period. Many children will have been away for nearly six months, and I am sure they are apprehensive at facing so many classmates. We all want to make sure this 'storm' happens, as children need the routine and mentoring from school attendance, not least the sports activities that coaches promote based on their enthusiasm, and knowledge of the rules.

Another storm is likely at the Free Church when we start to open. Just how do we manage the flow of people wanting access? A very measured approach is essential and forms the basis of detailed planning by the elders and others involved. Some of the user groups serving very vulnerable people clearly need to resume as soon as possible, otherwise a different storm – of neglect? - will start to affect society. All the activities provide interest, socialising, support or exercise and are an essential part of members' lifestyles.

Some are afraid of the possible storming cases of coronavirus as the winter approaches, schools go back and other intermingling of 'bubbles' takes place. At least face-masks and visors are now the norm, and we can do our bit to protect others and ourselves, without feeling too self-conscious.

Cafes and pubs are trying to manage their own part of the possible storm of too much socialisation. Nev and I took advantage of a recent low-cost meal at a local inn, and saved nearly £50, thanks to that government initiative. "I feel safe here, don't you?" one person said. A large venue, outdoor space, only half the tables used at any time, and staff suitably garbed spaceman style.

There is a storming move towards kinder, more inclusive and sustainable ways of living, and the Eco Action eco-faith group is a part of that. The next meeting is on Tuesday 8th September at 10.30am by Zoom. For an invitation, please contact either Mary (mary@jmcox.co.uk) or Helen Dye (stivesecoaction@gmail.com). This is building on earlier work of the Free Church eco-group.



May this Lull be a period of reflection for all, and the Storm become a vibrant community dedicated to the service of God shown through respect for His planet, its people and its ecosystems.

Peter Ball has sent us this very thought provoking poem. Some of you may find it controversial. It is good to be challenged sometimes!

Here's the poem 'Home' by Warsan Shire. Just a reminder to those who fear refugees.

Home

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well
your neighbors running faster than you
breath bloody in their throats
the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory
is holding a gun bigger than his body
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.
no one leaves home unless home chases you
fire under feet
hot blood in your belly
it's not something you ever thought of doing
until the blade burnt threats into
your neck
and even then you carried the anthem under
your breath
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilet
sobbing as each mouthful of paper
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.
you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.
no one crawls under fences
no one wants to be beaten
pitied
no one chooses refugee camps
or strip searches where your
body is left aching
or prison,
because prison is safer
than a city of fire
and one prison guard
in the night
is better than a truckload
of men who look like your father
no one could take it
no one could stomach it
no one skin would be tough enough

the
go home blacks
refugees
dirty immigrants
asylum seekers
sucking our country dry
niggers with their hands out
they smell strange
savage
messed up their country and now they want
to mess ours up
how do the words
the dirty looks
roll off your backs
maybe because the blow is softer
than a limb torn off
or the words are more tender
than fourteen men between
your legs
or the insults are easier
to swallow
than rubble
than bone
than your child body
in pieces.
i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you
to quicken your legs
leave your clothes behind
crawl through the desert
wade through the oceans
drown
save
be hunger
beg
forget pride
your survival is more important
no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your
ear
saying-
leave,
run away from me now
I don't know what ilve become
but I know that anywhere
is safer than here

Our special 40th anniversary edition of Inspire is now underway and we would really like to receive some of your memories and photos from before, during and after the remodelling of our church building. Any snippets of information would be most welcome.

Some of you may remember the fabulous dramas that FURY (Federation of United Reformed Youth) put on: Jerusalem Joy, Stargazers and the story of Robert Raikes to name a few. If you can put your thinking caps on and send your memories and photos of these events, we would very much appreciate it.

If you can let me have your memories by 1st September that would be really helpful in the planning of our exciting edition of Inspire.

Please send them to m.anthony300@gmail.com or to the church office.

Thank you in anticipation

Mary Anthony

Answers to last week's archive quiz.....

The photo is of course of the launch of Just Sharing in early February 1992. We didn't of course realise in those days that helium balloons were an ethical no-no!

The two young ladies in their yellow sweatshirts are Mary Cox and Freda Barnard.

The ringmaster is John Cox and the clown is Revd Liz Byrne.

The crowd photo is more difficult but we do recognise Tom and Kitty Johnson and Angela Wright—anyone else?

An important visitor to Oakington!

Johanna is a German student of agriculture who passed through Oakington on Sunday August 16th. She has explored Spain and is now on her way to Scotland on foot accompanied by her shetland pony, Hechizo, Chizo for short. They average 15 miles a day. By **chance they were** guided to our front door and how lucky we were to be able to look after them for **just** one night. I was able to direct them to the village of Broughton which they reached, soaked but happy, where Cheril at The Crown was eagerly waiting.



Johanna supports *La Via Campesina*, an international initiative which unites millions of farmers; supports women and children in rural **areas**, locals, migrants and seasonal workers all over the world through the transfer of knowledge and the **defence of** rural dignity, it ensures social justice and promotes a sustainable approach to nature.

To read Johanna and Hechizo's blog go to hdlvc.blog where you will find links to the international initiative. You will find a "translate" button.



A happier more positive **couple** I could not imagine. It was a **poignant** and important meeting .

With love
Charlotte

The weather for ducks and dear friends.....

This morning (Wednesday) Mary Anthony was out walking across Hemingford Meadow when she came across Gerry and Char having great fun in the pouring rain with a flask of coffee, kitkats and crisps for sustenance!



A Free Church Wedding from a while back..... 23/08/75

Two years before the reconstruction commenced .

Mick and Char and young Claire Jordan

Sister Louie made my dress.

Mother made Mick's little sister Claire's.

Freda Eaton took the photo, as the friend I asked to take a few pictures forgot to put a film in!

Flowers from the garden ,tea afterwards in the garden.

The only expenses were the organist and one night in a B and B in Bury st Edmunds.

Mick did buy new shoes but forgot to put them on.

I don't understand why weddings have to be so expensive—the whole happy event cost about £50.00. Lovely.

