

+ STOMP

WINTER 2021

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 49



THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD



STOMP MAGAZINE
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From the Editor	3
From the Rector.....	4
Saintliness in Somalia.....	6
Archbishops in the Spectator:	8
Bishop Michael's Visit.....	9
Congratulations Diana!.....	9
Unreliable Memories.....	10
LTPT Tenth Anniversary	12
Spring is Appearing	14
God in the Arts.....	16
Happy Birthday PCC!.....	18
More Christmas Card Reflections	19
Letters & Comments.....	20
Nothing Changes.....	21
A Hymn for Today	22
Tony's Take on Aspects of Lockdown	23
The Wondering Wandering Mariner	24
If Churches Go On-line	25
St James the Least of All	26
Money Money Money - again	28
Waterways Chaplaincy.....	30
The Lady With No Clothes.....	31
New Parish Website Online.....	32
Echos of Christmas	34
Parish Christmas Draw at St Paul's.....	35
A Message from Revd Caroline	36

Editor's Interview: As the preparation of this popular regular feature involves a detailed face-to-face chat it has not been possible to include one for this edition. We hope to resume this in our next edition.

COVER PICTURE

Gordon suggested to me that this splendid mature oak tree standing at the lower junction of Jupiter Drive and Queensway not far from St Paul's, might make an interesting picture for STOMP. He was struck by the beauty and the intricacy of the bare branches starkly silhouetted against the sky giving the tree a prominence it would not, clothed in leaves, possess in Summer. I took the photograph from the far side of Queensway, opposite the tree and I later found this poem which I thought made an appropriate caption.

Jeff W

A December Day

That's no December sky!
Surely 'tis June
Holds now her state on high,
Queen of the noon.

Only the tree-tops bare
Crowning the hill,
Clear-cut in perfect air,
Warn us that still
Winter, the agèd chief,
Mighty in power,
Exiles the tender leaf,
Exiles the flower.

Is there a heart to-day,
A heart that grieves
For flowers that fade away,
For fallen leaves?
Oh, not in leaves or flowers
Endures the charm
That clothes those naked towers
With love-light warm.

Robert Fuller Murray 1863 - 1894

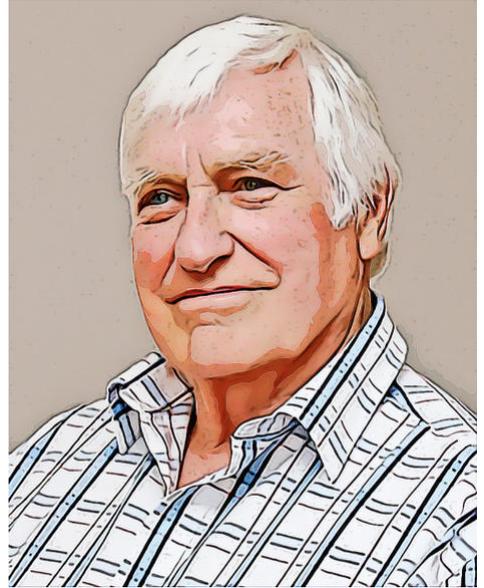
FROM THE EDITOR

Saints and Saintliness

I have always been bothered about this subject. Why you may ask? It is a matter of definition, is the reply. An Oxford Dictionary definition of 'Saint' is, 'a person acknowledged as holy or virtuous and regarded in Christian faith as being in heaven after death'. Another is, 'a very virtuous person'. The dictionary that I use does not mention 'saintliness' and that is the problem for me. Putting it all together formally we have 'Christian' and 'virtue'. In my mind 'saintliness', self-giving without regard to personal benefit or fear of consequences is a universal feature of human existence and being.

The sense of the sainthood, of the Saints we follow in the Anglican calendar, some of whom in their early lives were far from virtuous, does not do justice to saintliness in a contemporary world-wide perspective.

And I'm not on about missing the incredibly brave stand of people such as the Revd Bonhoeffer against the Nazis, a great Christian martyr, I'm also on about people from other faiths, or maybe people of no faith.



This is why readers of STOMP in the last issue were introduced to the Hindu Swami Agnivesh from India and in this issue to the Muslim from Somalia, Hawa Abdi.

Saintliness to me is the complete giving of self fearlessly to others without regard to cost and dangers. Such self-giving is encapsulated for Christians in the story of Jesus Christ.

GG

FROM THE RECTOR

Covid

For our parish much of the last year has been dominated - as it has for most of the country and indeed the world - by the ramifications of Coronavirus. Whilst we have had enforced closures of our churches and more recently chosen to close the churches to keep people safe ourselves, we have also had some powerful experiences of coming together which these challenging times have given us.

Perhaps surprisingly we have not had the huge increase in demand for funerals that may have been expected during this last year, indeed we have had fewer of them, many people having chosen to go direct to the crematorium or cemetery for their loved ones funeral rather than risk a visit to church or chapel. As society begins once again to open up we have seen an increase in demand for funerals in St Mary's and enquiries for baptisms and weddings have also picked up.

Many weddings have largely moved to the second half of this year, although we did have several last year where people had chosen to get married with smaller numbers, either because they felt that it was more important that they were married, even without the big party, or because a member of their family was very ill and they were concerned that they might not make a re-arranged wedding.



The rise of our online community, whether it is through the WhatsApp messaging group or the online services we are able to offer on Zoom, has been phenomenal. This has been the case for most churches and like many of them we have struggled to catch up with the technology. There is no doubt that we will continue to use these platforms long after the pandemic is over and the PCC is already considering how we can upgrade our audio/visual offering in both churches.

The open church offered by St Mary's throughout the time of this second lockdown has been greatly appreciated by people from all backgrounds and walks of life; they visit for peace, for a chance to pray, post a prayer on the prayer board and light a candle. Some also visit to look at the history of the building and there is no doubt that

the reopening of the church for visitors after about 25 years of being closed has transformed the perception of the church in the Old Town and with visitors to the park. Our links with the shops and the Old Town Market were very strengthening prior to lockdown and it's hoped that we will soon be able to rebuild these.

During the visit of Bishop Michael in December he was able to tour the Old Town Market, meet the organisers and hear from Sir Mike Penning and other local officials of their positive views of the way things have been developing between church and community in recent times.

Finances

Elsewhere in this edition of STOMP Robin Woodd's 'Money, Money, Money – again' article comments on our financial position for 2020 and alludes to the fact that we will have many challenges ahead during 2021. That is being realised now by the enforced closure of our hall facilities and restrictions that have meant fewer baptisms, weddings and funerals.

We are so grateful to you for continuing your support of the parish during this difficult and challenging time. People have been very generous with their financial contributions and – where possible - with their unstinting giving of their time and talents. We will need more of your generous support

going forward to allow us to emerge from the pandemic in a secure financial position.

APCM

Our Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be on Sunday 25th of April and we hope to be able to hold this, with people in attendance, at St Paul's. As usual we will be reviewing the past year and electing Churchwardens and members of the Parochial Church Council.

This year sees Norma Podmore stand down as Churchwarden after six years invaluable service in the post. I am sure I can see a future article for STOMP but suffice to say at this stage that she saw us through the last interregnum and has continued to powerfully support the work of our parish in the years following. I'm sure that Norma will continue to do much for the church in the years ahead but after six years she is required to stand down from her current role. There are a number of people with whom I am exploring the role of churchwarden but if you would like to nominate someone or you feel you might be called to this role yourself then please have a confidential word with me so we can discuss the possibilities further.

With every blessing to you all.

Canon John

SAINTLINESS IN SOMALIA

Hawa Abdi, aged 72, passed away on 5 August 2020. She was cut and stitched aged seven, aged twelve she had to look after her four sisters when her mother died, then a forced marriage and her first child when she was 13, losing that child and being divorced by her husband when she was 17.

What followed was amazing, she became a student.

On a Soviet scholarship she studied Medicine in Kiev for seven years followed by part-time study in Mogadishu for a degree in Law. This learning and her experience as a child prepared her for her life's mission of healing and, whilst a devout Muslim, for her fight for equal rights for orphans, girls and women.

On some family ancestral land, and using some saved gold, in 1983 she set up to the south west of Mogadishu a rural one room clinic, a place which came to be known as Hawa Abdi. This was her Rural Health and Development Organisation, which later became the Dr Hawa Abdi Foundation.

This was the basis for a village ultimately with a 400-bed hospital and three operating theatres, with four doctors and twenty nurses, serving 500 patients daily, and for a school for 850 children, seven feeding centres and a village for 90,000 people, with mangroves and extensive fields and self-funding fishing and agricultural projects. ▷

‘The catalyst and prime mover she was the chief doctor and surgeon, farm manager, strategist, fund raiser and spokesman for the place.’ (Ref. *The Economist*)

From a later marriage her two daughters, also educated in Medicine in the Soviet Union, became doctors and, as a great blessing, joined in her work and were a great support for the future.

It is said that Hawa Abdi's work helped 2 million people and saved thousands of lives. How can this have been so? From 1991 Somalia began to experience one of the most violent and persistent wars ever known. Many tens of thousands died and millions were displaced. Hawa Abdi became a place of peace and relative security for the displaced, the despairing, the sick and the suffering people. There were two rules: 'no politics' and 'wife beaters go to jail'. Both healing and work were available in what was a form of a commune, funded by charitable donations from throughout the world.

They faced great danger, for example from militant Islamists. Both in 2009 and in 2010 the compound was besieged and there were threats that it should be closed down. Hawa Abdi stood firm and the compound survived. One story is that she faced armed and highly dangerous boy soldiers who she put down with the words, 'yes, you have two testes but so do goats'.

This amazing work over decades led latterly to major accolades, the 2010 Award to her and her daughters as 'Women of the Year' by Glamour and Vital Voices, the 2012 Nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize, a number of other Peace Prizes and Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Harvard and Pennsylvania.

Based on research including the Hawa Abdi Obituary in the Economist dated 31st October 2020, and also her widely acclaimed 'Message to 21st Century Women' at New York's Chautauqua Institution on 31st October 2011, (reference 9 for TV)

ARCHBISHOPS IN THE SPECTATOR: CHURCH IN CHANGING TIMES

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have recently written an article for the Spectator magazine, responding to the recent media coverage asking: ‘Where is the C of E?’

The Archbishops say: “Let us offer an answer ... the Church of England has been a bedrock of faith, love, hope and compassion in this country for centuries through wars, plagues and pandemics — we still are, and we will go on being just that.

“You can imagine our shock, then, when we read in the media about what is supposedly happening... That the parish system, with its beautiful vision of serving every inch of the country and every person in it, is being systematically dismantled. That clergy are being made redundant. That there are plans to somehow centralise everything and for services, even

beyond Covid, to be online rather than in person.

“So let us try to set the record straight. There are no plans to dismantle the parish network. We are committed to our calling to be a Christian presence in every community.

“Yes, there are hard decisions currently being made across many dioceses. Overall some stipendiary posts will be lost. ...But the aim is to make each parish and each Christian community sustainable. If that doesn’t happen, there really will be no Church of England.

“There are rascally voices around who want to undermine the church — it was ever thus. But the real story is that we so believe in that vision of serving every inch of the country, and every person in it, that we are having to expand what it is to be the church.”

BISHOP MICHAEL'S VISIT

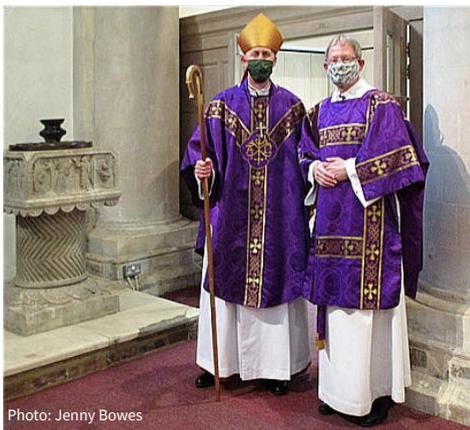


Photo: Jenny Bowes

Bishop Michael's visit was made at a time when we knew we would be soon heading back into lockdown and yet it was wonderful that he still chose to come to our services on the first Sunday in December. This had been planned as a chance for him to attend both 'Sausage Sunday' services but that was not to be. Restrictions meant that we had to be low on numbers, but those who came appreciated him being there and he was able to dedicate the new kitchen and toilet facility at St Mary's and the new garden at St Paul's.

Following his visit, he joined Canon John on zoom to review the way that the visit had gone and to look at the future. He was most encouraging about what we are doing in the parish and looked forward to visiting once again in more normal conditions.

CONGRATULATIONS DIANA!

Also on that Sunday we celebrated Revd Diana's 80th Birthday and she shared this splendid cake with us - we couldn't eat it there and then of course - but we each took a slice home to enjoy later .



UNRELIABLE MEMORIES

FROM A VERY ORDINARY OLD CHURCHGOER

I was 5 when my family moved to Hemel Hempstead in 1948. There was no new town, although it was about to emerge. Being good middle-class citizens, my family attended St Mary's on Sundays. We always walked to church. I've no idea whether they had a communion service, but we all went to Matins. The vicar then was Augustus Malley, who seemed pretty ancient to a 5-year-old. My parents thought that it was too complicated for us young ones to listen to one of his sermons, so they generously took it in turns to remove the children just before it. I now believe that they may have found the sermons boring too so used the children as an excuse. Occasionally, and I don't know why, we were taken to St Paul's church which was then just opposite Allandale. The vicar there I seem to remember as more child-friendly, a Revd Hanford? (memory problems here)

The new town was built and with it St Barnabas. I was a privileged little cub scout from a local prep school and attended the laying of the foundation stone by the Queen, although in June 1952 she wasn't yet crowned. I had a front-row place, and still have the photo of me in the background as the Queen was presented with flowers.

The newspaper photo (still got it) shows me as a grumpy little 9-year-old cub (third from the left in the front row).



We were occasionally taken to St Barnabas for Evensong where the vicar was Revd Stokes. A rather different style of worship, and of course as Evensong was shorter than Matins, preferred by reluctant youth.

Revd Malley retired in 1955 and we got Gordon Shelford. Quite a revolution! He was youngish, and had 2 children of my age, a boy with whom I played a lot and a girl whom I admired a lot. ▷

At St Mary's there were two curates, Peter Walker (who went on to become Bishop of Ely), and Philip Brown who managed the youth club at the church hall in George Street, ran after-service youth classes on Sundays, and took them on a Lakeland holiday (red bobble caps knitted for all). I was catering manager for a while – orange squash and Wagon Wheels purchased from Stainforths in the Parade. There was an occasional skiffle group, a wonderful collection of guitar, washboard, and a tea-chest bass. I seem to remember they played, among others, 'At the hop' by Danny and the Juniors, my first experience of the genre.

The old vicarage was where the hall is now, and was a wonderful rambling large house, great for exploring. I still remember going to my confirmation classes in the Vicar's study, and failing to learn (or even read) the Catechism for homework as instructed. Anyone remember it? ("An instruction to be learned of every person before he be brought to be Confirmed by the Bishop"). Luckily, we weren't tested on it!

The Shelfords were good friends with another local family (name withheld), the wife being a daughter of the Brocks of fireworks fame, their factory was where Woodhall Farm is now.

They had two sons of roughly my age and a nanny, unusual to encounter. November 5th in the vicarage garden was quite something, with huge (to me) display of fireworks direct from Brocks.

The other family had a huge house at the bottom of Fernville Lane, as it was then – another great place for us children to play. The son of the family built a dinghy largely out of plywood, which we launched at Water End, just the other side of the Red Lion bridge. It leaked.

Gordon Shelford left quite suddenly in 1958, along with the wife of a churchwarden, née Miss Brock. My parents, ever over-protective of young sensibilities, explained that he left because of heart problems. Partially true! I believed it for weeks. Revd Charles Plummer took over, but it was never the same (it never is!)

As we moved away from Hemel Hempstead soon afterwards that's the end of my unreliable memories. I moved back to Hemel in 1976, but that's another story.

David Gambling



LTPT TENTH ANNIVERSARY

On 8th November 2010 Pam and I with a group of fellow tourists went to the Dalukhanyo Pre-School during a visit to Langa Township in Cape Town. We were greeted by dozens of young children who sang and danced for us. It was an emotional experience, 'hardly a dry eye in the house'! The emotion was in seeing such energy and joy and receiving such warm greetings from these lovely children, in an area of such poverty. Over dinner that evening I said to Pam, 'We can do more for those kids than just put money in a cardboard box', and we agreed to do what we could.

The following 22nd February Pam and I signed the trust deed to set up the UK Langa Township Pre- School Trust. It was a small family initiative at first but gathered significant support from relatives, friends, our Parish Churches of St Mary and St Paul and others who had visited Langa. We launched LTPT the following July in St Paul's Church Hall, 42 people attending, mostly from our Parish. ▷

Vegetables provided by LTPT for the children of Langa pre-schools.



I lost Pam in 2015 and by 2017 the group of trustees was widened and included Rosina, whom I married in 2017.

Over the ten years approximately we have raised £212,000 and spent £210,000. The charity is run on a voluntary basis and 97% of the available money has been spent on the pre-schools, which is our continuing intention. Concentrating first on Dalukhanyo Pre-School our work finished there in 2018 and we started to support significantly the Nomonde Pre-School, which became our administrative centre.

In 2019 we started to help five other pre-schools and last year and this January we have been able to give some modest support in the pandemic – food, masks and sanitisers, to the Langa Early Child Development Forum. This Forum covers 8,000 children in 34 crèche and pre-school initiatives.

In April 2018 we launched the Nomonde Project, aiming to develop the infrastructure, as had been the case for Dalukhanyo over a seven-year period.



Our newsletters, available on:

www.langapreschooltrust.uk

have described the success achieved during the last three years, but the improvement of the playground is outstanding, largely because the pandemic has halted our profitable events programme.

On 22 February 2021 we launched an appeal to enable us to complete this project.

It is timely to recognise that LTPT has been made possible largely through the work and support of people in the Parish of St Mary and St Paul and to thank all who have supported us during the last ten years.

Gordon Gaddes





SPRING IS APPEARING

After a very changeable February with continuous rain we then had the coldest spell we have had for a decade with permafrost that did some damage in my garden. The snowdrops have nearly finished flowering and we have crocus and daffodils now.

The native daffodil ‘*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*’, Lent Lily, was very common around the Leverstock Green area in Victorian times. School children were given the day off to go and pick a bunch for their Mothers. Now due to modern farming practices and hedgerows being removed in the 1960s it is difficult to find any growing locally. I did find some in Blackmore wood a few years ago though.

Another native species of *Narcissus* less known is the Tenby daffodil, ‘*Narcissus maximus*’, found growing in South West Wales. It is a deeper yellow than its English cousin but grows roughly to the same height. This is regarded as the true St. David’s daffodil.

Going around my garden this first week of March, spring is certainly coming to life. First, against the south facing wall of the house is *Chaenomeles*, also known as *Cydonia* or *Japonica*, Japan being its country of origin. Pink buds are opening into salmon pink flowers.

Edging one of my borders is *Pulmonaria*, sometimes called American cowslip. ▷



Pulmonaria

It has a cowslip shaped flower but this plant has no connection to America being found growing naturally in parts of Europe and Asia. This plant is a favourite of mine due to its diverse range of colours from white, red, light blue, dark blue through to pink and blue mix on one flower. The foliage varies from plain dark green with the dark blue varieties to a mottled leaf with the light blue and bicoloured varieties. The plants are easy to propagate by division after flowering or in the autumn.

With the day length increasing the growth on plants is increasing too so it is a good idea to start sowing seeds, under protection and in the warmth. Lobelia and antirrhinum are fine seeds

so use a multi -purpose compost, fill to within a centimetre of the top of a pot, firm with the base of another pot and lightly cover with silver sand, you will then be able to see your seeds when sowing. After sowing lightly cover with vermiculite and water by standing your pot in a tray of water and allowing the water to percolate up overnight.

When sowing sweet peas use the inner of a toilet roll, fill three quarters full, sow one seed per roll and cover to one centimetre from the top. These rolls are ideal as sweet peas produce long roots. Water as above.

Enjoy your garden and the surprises it has to offer.

Roger Sygrave

GOD IN THE ARTS

The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a look at ‘Ecce Ancilla Domini’ by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It hangs in the Tate Gallery. Our image is from Wikimedia Commons

‘Ecce Ancilla Domini’ (Behold the handmaid of the Lord) is the title of this month’s painting of the Annunciation by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. We shall hear those words in the Gospel for this feast on 25th March, when Mary responds to Gabriel’s message that she is to be the mother of our Saviour.

It is a scene that has inspired artists throughout the history of Christianity. Over those years certain traditions emerged: in many paintings Mary was often shown at prayer, dressed in blue, in a room that was filled with elaborate furnishings of the period, all opening out onto the wider world.

Rossetti’s painting of 1850 is very different. He was a founding member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and as both a poet and a painter, he soon became its recognised leader. But the work of the Brotherhood was not without its critics. When Rossetti’s painting was exhibited, it was dismissed as ‘absurd, affected, ill-drawn, insipid, crotchety and puerile’



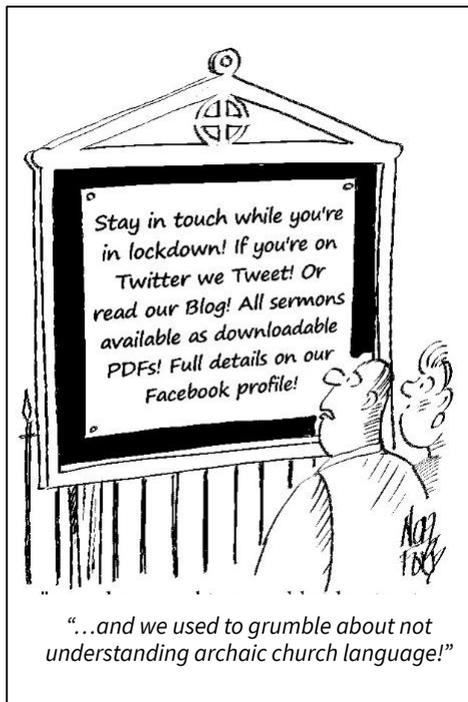
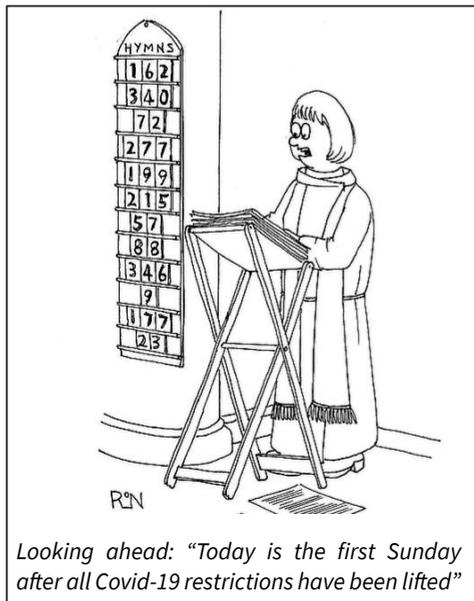
because it was such a contrast to the more traditional portrayals of this scene in Luke’s Gospel.

Here there is a claustrophobic feel to the painting. Mary and Gabriel fill the tiny, cell-like room. There is a window, but it does not open out to scenery and nature: just a solitary tree. Rossetti called ‘Ecce Ancilla Domini’ his ‘white picture.’ That is the colour that dominates: the robes of Mary and the angel, the stones of the floor, the paint on the walls, the flowers that Gabriel offers. Blue, the traditional colour for Mary, is relegated to the screen behind and the sky outside. ▷

Other colours are provided by the yellow flames of Gabriel's feet and the tapestry in the foreground on which Mary has embroidered lilies. These flowers, like the whiteness, are symbols of purity.

The model for Mary was Christina, his sister, the author of 'In the bleak mid-winter', and in portraying her, Rossetti has captured the adolescent vulnerability of Mary. A small dove linking the two characters is a sign of God's spirit coming to bring new life to this young girl. How does she respond? What is the expression on her face? Does she see the adult world of responsibility and motherhood opening up before her? Is it anxiety or wonder or awe? Or are all of these responses captured in her expression?

The stillness of the scene, the whiteness of the room – they are like a blank canvas on which God can paint His Gospel, His Good New of life and hope. Just as it opened up a new world for Mary, so the Gospel can open up a new world for all of us. We may respond with anxiety and worry, or with wonder and awe to that invitation. Or those feelings may be transformed into trust and service like Mary in Luke's Gospel: 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord: let it be with me according to your word.'





HAPPY BIRTHDAY PCC!

It's a hundred years since parish churches gained the power to run their own affairs, separately from what we now regard as local government.

The religious affairs of a parish, as well as its secular business had been controlled by a single committee, which met in the church and was known as the 'Vestry'. Then, in 1894, Parish Councils were formed to deal with secular matters; the Vestry continued to oversee church affairs until 1921, when Parochial Church Councils (PCC) were established.

Churchwardens have been around since the 13th Century and legally 'own' the movable contents of the church. They are meant to maintain order in the church and churchyard, with the assistance of their staves, if necessary. In the event of serious disorder today, a mobile phone might be a safer instrument, with staves

reserved for ceremonial occasions! Churchwardens are now chosen by parishioners, though the Incumbent (ie Vicar or Rector) has a limited right of veto.

Today, anyone on the Electoral Roll of the church (sorry, this is another confusion, for the secular Electoral Roll is entirely separate) can attend the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, which elects the PCC.

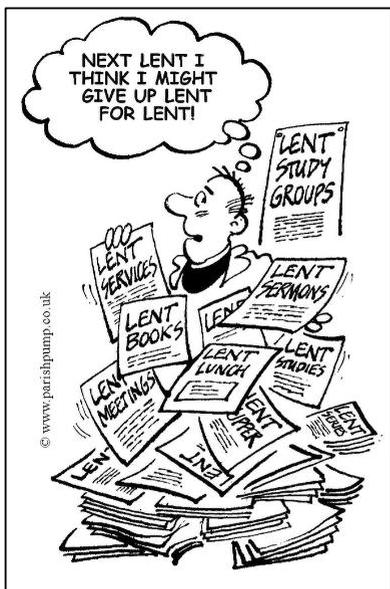
The Incumbent is an ex officio member, as are other licensed clergy and Churchwardens, members of the Deanery Synod, plus any member of the Diocesan Synod and General Synod who lives in the parish or is on the Roll. The Incumbent chairs the PCC, which elects a Vice-Chair and appoints a Standing Committee to transact business between meetings.



The purpose of a PCC, which must meet at least four times a year, is to consult together with the Incumbent “on matters of general concern and importance to the parish”, and that includes the “whole mission of the Church”. Did you know that changes to the forms of service, or the vesture or the minister, can only happen after consultation?

Inevitably, money and building maintenance take up a lot of room on the Agenda, though we all know they are less important than mission. It’s a real challenge for every PCC member to pray for non-churchgoing parishioners and to find imaginative ways of introducing them to Christ and His Church.

If you’ve got this far and are a member of the PCC – congratulations – you are a hundred years old this year!



MORE CHRISTMAS CARD REFLECTIONS

In the 2018 Winter edition of STOMP there was reference to 'the secularisation of Christmas'. Using a sample of 100 cards 54% had a Christian message, whilst 46% variously featured snow scenes, red robins, Christmas trees red post boxes and the like. The sample for last Christmas was 90 and the percentage with the Christian themes was 47, whilst the secular had risen to 53.

In 2017 I had been intrigued, relating to cards supporting charities, to compare the relative support as between Christian and secular cards. 69% of Christian cards supported charities compared with 57% of secular.

In 2020 the percentages were 82% Christian and 62% secular. The conclusions are that over the three years there has been a small drop in the use of Christian-themed cards but a significant increase in the use of cards supporting charities. Also we see a significant difference in the use of 'charity cards', as between the Christian and the secular.

Nevertheless the overall major use of cards bearing charity information on the back pages is an interesting and positive feature of what the sociologists call 'pro-social behaviour'.

Gordon Gaddes



LETTERS & COMMENTS



The necessary motivation to write this was Marion Smith's letter which appeared in the autumn edition of 'SToMP'. She wrote about her dislike of being referred to as 'wife of' rather than being regarded as a person in her own right.

Reading this, forcibly reminded me of an experience of my own after going to live in Switzerland to join Stanley, my husband (note the word order) who had gone to Zurich in January 1970 to take up the position of Professor of Chemical Engineering at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology.

I had stayed in our home in Nottingham until the following September, in theory to enable me to visit our two sons, Andrew aged ten and David, eight, who exchanged life in a State Primary School in Nottingham for that of boarders at Foremark Hall, the prep. department for Repton School in Derbyshire. David particularly was very homesick - my weekly visits only seemed to make matters worse! We told them to stick it out for a year (which must have seemed for ever) and if they were still unhappy after this we would take them to

a school in Switzerland - a British school there was just finding its feet.

But by then they realised how difficult life was for seven-year-old Sue who went with us to Zurich - school days were not much fun for her either. Her two brothers decided that they were better off where they were!

But what has all this to do with feminism. Nothing, - just memories - some of them still very painful.

The one which concerns my role in all this was annoying at the time - amusing later. It concerns my experience of being STANLEY'S WIFE in 1970s Zurich. Every Tom, Dick or Harry who knocked on our door addressed me as 'Frau Professor'. I wonder how Marion would have felt about that. Protest as I may that I was not a Professor produced nothing but puzzled stares. I just had to put up with it until I began to teach English as a foreign language, first in evening classes, then in a private school and last of all in a world-famous engineering firm which decided to make English its company language.

Finally I became 'Mrs Hartland' again - 'Ena' was a step too far for the conservative Swiss!

Ena Hartland

NOTHING CHANGES

'What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun.'

Ecclesiastes 1.9

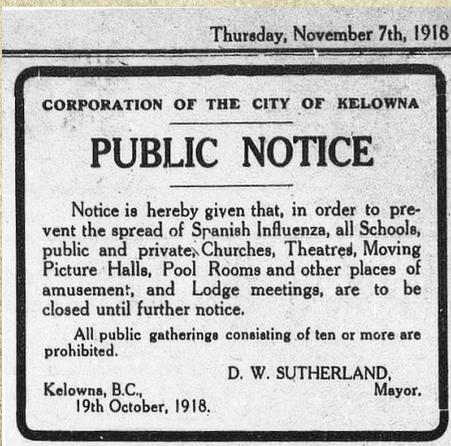


American pictures taken during the 'flu pandemic of 1919



And people stayed at home
And read books
And listened
And they rested
And did exercises
And made art and played
And learned new ways of being
And stopped and listened
More deeply.
Someone meditated
Someone prayed
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently
And people healed.
And in the absence of people who
Lived in ignorant ways
Dangerous meaningless & heartless,
The earth also began to heal.
And when the danger ended and
People found themselves
They grieved for the dead
And made new choices
And dreamed new visions
And created new ways of living
And completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.

This poem was originally written in 1869 and reprinted in 1919



Public Notice posted in British Columbia, Canada

A HYMN FOR TODAY

By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered,
And confidently waiting come what may,
we know that God is with us night and morning,
and never fails to greet us each new day.

Yet is this heart by its old foe tormented,
Still evil days bring burdens hard to bear;
Oh, give our frightened souls the sure salvation
for which, O Lord, You taught us to prepare.

And when this cup You give is filled to brimming
With bitter suffering, hard to understand,
we take it thankfully and without trembling,
out of so good and so beloved a hand.

Yet when again in this same world You give us
The joy we had, the brightness of Your Sun,
we shall remember all the days we lived through,
and our whole life shall then be Yours alone.

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer - Pastor
Executed by the Nazis on 9 April 1945 in
Flossenbürg concentration camp*

TONY'S TAKE ON ASPECTS OF LOCKDOWN

Tony and Lucille Harris moved to Cambridge to be near their son's family a while back.

Tony, as well as being our PCC Secretary, had been a regular contributor to StoMP with his verses, often inspired by comments made during Advent/Lent groups and other current events.

Here's a couple of recent poems he has sent to us.

First Wave

Profane the fleshpots of Wuhan
As the world washes its hands.
No plan, no vaccine, no loo rolls.
Deaths soar as domino lands.
Experts in viral disarray.
Medics overwhelmed, deprived.
Isolation becomes Plan A.
Covid-19 has arrived.

Lacerated economies.
Ordered chaos the new norm.
Concentrate on the essential.
Kindness helps to calm the storm.
Doomsday seems a little closer.
Other threats our lifestyles bring.
What we learn is not forgiving
Nightingales in silent spring.

(acrostic) ARH 30 Jun20

Zoomed Out

A fell asleep in the screen at the top
B stood up forgetting to stop
C went mute as a thunderstruck swan
D was anon 'til the lights all went on
E held court as we all went still
F waved and froze in a mid garbled shrill
G showed his books neatly in line
H lost control to something feline
I just kept quiet
J joined the riot
K was trying to keep the score
L was shunted aside for four more
M tried from tablet, laptop, and phone
N waits to be let in, waits all alone
O has a dodgy internet connection
P feels a product of random selection
Q is wanting to go off to bed
R has a microphone wrapped round his head
S is about the last to appear
T is just a wanton sightseer
U is the boss, here with her spouse
V leaves the meeting by a slip of the mouse
W is the one who knows what to do
X is the person that nobody knew
Y is a blur all flustered and hot
Z is the host and says "End of Slot"

ARH 19 May20

THE WONDERING WANDERING MARINER

The lighthouse shines on behalf of sailors on the dark sea warning them of the dangers of rocks. The keeper's job is to keep that light shining. His is a lonely, isolated calling – but his influence of his light on others' lives is significant.

The lighthouse stands for security.

It doesn't shift – as it is built on rock.

It carries a message of salvation.

It will guide you to a safe haven.

It is constant, never going out.

It is absolutely reliable, it doesn't change with the wind or vary the flashes. Even when there is fog and the light though shining cannot be seen it sounds a warning to stand off from danger.

It seems to me that I have known many lighthouse keepers. People who trust and stand firm and say: 'I have been called to do this work and have the authority of Trinity. I will shine my light out regardless.'

All are not appointed by the higher authority to be lighthouse keepers.

For some, like me, the spirit of the sea demands that they must be mariners. . .

Plumb the depths

Breast the waves

Must travel on

Keep exploring

Keep pushing the limits of their understanding.

Safe harbour is not for them.

Some are called to be lighthouse keepers – and are secure.

I, the wondering, wandering mariner, respect their calling.

Ruth Clinch 1998

IF CHURCHES GO ON-LINE

what happens
to
their
buildings?



Simon Jenkins in his perceptive Opinion article in the 26 December 2020 issue of the 'Guardian' develops on the theme, 'If churches go on-line what happens to their buildings?'. His article is driven by a number of facts.

Barely 2% of our population regularly attend Anglican parish services.

2,000 Anglican churches have attendances of less than 10. There are some phenomenal mismatches in terms of population and nearby churches. For example nine churches are grouped around Asterby in Lincolnshire serving a population of 1,319. Over most of 2020, in the context of lockdowns and tiers, our churches have been badly hit.

However, Jenkins indicates, 'Zoom praying, live streaming and social media posting have soared. Almost 17,000 services and events were added in 2020 to the website A Church Near You.

Questions about churches to Amazon Echo's Alexa rose from 75,000 in 2019 to 250,000 in 2020.

The church's Easter social media content was seen 3 million times'. He adds, 'my local vicar has seen her meagre attendance at daily morning prayers more than double on Zoom'.

This article by Jenkins is positive in three ways. First, he sees churches to be 'permanent features of our ceremonial and collective lives'. Second, the pandemic experience is seen as emphasising and accelerating the on-line connections between the church and a wider congregation. Third, he opines that they 'must recapture their traditional role in the community'. He mentions us finding 'new uses as social enterprises, as post offices, cafes, bookshops, concert halls and farmers' markets'.

He ends his article on churches with these words, '**Turning them from a towering liability to a community asset should be a challenge to every town and village in the country**'.

Opinion Guardian 26 December 2020

GG

ST JAMES THE LEAST OF ALL

The Revd Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from Uncle Eustace.



On the ferocity of the church's Bridge drive.

My dear Nephew Darren

Your suggestion that we should hold a sponsored hymn-singing bicycle ride through the village as a way of raising money was well-meant, but I am not wholly convinced it would suit our clientele here at St James the Least of All.

You may have musical bike rides, but we have Bridge drives, although socially distanced at the moment, of course. But even at two metres apart, our Bridge games are generally as amiable and peaceful as bear baiting. Half of those attending will see the afternoon as an opportunity to catch up on local gossip and to exchange knitting patterns, the game of cards being a minor hindrance to these other activities. The other half arrive primed for a battle to the death, reluctantly conceding that eye-gouging is not allowed. They will demand total silence – which is wholly ignored by those at the tables discovering what Mrs Trumpington confided to Lady Driver halfway through 'Onward Christian Soldiers' at last Sunday's Matins. The congregation is eternally grateful to Mrs Mitchell, who as a former mill worker is able to lip read.

Refreshments have been hit hard by Covid-19 of course, and the fact that everyone has to bring their own sandwich and drink has rather spoiled the fun. Usually half our players regard lunchtime as an opportunity to put jam on the cards, spill tea on the score cards and make sure that the other tables get the egg and cress sandwiches while they corner the boiled ham; the others usually see it as an unwelcome interruption to the serious business of slaughtering their opponents. It is so sad that Covid-19 has halted this merry camaraderie.

As for drawing the raffle, it is the adult equivalent of ringing the school bell at going-home time. Half the players will immediately dash off to relay newly mined seams of gossip throughout the village, leaving the others holding reproachful post-mortems with their partners over their bidding mistakes.

Reproaches are never too violent, however, since the chances are that they will all be meeting again the following afternoon round a socially distanced card table at another location, for yet another re-enactment of the slaughter at Agincourt. The only difference will be that the French and English were not entertained with tea and sandwiches at half time.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

MONEY MONEY MONEY - AGAIN



Christmas has come and gone and what a strange Christmas it was, with no Christmas Eve Nativity Play Service at St Mary's for the first time in around 50 years, Just one of the casualties that Covid has inflicted.

New Year brought an end to the 2020 Parish Accounting year and we were able to assess the impact on the Finances of the fantastic generosity of so many of you and the daunting loss of rental and other income caused by the various lockdowns and other restrictions.

You will see the detail in the Annual Accounts to be circulated for the APCM, but the broad brush figures on the negative side are that hall rental income was around £13k less than budget; Wedding Fee income and Loose Plate collections between them added a further shortfall of around £2.7k; and not having the Christmas Bazaar or Art in the Nave added a further shortfall of around £3k. So around £18.7k in all.

On the credit side your Pledged Giving held up fantastically well and was augmented by your further generous donations so that with Tax recovery this was better than Budgeted by around £2.5k. ▷



The Government's Job Retention Scheme paid us £4.7k and a reduced Diocesan Parish Share calculation and lower Clergy expenses saved us around £5.3k. So with the residue from the legacy from Norman Quail (after paying for the very special door handles to St Mary's new kitchen) and all the smaller adjustments we have ended the year with a small surplus.

Quite an amazingly good result for a really challenging year and all thanks to everyone who has helped along the way.

We had such high hopes of 2021 and still do, but Covid has shown that it is not going to disappear quietly and the January lockdown has already closed our halls with consequent lost revenue. So please don't stop being generous, this could be another difficult year.

But some of us have had our first injections and more will be getting theirs soon; so hope is high, God is Good and maybe 2021 will be one where we can learn to enjoy socialising again.

Fancy not walking distantly round each other with our faces covered. Won't that feel strange!

Robin Woodd

Stewardship Secretary, January 2021



On the following page there is an account from Gordon Short about his work, which we are now supporting, as a Waterways Chaplain. Gordon contacted me out of the blue looking for some stub-ends of candles that we might let some of the local boaters use on their launches and narrow boats. Little did I know that once I contacted him this would set in train a series of interesting and rewarding contacts. Surprisingly many of the boaters use candles as well as coal to keep warm and we were able to unlock some funding from the Buckley benevolent fund along with a private donation to provide coal for their use. Candles we have in abundance and I am now co-ordinating their collection from other deanery churches.

The Waterways Chaplaincy is able to access matching funding which maximises our gift and will allow them to fund a new coal boiler for one of the boats. I was amazed by the deprivation and difficulties faced by many of the boaters on the canal but also how many of them had a connection with St Mary's and the Old Town. One gentleman, an ex-army man had been married many years ago in St Mary's and now lives with his dog on the canal. I much enjoyed putting my new found lockdown knowledge of American Civil War generals to use in talking to him. We also met a former wedding photographer who knew our churches well, it is such a small world even on the waterways.

Canon John

THE LADY WITH NO CLOTHES

On my first visit to the canal as a probationary Waterways Chaplain with an experienced mentor we met a couple known to the mentor as having a difficult life and an addiction. They were however a lovely young couple but a little naïve about debt. Their boat had been burgled probably by someone to whom they owed money and had lost valuable audio equipment as well as almost all their clothes.

During the course of our conversation I asked if the young lady would like some second hand clothes as having worked at the homeless centre I knew it was possible to find a suitable source. Having sized her up I thought of a young mum in our congregation who might be willing to have a clear out. As it happened she had some nice things from before having children that looked about the right size.

I also had a warm shirt from my son in law that should fit the young man. Loaded up in a suitcase also surplus to requirements I found their boat again not too far from a parking spot and they were very pleased.

The following week I had no trouble finding them as I noticed a blue sweat shirt I recognised on the lad and a smart dress on the lady! A bonus was they also accepted a Gideon's Waterways badged New Testament.

Subsequent tours along my patch of canal have produced other needs such as warmth and light in the shape of candles. These are needed by boaters who have a cruiser rather than a narrow boat and no fixed form of heating. A call to a Church produced some left overs from Christmas and New Year and other Churches have now been able to donate half used larger candles which have been warmly welcomed by the boaters (pun intended!)

There is much need among the livaboards, as the boaters are called, and the Chaplaincy can offer friendship, advice and practical help with the support of local Christian organisations.

Gordon Short, Chaplain

www.waterwayschaplaincy.org.uk



NEW PARISH WEBSITE ONLINE

The new Parish Website is your first port of call for information on all things regarding Parish life - e.g. forthcoming events, publications, hall bookings and initial contact for weddings and baptisms and funerals. Here Brian Crawley who headed up the project explains the stages leading to the site launch.



It's now just over a year now since a small group got together to begin debating what we wanted to include on our new website and how it should be delivered. The overarching design decision was that it had to be a single site reflecting both churches. It was decided that a packaged solution was the best approach as it would allow the maintenance/update work to be split between multiple people with a small amount of training.

A considerable amount of time was spent looking at other church websites and identifying features we thought were good and things that we thought were bad. This included things like the layout, the use of graphics and the menu structures.

In parallel to that was an investigation into different packages and their costs. With a package in mind, 'Church Edit', we were lucky to get a demonstration from Neil Middleton of St John's Harpenden, who already uses this package.

This convinced us that the package met our needs and was relatively simple to use, so we engaged them and started to build a prototype.

The next task was to define the header/footer and 'Home' page content and layout. This was something that Church Edit customised for us, providing a framework we could then easily add our own 'content' to. ▷



- DONATIONS
- ST MARY'S WEEKLY SERVICES
- ST PAUL'S WEEKLY SERVICES
- ART IN THE NAVE

ST MARY'S - IN THE OLD TOWN AND ST PAUL'S - HIGHFIELD

One united parish worshipping on two sites

Welcome to our website.

We are a friendly, welcoming Church of England Parish rooted in the Modern Catholic tradition of the Church of England, committed to dignified worship, good music and orthodox teaching. You are most welcome to join us at any of our services or activities.

<p>WHAT'S ON</p> <p>Sunday 09:30 Zoom Service 10:30 Zoom Social after Service</p>	<p>LATEST ARTICLES</p> <p>31 Jan 2021 Bulletin Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)</p> <p>Charities Charities</p>	<p>BAPTISMS/CHRISTENINGS</p> <p>WEDDINGS</p> <p>FUNERALS</p>
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So followed a number of iterations to get to the point you see today. In parallel to this the rest of the menu item pages were populated.

The Home page includes a simple 'What's On' and what items have been added recently, so you will see up and coming services and the weekly bulletin without having to navigate very far.

After 10 months the new site went live in November 2020. I would like to thank the rest of the team who put so much time into this; Brian Doran, Chris Wainman, Gordon Gaddes, Jeff Wallis, Michael Boardman and John Williams.

Please do take a look

<https://stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk/>

and if you have any suggestions or corrections then please let me know on

media@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

or just have a word.

Brian Crawley

ECHOS OF CHRISTMAS



Lighting the final candle in the Advent wreath in St Mary's zoom service on Christmas morning



This wonderful Commemorative Hearts initiative by the Old Town market committee saw all monies raised coming to the parish and reminded people of the love and support the church offers to all bereaved people. We offered prayers in services over Christmas for all those commemorated.



The Christmas Crib at St Paul's at the zoom service on 3 January

THE PARISH CHRISTMAS GRAND ZOOM DRAW AT ST PAUL'S



The Parish Grand Christmas Draw took place at St Paul's on 13 December. It was made by Penny Williams assisted by Canon John. Usually part of the annual St Paul's Christmas Fair, this Draw was very special replacing completely the pandemic affected and cancelled Fair.

All the 1000 Draw tickets were sold and an assessment of the value of the prizes given to this Draw is around £600. Additionally there were cash donation of £386, most of which attracted gift aid. After costs the contribution to Parish funds is estimated to be £1,200.

370 tickets were sold through the St Mary's network and 630 through St Paul's.

This year the sales ratio was reflected in the prizes won, around two-thirds going to St Paul's people.

Of the top prizes 'Tea for Two at the Centurion Club' was won by Geoff Cottrell, the 'St Mary's Hamper' by Pat Hussey, the £50 cash prize by Nicole, the daughter of Many Rance and the special Christmas Cake by Brian Crawley.

The ticket sell-out beats the previous record of 940 sold three years ago. Perhaps we should order 1500 for the 2021 Christmas Grand Draw. Many thanks to everybody who gave prizes, who donated and who bought tickets to produce such a super result in this difficult time for us all.

GG

A MESSAGE FROM REVD CAROLINE

A huge thank you for the beautiful gift of three chasubles that you so generously gave me to mark the end of my curacy with you. As you can see, along with the beautiful red one you gave to me on the occasion of my priesting, I now have a full set in the four liturgical colours!

I miss you all and look forward to a time when you can visit me here in Waddesdon or I can come back to see you all again.

With much love

Revd Caroline



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Reg. Charity no 1130644

