

† STOMP

SPRING 2020 MAGAZINE



THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

STOMP MAGAZINE
ISSUE 46 SPRING 2020

From the Editor	3
Some Lockdown reflections	4
A Past Reflection.....	6
Keeping in Touch	7
An Appreciation.....	7
When This is Over	9
Editor's Interview	10
<i>Parish Contacts</i>	12
My Grandparents' House	13
What Charities Need	14
Our Journey to Auschwitz.....	15
Book Review 'Jesus and Judaism'	19
Letter from Covid-19 to Humans	20
Joseph Lowery	23
My Garden During Lockdown	24
New Archdeacon's Licensing	26
Lockdown Laughs	27
St Mary's Kitchen and Toilet	28
Money, Money, Money.....	29
The Revd Caroline	31

COVER PICTURE

It is often the case that things we take for granted in normal circumstances, when they are denied us we find are the things we miss the most, and it is only then we begin to understand their significance in our daily lives.

One such thing must surely be the simple physical contact with other human beings that the present emergency lockdown has precluded between all but the members of an individual household.

Formal handshakes, exuberant 'high fives', the embrace of friends and sweethearts, the hugs of children and their grandparents, all manifestations of the unspoken need for the simple human touch.

When Mary encountered the risen Jesus on that first Easter morning her instinct was to embrace him and in the Eucharist, it is a handshake, a kiss or a hug that we use to acknowledge the injunction 'make peace with your neighbour before bringing your gift to the altar' and for centuries the 'laying on of hands' has been a feature of the Church's ministry of healing.

If it's true to say that we don't know the value of what we have until we lose it, might it also be true to say when it's restored we may have learned to value it more highly?

Jeff W.

FROM THE EDITOR

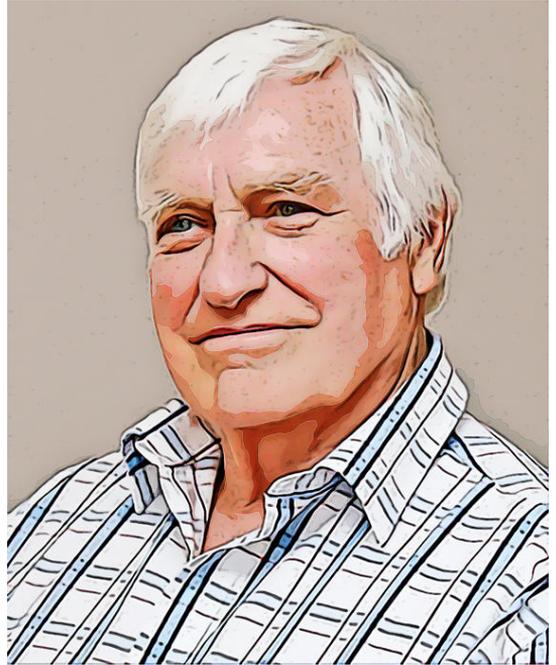
CREATION

'If we destroy creation, creation will destroy us', words taken from the June 2019 Papal Encyclical on the Environment. Pope Francis has called for global action on climate change and environmental degradation as a moral imperative for all humans. The message from Rome brings to my mind two recent messages to humans, one from a virus and the other from a valley glacier.

This issue of SToMP features 'An Imagined Letter from Covid - 19 to Humans'. Kristin Flyntz from South Africa starts the letter, 'Stop. Just stop. It is no longer a request. It is a mandate' and the letter ends, 'We will help you if you listen' The letter perfectly captures the spirit of the Papal Encyclical.

Equally relevant is the message from valley glacier in the Peruvian Andes, to be captured in 'Ice Rivers', a book by Erika Stockholm to be published next year. The book follows research by a glaciology professor and a toxicology professor. The story is told by the glacier itself, as it speaks to the people of the valley, saying it is dying, it is sorry and it is not its fault. The people face devastation and the book is based on research on what is happening and what can be done about it. Associated with global warming the glacier is retreating and is likely to have disappeared by the end of the century. As it retreats it exposes mineral-rich rocks and boulder clay. The heavy metals are washed out by the melting ice water and sluiced into streams, rivers and lakes. Water is poisoned in some areas and is undrinkable. Some lakes and rivers have lost their fish. These are two real life setbacks for people in small hamlets higher up the valley and a longer-term threat to a town lower down with 250,00 people. The answer may be in changing river courses, producing wetlands and introducing plants to absorb the heavy metals.

A Papal Encyclical, a virus and a glacier together point the way forward for us all.



SOME LOCKDOWN REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR TEAM RECTOR

‘The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. In the declaration you are about to make, will you affirm your loyalty to this inheritance of faith as your inspiration and guidance under God *in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation* and making Him known to those in your care?’ (my bold italics)

This passage from the declaration of oaths made by the Parish Priest when being licensed has struck me in a new and powerful way during this time of pandemic and lockdown. Ministering to people in a modern parish setting is challenging in many different ways anyway, however when faced with the current issues the traditional role of the clergy has come under pressure.

The role of the parish priest has changed quite considerably over the last 30 years and that has been challenge enough for many clergy and parishioners; now at this time of Coronavirus lockdown it has been harder to comprehend and come to terms with the changes that are happening. Indeed, even now, many are unaware of the storm clouds of change that are about to pour down on the church as these won’t become evident until a ‘new normal’ has been established.

The current changes have come almost overnight and have been forced upon us by the sudden arrival of this virus and the response of society towards it. So the lumbering slow pace of ecclesiastical reform and the natural replacement of congregational stalwarts over time has been circumvented. When people in church try to hurry change we can point to 2000 years of history and development as an excuse for maintaining the status quo, however we forget that quick and sudden change has come before through historical and natural calamity. Just ask any school child and they are quick to mention that Henry VIII took us away from Rome and when outrage recently ensued in some quarters upon the closure of church buildings it was soon recalled that ‘Bad’ King John had managed a similar thing less than 60 years after the construction of St Mary’s started. ▷



◁ The vicar of our parents' generation was – in a strange conflation of Dad's Army, Derek Nimmo and Fr Brown – seen as a cycle riding, bumbling, ever present fixture of village life and although that image had largely gone, current clergy were still a visible and traditional presence in many parts of their community. Coronavirus has reduced them to mere onlookers; people who have suddenly had to become experts on Zoom, Facebook and WhatsApp to the amusement of those who have to watch the whole torturous result. Fortunately, my other extra-parochial activities have kept me out and about and – largely – offline!

The vicar who was desperately running to manage their diary commitments has been changed overnight into a time rich, technology poor, bit part actor on the minimised split screen of the few parishioners who have WiFi. As such we are poorly equipped and as the Bishop of Hertford quipped; 'Cranmer Hall (Oxford) didn't prepare us for this'! (I went to Ridley Hall at the other place myself, which explains a lot).

The sacred buildings of which we are custodians have been locked and denied to the community as our empathetic, Archiepiscopal leader presides on Easter day from his kitchen to the confusion of Methodists and Roman Catholics alike!

There is no doubt that this crisis has been a challenge to the Church in many ways and perhaps it may pull the Church of England up sharply to look at the way we utilise ancient buildings, deploy the clergy and see different types of ministry re-ordered for the modern age. This will not be before time.

In our own context we were already looking at the Team Ministry and the way we functioned and worked together in Hemel Hempstead. How the clergy could support one another and - with the recent departure of Rickey and now Caroline - bring a diverse offering of ministry back to us in this parish.

St Mary's, whilst being ideally placed for the park and the High Street does not have an obvious residential catchment in the same way as St Paul's and so we need a different approach to outreach playing to the strengths of these buildings with their location and kerb appeal. If one looks at St Mary's from the outside one expects tradition and a certain style of worship whereas something completely different might be expected at St Paul's.

The furloughing of curates and the threatened redundancy and reduction in the number of vicars in some diocese in the Church of England will certainly concentrate the minds of many with the bishops and archbishops needing to look for much more radical solutions if the Church of England is to adapt and minister into future decades. For us here in Hemel a return to the traditional aspects of parish ministry might see us going 'Back to the future'. Just one thing though; I won't be trying my bike riding, Derek Nimmo impersonation out on you anytime soon.

With my love and prayers in these extraordinary times,

Canon John

A PAST REFLECTION

SHOWING US A WAY FORWARD

Thirst After Righteousness: Rector and Publican in charity job-swap



In 2018 on Sunday 25 November Canon John worked a two hour busy lunchtime shift at the Old Kings Arms in the High Street.

Earlier Ben Satchfield, the Landlord, had welcomed people at the door of St Mary's Church, given an address and handed out leaflets.

Ben's address highlighted the role of both pubs and churches in building and nurturing communities, tackling social isolation, providing advice and support in times of crisis, community outreach and charity giving.

One parishoner recalls, "Ben explained how the role of the pub had changed in recent times. Among the pub's visitors on a quiet evening there were often the lonely and the troubled; those who, perhaps to save money on their heating bills, would buy just one small drink or a cup of coffee and make it last. He also cited the number of pubs that were closing down at an alarming rate, a rate no doubt accelerated currently by lockdown."

This is a critical message for all of us as we come through and out of this pandemic.

This story was featured in E-News, the fortnightly e-mail news bulletin from the Diocese of St Albans

KEEPING IN TOUCH – AN APPRECIATION

With the pending onset of pandemic lockdown crisis Canon John on 21 March sent out the first of his many messages to the Parish. Importantly, in this message was a selection of links providing for access to sources of worship and prayer. Since then there have been no attended services. Assisted by The Revd Caroline he has continually retained contact and he has led from the front.

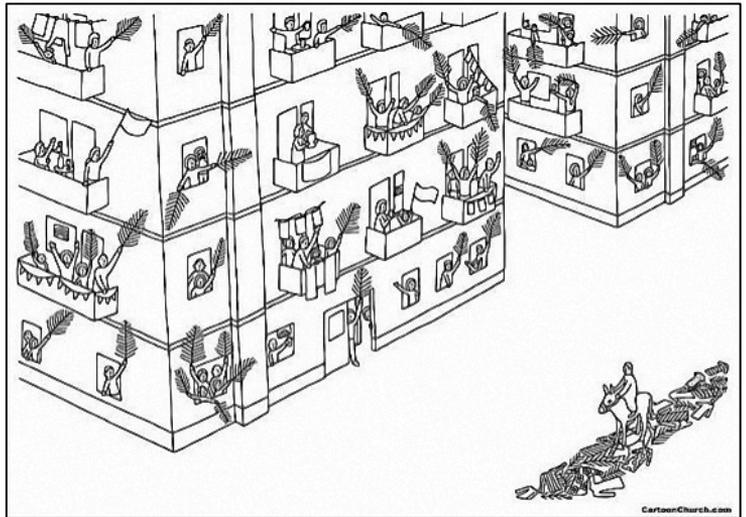
The weekly bulletin has been supplemented by 'SToMP Bulletin Extras' and weekly service and reading sheets. A pastoral contact system has been set up whereby key people have reported on a weekly basis on their telephone and other contacts with people within their charge. In any one week over 30 people have been involved. Also, a WhatsApp group has flourished and currently has 43 participants.

ZOOM has come into its own, particularly demonstrated by the Service of Prayer and Thanksgiving on 24 May shared by a congregation of 45 people built up in 33 ZOOM contact places. ZOOM has been used to hold meetings of the Standing and Finance Committees and of the PCC. Arising from these were considerations and decisions, which included alternatives to be faced because of the financial impact of COVID-19 on our church finances, the need to introduce WiFi to both churches and the need for risk assessments as a basis for opening the churches when that time comes. Intensive use of ZOOM has also enabled consultation, decisions and significant progress towards the establishment of the new Parish website.

Canon John has kept us both in our faith and variously interested and amused through regularly sending out pieces of information, including His three 'Daily Tales' and his four 'Saints of Interest'. Also, his 'English Clergy Eccentrics', of which we have seen four to date, have been a source of incredulity and fun. For example, The Revd Jeremiah Carter the Curate in Lassingham in 18th century Yorkshire who, after the Sunday morning service, playing his fiddle would lead the congregation to his buxom barmaid wife in their pub. Such was his reputation that on one occasion there were 250 communicants and presumable the same number of drinkers in his pub. ▷

◁ My key Parish memory to date during this time, however, is of Palm Sunday. Resplendent in his church vestments and standing back against the stone wall in the grounds of St Mary's Canon John prays and blesses the dwarf African palm crosses. He then goes up to St Paul's, but now dressed in puritanical black with a beautiful red stole, and he prays and blesses the palm crosses as before in the church, and then goes outside to pray for the community. All of this was beautifully captured by Penny Williams and available on the mobile phones of the WhatsApp group.

I have thought a lot about these things over the unending weeks of isolation. We could have been even more involved had we had WiFi and been able to stream services, as in the case of the Holy Trinity Church in Leverstock Green. However, fine for those with computers and laptops and fine for those with mobile phones. Some have neither – just a thought for the future.



Palm Sunday Morning - Blessing the palms

WHEN THIS IS OVER

When this is over we may never take for granted
a handshake with a stranger
full shelves in the stores
conversations with neighbours
crowded theatre
Friday night out
taste of Communion
a routine check up
the school crush each morning
coffee with a friend
the stadium roaring
life itself.

When this ends we may find we have become
more like the people we wanted to be
we were called to be
we hoped to be....and may we stay that way
better for each other
because of the worst.

Author unknown



EDITOR'S INTERVIEW



MARIE EVANS

On reflection Marie's life falls into five phases. The first phase included the early years. Born in Park Royal near Wembley in 1975, she lived with her mum, grandparents, great-grandmother and mum's 2 siblings. Marie lived in Neasden for 11 years before her roaming early years began. A year in North London was followed by a year in Praa Sands near Penzance, then three years in Huddersfield before at the age of 16 she went to live with her grandparents in Kings Langley. The second phase began when, leaving school, she took up a three - year hair dressing apprenticeship at Sloane Street, one of Vidal Sassoon's five salons in London. Then she went to teach in Sassoon's School of Hairdressing, very popular for students from throughout the world.

A third phase started in 1998 when she met the Hemel Hempstead man she was to marry, and during this she spent the next ten years as a home maker, which she loved. In 2000 Mollie was born and Sonny followed in 2003. Living first in Adeyfield, the family finally moved to Highfield in 2002. When returning to work, it was as a domiciliary care worker and, in 2013, she took an IT course at the West Herts College, where also she did voluntary work as a teaching assistant. Wanting to go into administration within the Hertfordshire County Council, her first post was at a residential complex for adults with learning disabilities in Abbots Langley. ▷

◁ In 2017 she became a Customer Relations Advisor with the Hertfordshire Health Improvement Service and now helps to run the County's Stop Smoking Service. This is both paradoxical and appropriate because, starting to smoke even before she was 16, she had smoked heavily until 2015 when she stopped completely. Who better to give advice than a reformed smoker?

Starting the fourth phase Marie faced a major watershed when her marriage split up in 2012. Her life entered a chaotic period. From 2012 through to 2017 she faced the trauma and challenges of becoming a single parent and of her stepfather having a major stroke in 2013, losing her grandmother in 2014 and then her grandfather on her birthday, 24 January 2017, all the time whilst earning her living through her work journey. Looking back, she realises that she felt that life was tough, that she had been dealt a bad hand and that she was resigned to it. Following the tragedy on her birthday she was traumatised for several weeks. A seasoned drinker, alcohol seemed to give her the support she needed.

Then she clearly remembers the next major watershed in her life and the start of the fifth phase. On Wednesday 19 April 2017, pouring a large glass of wine in finishing off a bottle, within herself she heard a voice saying, 'What are you doing? Drink it because it will be the last one that you have'. And so it was. On the same day she remembers walking past St Paul's which, living in Highfield for 17 years, she had passed with her dog a thousand times but hardly noticing it. Now she looked up at the bell and at the doors. The same voice said to her, 'what you are looking for is through those doors'. The following Sunday she went to St Paul's for the first time, meeting Penny Williams at those doors, they went in together and sat together; this was also Penny's first service at this church.

Marie whilst baptised had not been a church person. Sometimes with friends she had gone to their churches, but she had never felt comfortable in any church. She felt she had no faith and no concept of God but was too scared to say that she did not believe in God. Now there was a spiritual awakening and she felt at home in St Paul's, a welcoming church within walking distance from home. Also, she came to appreciate the special seasonal services in St Mary's. Attending St Paul's regularly and going to confirmation classes for several weeks she was confirmed at St Paul's the following October. That was John Williams' first confirmation service in the Parish and Caroline Wainman's first service in St Paul's and Marie felt privileged that they were both there for her. She was thrilled to be confirmed and she floated that night. Now she realises that she had never appreciated what she had and that she had always been looking for something else. ▷

◁ Marie's pride and joy are Mollie and Sonny, the former at Bournemouth studying Psychology and the latter heading into the sixth form to study English, History, Government and Politics. She sees the family as 'the three musketeers'. They give her great support; she trusts them 100 per cent and she is thrilled to be part of their life journey. Marie also has another great commitment being very involved with Alcoholics Anonymous. Having been sponsored to join them she now sponsors others and has served variously as Treasurer and Secretary. The new path that Marie is on stood her in good stead when, in 2018, her stepfather was diagnosed with terminal cancer and died 9 weeks later. This was a very upsetting time for her and her family but, with great support from friends and, especially her children, Marie took much good from the situation – she was able to take leave from work and devote her time to getting to know the man whom she had so taken for granted. Instead of losing a stepfather, in these very precious last moments of his life, she felt privileged to have finally found her father.

These last few weeks have seen Marie working at home for the county service, which has been inundated with work from many referrals. Now acting as a telephone advisory service, the work is based on 64 clinics and it is seen by other counties to be a model of how to do things in the COVID-19 crisis.

This brings us up to date and it was fascinating and moving to listen to Marie's story. Daring to dream she would like to write a book. It is fitting, having told somebody over breakfast about her dream of writing, that on that day after the morning service at St Paul's, Marie was astonished to be asked to write a piece on her recent visit to Auschwitz, which is featured in this issue of SToMP. She feels now that she can dare to dream but that she needs to be careful what she wishes for!

Is Marie's life about to enter a sixth phase?

GG 30 May 2020.

THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL

The Clergy

The Revd Canon John Williams 01442 265272:
The Revd Luke Geoghegan
The Revd Richard Leslie
The Revd. Diana Spink 01442 262133

Parish Office

Norma Howie 01442 253977

Church Wardens

St Mary's: Norma Podmore: 01442 248535:
Emmeline Lambert 01442 268705
St Paul's: Gordon Gaddes: Tel: 01442 257920

Hall Bookings:

For St Mary's and St Paul's Halls:
Norma Howie 01442 253977

SToMP Magazine

hello@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk
Editor: Gordon Gaddes
Design: Jeff Wallis
The Parish of St Mary & St Paul
Reg. Charity no 1130644



MY GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE



The lights are somehow warmer there: not as bright as the glaring city lights that I'm used to. My Grandma's always cooking, so the house is always filled with the smell of fresh bread or cakes or melting butter. The TV is never off. It's usually some old wartime comedy so when you walk past you get a few seconds of silly trumpet music or canned laughter. The soap smells like the summer and the sheets smell like my Grandma. It's the kind of house where the pillows are never unplumped. Every available wall space is covered in photos. There are generations of my family smiling at me from all around. Their shelves are filled with odd little trinkets and knick-knacks and the kitchen window sill is filled with plants. There always seem to be more birds and brighter flowers in their garden. There are old teddy bears welcoming you in each bedroom and the curtains let golden sunlight drift through in the morning, illuminating the dust mites.

Walking past my Grandpa's study, you can hear the sound of typing or the flicking of pages or maybe even snoring. His shelves are lined with books and old newspaper clippings. There's always a warm squishy hug going and never a frowning face.

I love my Grandparents' house.

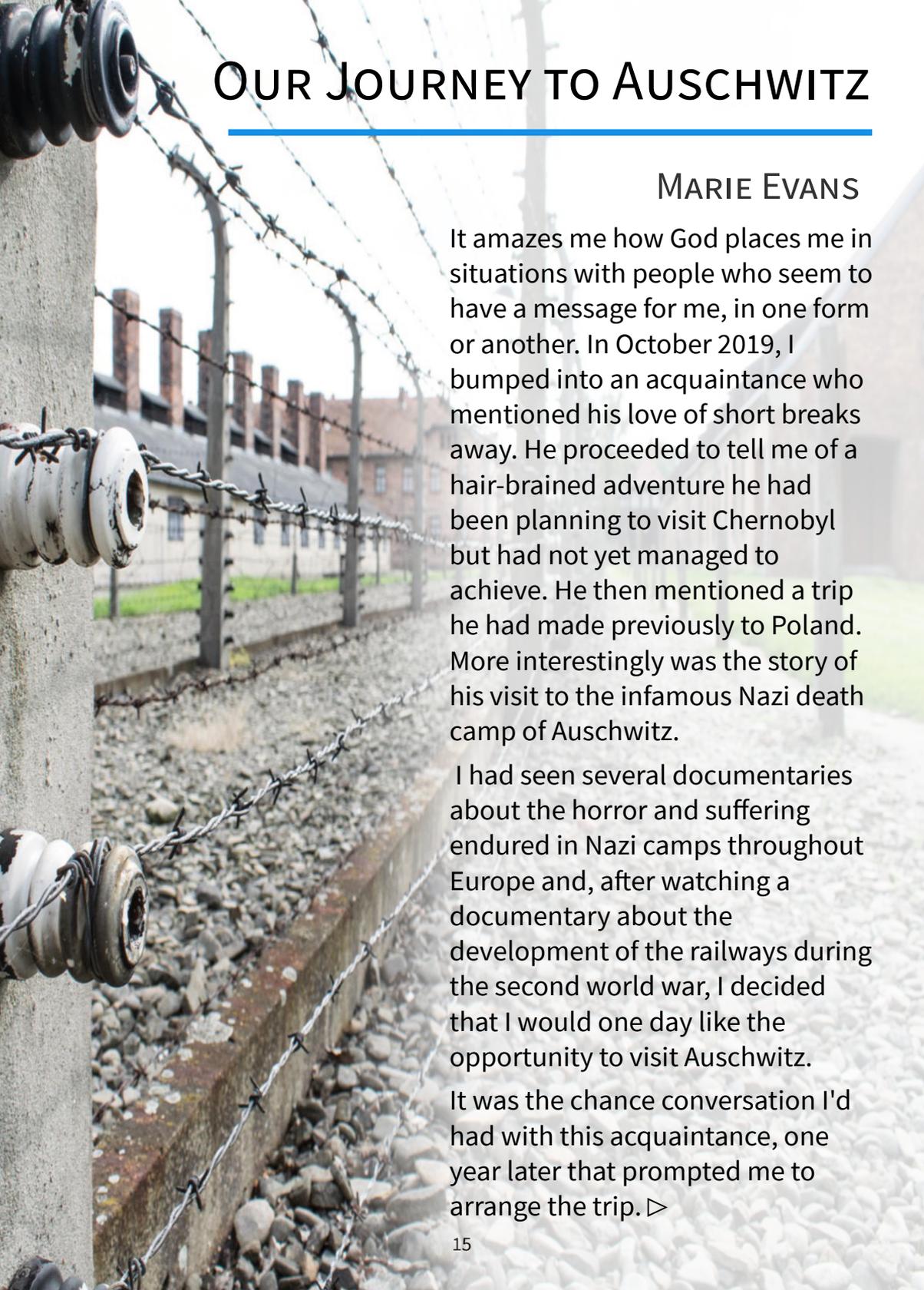
Leah Plant (Age 14)

Image deleted

WHAT CHARITIES NEED - BISHOP ALAN SPEAKS IN HOUSE OF LORDS DEBATE

Many charities are "teetering on a cliff edge" at the very time they are needed to help cope with the coronavirus crisis, a senior church leader warned. The Bishop of St Albans, Rt Rev Alan Smith, stressed the need for urgent assistance as the House of Lords debated online the challenges faced by the charitable and voluntary sector during the current Covid-19 pandemic. While the outbreak had led to an increase in demand for support services, it coincided with groups seeing a significant cut to their income with the closure of charity shops and cancellation of fundraising events because of the lockdown, The National Council for Voluntary Organisations estimated that the sector overall may lose around £4 billion over a 12-week period as a result of the pandemic. It has warned that this would result in charities becoming unable to provide essential services at a time of increased need.

Speaking during the debate, the bishop said: "At the very time when we need every charity in the country to be mobilised and deployed, many charities are teetering on a cliff edge. Over the years, as the Government has rightly raised standards in safeguarding and health and safety and training, charities have had to employ people to meet those requirements. And now, as fundraising activities and charity shops income has dried up, they are furloughing the very staff who are needed to oversee volunteers. Many charities are themselves major employers and as such are part of the drivers of economic recovery." He added, "We are all passionate about trying to allow charities to function fully again and to raise funds, but meanwhile, they need help and they need it rapidly." Opening the debate, Liberal Democrat peer Lord Addington said the £750 million package of support for charities announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak was welcome, but pointed out that this was far outstripped by the losses faced by the sector. He added, "We have got to have a look at how these charitable institutions survive to meet the needs that will still be there at the end of this period."



OUR JOURNEY TO AUSCHWITZ

MARIE EVANS

It amazes me how God places me in situations with people who seem to have a message for me, in one form or another. In October 2019, I bumped into an acquaintance who mentioned his love of short breaks away. He proceeded to tell me of a hair-brained adventure he had been planning to visit Chernobyl but had not yet managed to achieve. He then mentioned a trip he had made previously to Poland. More interestingly was the story of his visit to the infamous Nazi death camp of Auschwitz.

I had seen several documentaries about the horror and suffering endured in Nazi camps throughout Europe and, after watching a documentary about the development of the railways during the second world war, I decided that I would one day like the opportunity to visit Auschwitz.

It was the chance conversation I'd had with this acquaintance, one year later that prompted me to arrange the trip. ▷



◁ The German railway system (the Reichsbahn) was integral to transporting millions of Jews from around Europe to these camps so, to find myself standing on the tracks leading into Auschwitz itself was a very moving and unforgettable experience... I made the trip to Poland in October 2019 with my teenage son and daughter – Sonny, 16 and Mollie, 19. Both have an interest in history, particularly the second world war and were very keen to go.

The journey to Auschwitz began when we were picked up at our hotel in Krakow. It was about an hour and a half drive to our destination, and the weather was lovely, warm and sunny.

As we got further away from the bustling city of Krakow, the landscape changed – it was quite beautiful, peaceful and quiet. We were travelling in luxury compared to the families who would have been making that journey some 80 years earlier. The difference for us was that we knew our destination and had a view of our surroundings. The life I live with my children bears no resemblance to the lives of the people who would have entered Auschwitz during the war. We couldn't begin to imagine the fear and uncertainty they would have faced, even before reaching the camp, let alone once there.

We arrived at Auschwitz I – this was the first of the camps on this huge complex, its purpose initially to house political prisoners of war. It was previously a military camp so its existing buildings were useful for the sudden influx of detainees coming from all over Europe. To those who didn't know better, conditions here were relatively good – rooms had wooden bunks that were 3 beds-high; there were washrooms and toilets; the belief as the prisoners entered was that they would work there until the war was over; then be allowed to return to their homes and their lives. Little did they know that their journey there would be their last and that they would work, not for their freedom as promised but, until they could work no more. ▷



◁ Explaining the story of the holocaust in pictures, there was some outstanding and unforgettable photography. It captured the true nature of the intention to rid countries of not only Jews but most other ethnic groups. It illustrated the extent to which this was done, travelling to the far reaches of Europe, gathering vast numbers of people, so that no one deemed unsuitable for The Third Reich would be left.

In memory of the hundreds of thousands of souls whose lives ended at this terrible place, displays of personal belongings were installed for us to see - suitcases, kitchen utensils, men's shaving brushes and shoes. The grisly details of many acts of cruelty I was unaware of, but they were necessary to know, to be able to comprehend the scale of the suffering that took place.

As we prepared to leave this first camp, what stood out for me when standing at the end of a row of the buildings, was the length and precision-straightness of the walkways that surrounded us. It wasn't too difficult to imagine how stifling it must have felt to be hemmed-in by electric fences that were too high to consider scaling; whilst being watched-over by armed guards in the ominous and looming towers.

Next, on to Birkenau (Auschwitz II) – we walked from Auschwitz I, following the footsteps of so many who had gone before us, to Auschwitz II. Although there were hundreds of people visiting that day, the air seemed silent as we followed the infamous train tracks that stretched into the distance, through the arch and directly into the centre of the camp. It was difficult to comprehend that I was standing on the spot that I had seen in the documentary. Unlike the prisoners, I had chosen to go there. ▷

◁ Although most of the barracks had gone, the chimneys had been left standing, row upon row, as far as the eye could see. The size and scale of this place was far greater than I had ever imagined. It was chilling to consider how many people were housed there, yet daily, even more were losing their lives. The trains that pulled into Auschwitz were packed full of people but left empty to refill and return with more.

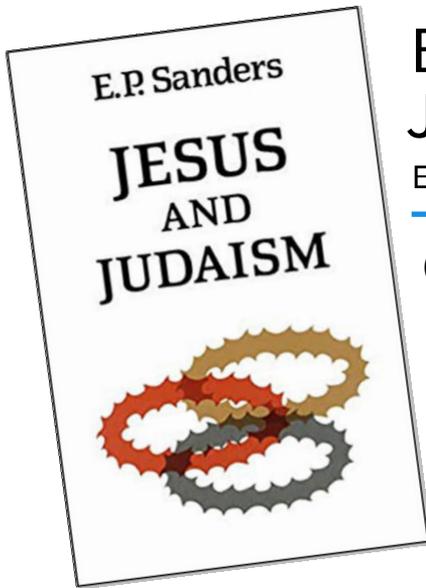
We entered one of the barracks – in comparison to the buildings at Auschwitz I, these were shoddily built. No clean, military lines or symmetry. No wooden bunks. No washrooms or toilets. Just a stove and brick-built bunks, with room for up to 6 to sleep side by side and stacked 3-rows high. Conditions must have been horrendous.

Much of the evidence of this part of the camp had been destroyed before it was liberated but a memorial site stood where the 3 huge incinerators that ran for 24 hours a day had been. Here, many gathered and sang songs in remembrance. Incredibly emotional, it was humbling to witness. Our day at Auschwitz was almost over.

Film and photography images that I had seen always showed the camp during the winter; the ground covered in snow; landscape unforgiving. As we stepped out of the barrack, we noticed that the sun was setting. The sky was a beautiful colour and there was a feeling of great peace and tranquillity. Visiting Auschwitz was an incredible experience. A privilege that Mollie, Sonny and I will never forget.

My parting thoughts: amidst the undeniable ugliness of it's past, and the horrifying history that saturated the entire area, here was a scene of great awe and beauty. This was the final resting place for so many lives that had been unjustifiably ended. It looked surprisingly very beautiful, considering the circumstances of its existence. Although not the one that was promised as they had entered, in the warmth and beauty of the setting sun that enveloped the surrounding landscape, the prisoners finally had their freedom. ●





BOOK REVIEW

JESUS AND JUDAISM

E. P SANDERS.

(E P Sanders is a historian rather than a theologian and calls himself a liberal, modern secularised Protestant. This book was published in 1985)

I read this book during Lent 2020. E. P. Sanders sets out to identify Jesus' intention and his relationship to his contemporaries in Judaism and in doing so tries to discover the reason for his death and the motivating force behind the rise of Christianity. In other words why did Jesus upset the scribes and

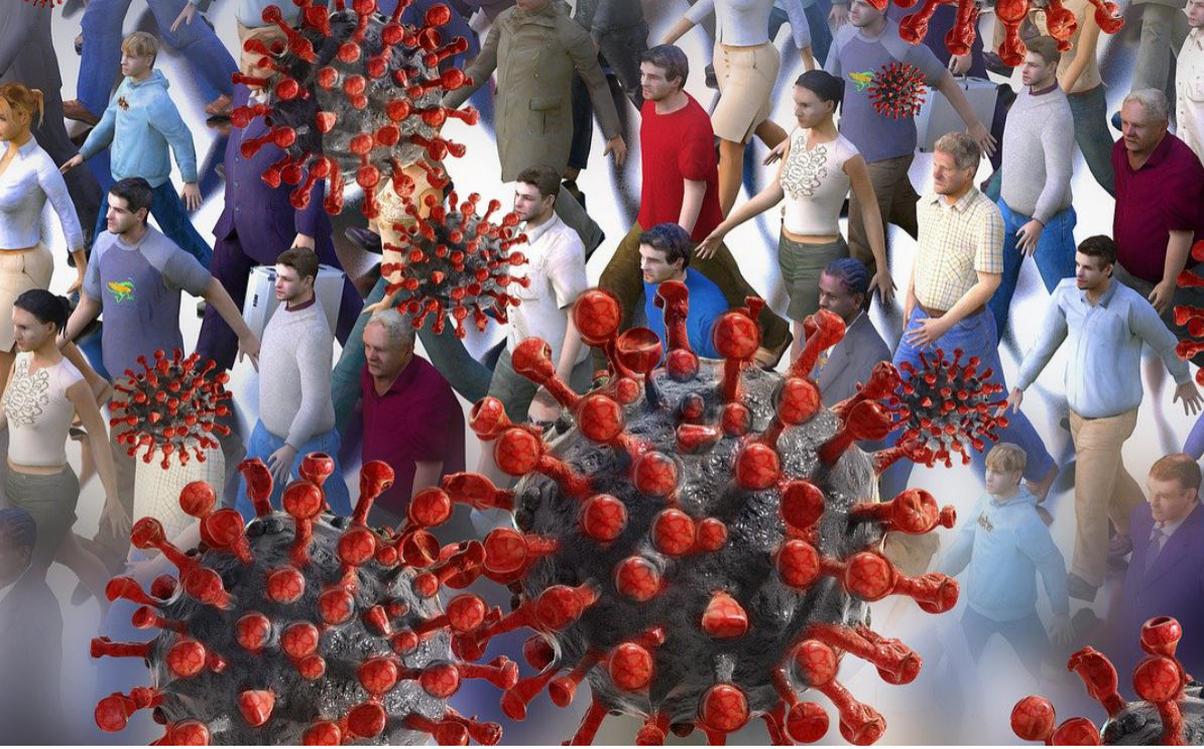
Pharisees and why did his followers then start a new community?

For Judaism the kingdom was always the Kingdom of Israel with its twelve tribes. By his calling of the twelve disciples to replicate them Jesus intended to call the twelve tribe nation to repentance, but by emphasising 'the Kingdom of God' made a fundamental change, which broke with Jewish nationalism and meant that ultimately the kingdom would include Gentiles.

Jesus cleansed the temple for the approaching Kingdom of God and this provoked the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem and it is probable they turned him over to Pilate as a political suspect. The temple stood for the old way of religion and the community embodying it. Destroying it and rebuilding it signified resurrection and the birth of a new way of expressing religion, with a new community to embody it. Jesus proclaimed God's love to sinners before they repented, demonstrating the kindness of God, replacing a superstitious belief in a God of wrath says E. P. Sanders.

It was at Pentecost this year that I made several connections. Pentekoste is Greek for 'fiftieth'. Shavuot (Pentecost) is fifty days after Passover in the Jewish calendar. It was Pentecost (fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus) and Jerusalem was filled with people celebrating their holiday. The disciples were gathered together and the Holy Spirit rested upon each one of them empowering them to go out and preach the good news of Jesus. This marks Pentecost as the birth of Christianity.

Catherine Lindsay



AN IMAGINED LETTER FROM COVID-19 TO HUMANS

Stop. Just stop.

It is no longer a request. It is a mandate.

We will help you.

We will bring the supersonic, high speed merry-go-round to a halt.

We will stop

the planes

the trains

the schools

the malls

the meetings

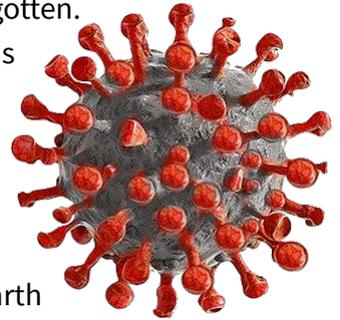
the frenetic, furied rush of illusions and 'obligations' that

keep you from hearing

our single and shared beating heart,

the way we breathe together, in unison.

Our obligation is to each other,
As it has always been, even if, even though, you have forgotten.
We will interrupt this broadcast, the endless cacophonous
broadcast of divisions and distractions,
to bring you this long-breaking news:
We are not well.

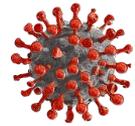


None of us; all of us are suffering.
Last year, the firestorms that scorched the lungs of the earth
did not give you pause.

Nor the typhoons in Africa, China, Japan.
Nor the fevered climates in Japan and India.

You have not been listening.

It is hard to listen when you are so busy all the time,
hustling to uphold the comforts and conveniences that scaffold your lives.



But the foundation is giving way,
buckling under the weight of your needs and desires.

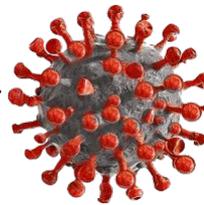
We will help you.

We will bring the firestorms to your body.

We will bring the fever to your body.

We will bring the burning, searing, and flooding to your lungs
that you might hear:

We are not well.



Despite what you might think or feel, we are not the enemy.

We are Messenger. We are Ally. We are a balancing force.

We are asking you:

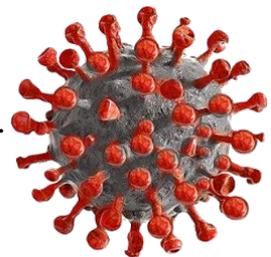
To stop, to be still, to listen;

To move beyond your individual concerns and consider the concerns of all;

To be with your ignorance, to find your humility,

To relinquish your thinking minds and travel deep into the mind of the heart;

To look up into the sky, streaked with fewer planes, and see it,
to notice its condition: clear, smoky, smoggy, rainy? How much do you
need it to be healthy so that you may also be healthy?



To look at a tree, and see it, to notice its condition: how does its health contribute to the health of the sky, to the air you need to be healthy?
To visit a river, and see it, to notice its condition: clear, clean, murky, polluted?
How much do you need it to be healthy so that you may also be healthy?
How does its health contribute to the health of the tree,
who contributes to the health of the sky, so that you may also be healthy?

Many are afraid now.

Do not demonise your fear, and also, do not let it rule you.

Instead, let it speak to you—in your stillness,
listen for its wisdom.

What might it be telling you about what is at work, at issue, at risk,
beyond the threats of personal inconvenience and illness?

As the health of a tree, a river, the sky tells you about quality of your own health, what might the quality of your health tell you about the health of the rivers, the trees, the sky, and all of us who share this planet with you?

Stop.

Notice if you are resisting.

Notice what you are resisting.

Ask why.

Stop. Just stop.

Be still.

Listen.

Ask us what we might teach you about illness and healing,
about what might be required so that all may be well.

We will help you, if you listen.

Kristin Flyntz

South Africa 3.12.2019

JOSEPH LOWERY

Preacher and civil rights campaigner
1922 - 2020

This American preacher and civil rights campaigner died on 27th March aged 98. He could have died as a teenager. In a store he had been struck in the belly by a policeman's nightstick with the words , 'get back n****r! Don't you see a white man is coming through the door?' He ran back home to get his Dad's .32 revolver. Had he used it he would probably have been lynched in those days. Dad stopped him .

Thereafter he found love and non-violence through the New Testament; he became a Methodist preacher at two big United Methodist churches in Atlanta. A close friend of Martin Luther King he continued their joint work on desegregation after Martin had been shot. Joseph was not in his hotel room when it was blown up and on another occasion Klansmen's bullets missed him and his wife. '.. he knew that God's plan would work out. Crooked places would be made straight, the lion would lie down with the lamb and every tear would be dried' (see footnote). He gave the benediction at the inauguration of Barack Obama in 2008 and 'In the fierce cold of that January day, hot tears streamed down his cheeks'.

Say amen and amen for a great and good man now gone!

Gordon Gaddes

Footnote: quotations taken from The Economist Obituary April 4th 2020, page 78; copy of page available from SToMP Editor



MY GARDEN DURING LOCKDOWN

The last few months since lockdown have been some of the strangest times we have ever experienced. If like me you are fortunate enough to have a garden to lose yourself in it has been a great relief. My greenhouse is a large part of my gardening, growing flowers and vegetables, propagating plants and growing some more exotic species like orchids and has been an added bonus for when we have inclement weather.

At the start of lockdown I was caught out by not having enough compost so I turned to making my own, not ideal as it wasn't sterilised but it had to do. Making it up I went with the good old recipe of John Innes – that's 7-3-2. 7 parts of loam (in this case my own compost, sieving it first through a ¼" sieve) 3 parts of some old peat based compost and 2 parts of horticultural grit. To this I added a good handful of slow release granular fertiliser. This kept me going until our internet order arrived some three/four weeks later. ▷

◁ My son rang to ask how long seed lasted as he had found some, that I had given him, in his shed. That seed was at least 10 years old! I said if it was vacuum packed inside it was worth a go. The picture here is the result of that planting. Mizuna (peppery/mustard leaves), salad leaves and sunflowers all germinated from those 10 year old seeds. So it is always worth a try.

Having a large greenhouse, and the time, has given me the opportunity to grow more plants than I have ever done in the past both from seeds and cuttings. Ten different varieties of Geraniums including some old Victorian ones, double red and appleblossom. Twelve varieties of scented leafed Geraniums, all cuttings from plants I had in stock. Twelve varieties of Fuchsias, some grown as standards. Six varieties of Abutilons, all cuttings taken from old plants.

From seed came Tomatoes, which are now producing fruit, lettuce and leeks. Brompton stocks and Sweet Williams will be ready for autumn planting whilst Rudbeckia, Zinnias, Asters, dwarf and tall Sunflowers, Petunia, Morning Glory and annual Chrysanthemums should all soon be gracing our borders, God willing and if the foxes



leave them alone! They seem to have taken a dislike to my Iris that is planted in the pond at the top of the garden and many mornings I have found it lying on the grass. At times they roll around on my onion bed and have taken the top of a cucumber plant, they dig holes in the borders and bury food but when I see the two cubs playing on the lawn in the evenings I have to forgive them.

We have also been able to sit and enjoy the garden more this year, the Spring weather was glorious and taking the time to watch the birds, blossom and plants develop was something to remember. We watched blue tits raise a brood in the box on the patio, feeding was frantic and we worried if we hadn't seen them for a few hours! The quantity of butterflies passing through the garden was unusually high particularly the Orange tip who was a frequent visitor.

This is just a little of what has been keeping me busy during this pandemic but I have loved doing it and feel very fortunate in having the facilities to do it. I hope too, like me, you have found some way of connecting with nature, it does have a calming effect on us I am sure.

Roger Sygrave

NEW ARCHDEACON'S LICENSING

On Saturday 14th March The Revd Canon Dr Jane Mainwaring was Licensed as the the new Archdeacon of St Albans. For the first time this did not take place in the Cathedral as an emphasis was put on the new Archdeacon's ministry throughout a wider archdeaconary.

St Mary's had the honour of hosting this historic occasion and despite a concern regarding Covid-19 and large gatherings reducing the expected number of invited guests from all around Hertfordshire and beyond, (this was just a few days before the official closure of church buildings), the 200 approx that attended witnessed an impressive and moving ceremony and afterwards enjoyed some wonderful refreshments brilliantly organised by our Parish catering team led by Sheila Barton.



LOCKDOWN LAUGHS

"Phoned the Council today to ask if it was alright to have a skip outside the house at the moment. They said they thought it was a good idea, they'd noticed I'd put on a few pounds since the start of the lockdown."

Brian D posted on WhatsApp group

"When you couldn't get eggs a few weeks ago I thought about keeping a few chickens. I phoned the Council to see if I could have a run in my back garden. I got the same answer as Brian."

Jeff W posted on WhatsApp group

FRANK STRUGGLING

Calling in on the Co-op at the Heights to get an Observer on a recent Sunday I joined a queue of four outside. Frank serving alone in the shop had his own queue inside. Struggling to be courteous, to count, collect the payments and to control the door was stressful. The phone was ringing incessantly and unanswered.

Inside by now, one customer impatiently asked, 'aren't you going to answer the phone, then'? Frank turned went to the phone and at which the ringing stopped. Everyone cheered. Back at his till, the ringing started again and was still ringing when I got to the head of the queue. 'Don't worry about me' I said,' answer it if you wish'.

He picked up the phone:

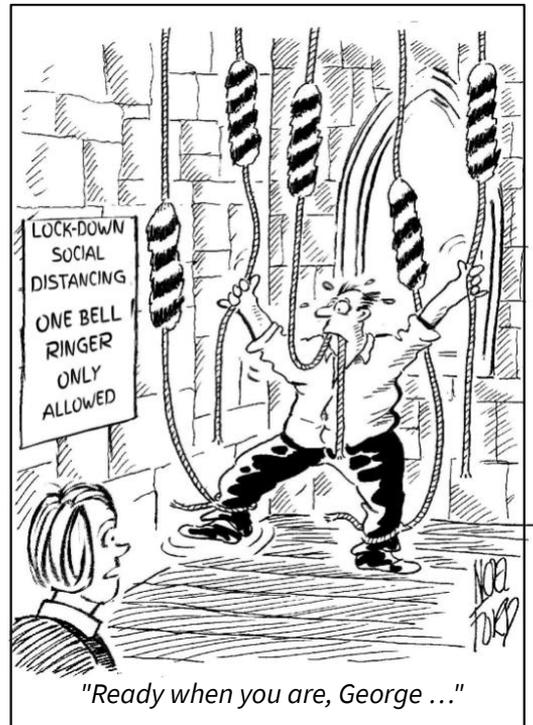
Frank, 'Can I help you'?

Caller, 'Do you have any large cans of Carling's lager on the shelf'?

Frank (exasperated) , 'Look here, I am trying to serve at the till, I have a queue outside, I need to keep an eye on the shop and I am lone working, so I'm sorry but you'll need to come

and look for yourself'. He hung up and with a shake of the head and a look of disbelief returned to his duties.

Rosina G



ST MARY'S KITCHEN AND TOILET UPDATE

Work started just before the lockdown but was paused after only a couple of days during which plastic screens had been put up to keep in the dust and the stone and timber floor was taken up to expose the substructure. Clarks also bought in the oak needed in case supplies became more challenging after lockdown. After the C of E guidance was changed to allow work, it was re-started on Friday 29th May.

The subfloor is now laid and the drain route through the West wall has been opened along with the excavation for the sewage pumping station allowing the plumber to start his work on Monday 8th June. Excavations in the churchyard for the water supply and the foul drain are scheduled to start on the 15th June.

The plan is still to finish within 10 weeks so possibly early August, but times are not normal so we are not counting on it. Also, one potential complication is that the annual boiler service on Tuesday 2nd June revealed that the boiler chimney flue, built into the west wall behind the new kitchen, is partially blocked. So we are now waiting for a CCTV survey to tell us where the blockage is, and hopefully how it can be cleared without having to break into the flue.

Robin Woodd



Frames for the stud partitions (view into toilet doorway)

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

There are so many different aspects to these strange times and for most of us money will be one.

For some it will have been a time of real financial hardship as our money coming in has been hit, or we have felt it important to support family who were affected that way; and for others it will have been the exact opposite as lockdown has reduced the opportunities for spending.

National statistics have shown this, with many Businesses unable to cope but personal credit card borrowing being paid down in an unprecedented way.

Sadly the Parish falls into the former category. About half of our income comes from Pledged Giving and this has been largely maintained – thank you so much. But much of the other part of our income comes from letting our halls, fees from weddings, Weekly envelope giving and collections of various kinds, and this has all been either stopped or badly affected.

Like other organisations we have applied for any Government help which we think we qualify for, and so we are receiving grants of 80% towards our wage costs for Administrator and Hall Cleaners. This amounts to around £800 per month and we are also saving on heating, lighting and photocopying.

The other side of the picture is that our Hall letting income has stopped with a loss of income of around £1800 per month, Weddings have also stopped with a loss of Fee income of around £3,000 in the year and much of our weekly income from collections and carboys is no longer. ▷





◁ Some Pledged Giving Weekly Envelopes are arriving at the moment, but many are not. So we do hope that if this is the way you support the Parish, you will fill and deliver all your back envelopes, if you possibly can, once a semblance of normality returns – again thank you!

We have tried to model what the end of year financial situation might look like. Of course this depends on a lot of unknowns so it can only really be an educated guess, but with the help of a recent Legacy and the already Budgeted input from the Legacy left by Richard Salisbury, it looks as if the shortfall might be able to be reduced to around £3,000.

This illustrates how lucky we are as a Parish to have had generous Benefactors; but whilst recognising and celebrating that fact, we should perhaps also consider how to support their generosity with our own - where we can.

So I would like to ask any of you who have actually been spending less through this strange period, to consider using a part of any saving to help us as a Parish reduce our losses and get through to the end of this year without needing to make any drastic decisions

If you feel moved to help then let me know if you would like talk through the most tax efficient way of doing it, or just send in a one off donation or give more each week . Thank you so much. ●

Robin Woodd
Stewardship Secretary

THE REVD CAROLINE



A Vestry 'Selfie'

It's not goodbye, it's au revoir!

This is not how it was supposed to be! I expect that this has been the plaintive cry of many during these unprecedented times. I was so looking forward to my last Easter at St Mary's and St Paul's and then having a chance to finish on a high with hopefully a final celebratory service and a send off to my new pastures as a rookie Vicar in Buckinghamshire.

Thank you for those who were able to join me in a virtual goodbye service on Zoom on 24th May. It was, in it's way, rather a unique and lovely experience. However, I am determined that, to quote Vera Lynne and the Queen, we WILL meet again...

This rather abrupt and unusual ending, as a curate on furlough, brings to a conclusion what has been a most wonderful curacy amongst you all at St. Mary's and St. Paul's. I cannot thank you all enough for the love and support I have received over the last (nearly) three years. ▷

◁ Especially I'd like to thank all of you who were willing me on, who advised me gently with such grace when I hadn't a clue and encouraged me when I got it right.

It was a steep learning curve right from the get-go – week one involving a collapsed body in the graveyard, and within my first few weeks, a former teacher colleague of mine died and my first ever funeral was huge and in front of many people who knew me. No pressure! There were so many great learning experiences, from Midnight Mass at the High Altar, swinging the thurible on my first Easter Day (thanks to Jeff I didn't take anyone's eye out) to a more recent one, visiting a care home in PPE to minister to the dying. After each experience, Canon John would say, "well you can't say you haven't had the full-range of training!"

Did I say it really was a steep learning curve? This girl had never even HEARD of some of the Holy week services, let alone led any – chasubles, incense, candles....oh so many candles – and so many liturgical rules! Thankfully I had a wonderful teacher in Canon John who, as you all know, loves to explain things in great detail and not only the hows, but also the whys – which is extremely important. John taught me with a mixture of wisdom, sound teaching, humour and a lot of patience!

In both the buildings of St Mary's and St Paul's I felt a sense of privilege to be a part of the history there, if only for three short years. In both buildings, I get the sense of how the intricate tapestry of life has played out there over the years, or centuries in the case of St. Mary's. As I went about on my travels around the parish and met with new people, so many people have told me of the place that these churches have in their family history and their lives – and we remember how much those relationships are important to people, whether they attend regularly or not. And it has been a privilege to be a part of that history.

These recent times have kept us out of these buildings and never has it been so important that as Christians, we go out there into the community and bring some of Christ's light out with us. To finish on one of my favourite Bible passages, Philippians 2:15 "Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky." I thank God for you all and for the special part you have all played in my formation as deacon, priest and now newbie vicar. You have all been stars. ●