

St. George's Hontesbury

Magazine 50p



May 2021

The Parish of Pontesbury

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QUOTE: To spend an hour worrying on our knees is not prayer. Indeed, there are times when it is our duty, having committed a problem to God in prayer, to stop praying and to trust and to do the necessary work to arrive at a solution. - Oliver Barclay

Contributions for St. George's Magazine should be in by the **15th** of the **previous month**. It may not be possible to include contributions received after this date until the following month.

Send E-mail & attachments to stgsmagazine@googlemail.com
Please post handwritten articles to Ford Place, The Bank, Pontesbury Hill, SY5 0XX.

Website: www.st-george.org.uk

Items for inclusion in the Deanery News to be submitted by 10th of previous month to
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LIFTING UP OUR EYES

I don't recall many sermons I have preached over the years (I know you probably don't recall the one I preached last Sunday!) but I do remember the one I preached for my sermon examination back at college on the passage in John chapter 2 in which Jesus turns water into wine. It was very well received by my fellow students (but then we tended to be generous to each other because it was your turn next!) However, the lecturer who was presiding over the module was less impressed. What did I think I was doing using a football illustration? Didn't I know how many people I was excluding by doing this? My colleagues (50% women I should add) leapt to my defence. Pretty much everyone was aware that England had just been knocked out of the World Cup on penalties (I appreciate this doesn't entirely clarify when I'm talking about) and it was legitimate to reference the fact that the missed penalty had been taken by someone who claimed never to have practised. The analogy I drew (you see I do remember) was with Jesus who also seems unprepared to enter into ministry at the wedding of Cana and needs persuading by his mother to take action. I further asked the question whether we as future ministers of the Church of England felt ready for all that ordained ministry had in store for us.

I have managed to get through two months in Shropshire without referencing football in a sermon. I was tempted on Easter Sunday to reference VAR (don't ask) but realised I would spend five minutes explaining it either to people who understood perfectly what it was and didn't need an explanation or to everyone else who wouldn't have been interested.

One of the challenges for the preacher is to find stories, analogies, illustrations that chime with the congregation's everyday lived experience. I suspect this is harder than it once was. There are now literally hundreds of television channels to watch and with the advent of recording, streaming and binge watching, even programmes most of us have watched (The Crown anyone?) you are likely to have half a congregation who watched it a year ago and the other half who haven't watched it yet. DO NOT DARE SAY ANYTHING TO ME about *Line of Duty* which Fran and I will watch in

one night, when all the episodes have aired.

The net result is that almost every sermon is illustrated with some reference to the corona virus and the associated restrictions. If the lives we live are more fragmented than ever before in some respects, in this one respect we have not been so united in our everyday experience since the War.

My prayer is that our common experience will bring us closer together as a nation. End of sermon!

Greg



Ascension Day this year is on 13th May.

Ascension by Daphne Kitching

(Luke 24:44-53)

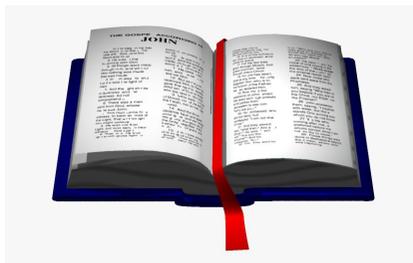
*Scriptures fulfilled,
Minds opened,
We followed Him to Bethany.
And there was joy in the blessing
Of our risen Lord,
Jesus, God on earth.*

*And in the blessing
Was the leaving,
And in the leaving
Was the blessing –
His Spirit of life and power
To witness to the world
Of our ascended Lord,
Jesus, man in heaven.*

Readings and Services for this MONTH

Here are the Sunday Service details, and the readings which you may enjoy at home if you are unable to come into church this month.

Date	Time	Service	Readings
2 nd May 5 th Sunday after Easter	10.30am	Holy Communion	Acts 8: 26 – end 1 John 4: 7 – end John 15: 1 - 8
9 th May 6 th Sunday after Easter	10.30am	Holy Communion	Acts 10: 44- end 1 John 5: 1 – 6 John 15: 9 – 17
13 th May Ascension Day Thursday	TBA	TBA (Look on Church noticeboard)	Acts 1: 1 – 11 Psalm 93 Luke 24: 44 – end
16 th May 7 th Sunday after Easter	10.30am	Holy Communion	Acts 1: 15 – 17, 21 – end 1 John 5: 9 – 13 John 17: 6 – 19
23 rd May Day of Pentecost	10.30am	Holy Communion	Acts 2: 1 – 21 Romans 8: 22 – 27 John 15: 26 - 27, 16: 4b -15
30 th May Trinity Sunday	10.30am	Holy Communion	Isaiah 6: 1 – 8 Romans 8: 12 – 17 John 3: 1 - 17



Our Church Family

JEAN GWILLIAM

RIP: APRIL 2021



One of my earliest memories of Jean was that of a young lady, always in a dress, flying down the Habberley road on a bicycle. If I had mentioned this to Jean in her later life she would have chuckled. Jean spoke to everyone and always had a word for those who could not get around so well.

Jean married Tom, a local man and became involved in village life. Jean was a wonderful gardener, and with her husband Tom worked hard in their garden and greenhouse; there would always be trays and trays of annual plants ready for the great MU plant sale each year.

Jean danced in the aisle at St. George's Church. She believed that music and dance had a place in worship— this was her way of expressing her faith.

Jean became the enrolling officer for the Mothers' Union group at St. George's, and carried this out until her last few years. Her role involved keeping the group together and overseeing their meetings. Jean was also the link for the yearly world wide service for 'Women's World Day of Prayer'.

Jean loved to commemorate occasions with a poem and she was still writing poems at the beginning of lockdown.

Jean had a very strong faith. Many times she would have a statement from the Bible which would help others understand what was happening. Jean was a true disciple; she would tell people of her faith but would always respect another's point of view.

We at St. George's Church say thank you for your commitment to the church throughout your life here in Pontesbury, also to your commitment to God. You gave your love to us, you gave your time to us. May God now give his peace and joy to you.

Rest in peace Jean,
with love from all at St. George's Church.

MW

ROBERT (BOB) WEBB

RIP: APRIL 2021



Dear Bob. How we will miss him! As a welcomer both to the village and to our church, his huge smile and concern for a person's well-being was his hallmark. His smile filled his eyes and one felt the warmth and kindness of this gentle man. I say – gentle man – and Bob truly was a gentleman.

We will all have images in our mind of the warm, smiling welcome that he gave as we entered to worship and part of the welcome included Bob asking after our health and, at times, giving good and kindly advice, gleaned from his extensive knowledge in the field of pharmacy. 'Team Webb' has been known to provide an excellent Remedy Service.

Whenever an event was organised, Bob would be found doing his 'bit', working alongside Cynthia. I have visions of them some years ago on a church 'cleaning day', armed with dustpans and brushes, brushing down all the window ledges in church – and there are a lot.

A favourite social event of the year for Bob was the Beetle Drive and Pancake Supper. He would arrive along with his lovely ladies – Cynthia, Fiona Fields and Mary Hacker (RIP). He would usher them safely to a table and make sure that they enjoyed their evening before escorting them safely home.

Bob was several times a member of the PCC, but the task for which he will possibly be most remembered is as St. George's Street Warden. Bob has for many years led the team of welcomers to people coming to live in Pontesbury, right up to the current crop of residents to Cricketers Meadow, delivering our church Welcome Leaflet and, no doubt, leaving a feeling of warmth and welcome.

Our prayers go out to Cynthia, David, Michael and their families as we remember Bob and hold his memory in our hearts.

VB



HELLO - from Our ORGANIST and CHOIRMASTER

I'm Paul Bracken, recently appointed as your new Organist and Choirmaster. Many thanks to everyone for making my wife Sue and me so welcome here in Pontesbury.

Previously, I was Organist and Choirmaster of St Giles, West Bridgford in Nottingham (2015-2020) although my career has been largely in education - I taught at West Bridgford High School, at Nottingham College and latterly at the University of Nottingham. However, I've been involved in Christian life and music for many years, and I have Lay Ministry qualifications in Music and Worship, and in Adult Education. I'm really looking forward to the challenge of playing at St George's, and to working with the very enthusiastic choir which I hope to expand. My aim is to encourage *a capella* singing, and to enhance the liturgy by deepening the sense of mystery and spirituality. In order to do this, I'm planning to introduce new canticles for the Eucharist Service, some Gregorian Chant, and in due course, some anthems of Byrd, Tallis, Palestrina etc.

My musical background is in classical music, although later I specialised in early music/historical musicology, and directed several chamber choirs with a specific focus on early music. Later, I studied for an MA (awarded 1996) and then (through a British Academy Scholarship) for a PhD (awarded 2001). My PhD research involved transcription and analysis of music in manuscripts (some more than 700 years old) at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. I went on to teach at the Universities of Nottingham, Keele and (briefly) at Nagoya in Japan. Some of my research has been published in early music and history journals including *The Consort*.

I'm also very interested in (jazz, blues/boogie, gospel) and in composition. I've performed widely as a pianist (classical, jazz/blues) under the stage-name Paul Ricard, and recorded a solo piano album *Canaan Road*, a collection of original pieces on the theme of journeys, some with underlying Christian themes in 2013. In recent years, I've become interested in transcribing and adapting Gregorian Chant for use in an Anglican context, and have composed some psalm settings, anthems and canticles for the Eucharist.



Overall, it's a mixed bag of experience and skills, but hopefully, it will be of use to St George's, Pontesbury.

Our Church Community

Eco Church

An organisation called Eco-Church ...

<https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/how-eco-church-works/>

encourages all churches to become more environmentally aware. Hereford Diocese has signed up to become an Eco-Diocese and it would be great if some of the churches in the family were to become eco-churches. The Bronze Award is relatively easy to achieve.

Interested? ... have a word with Greg.

Garden meetings

Now that we are allowed to meet outside, if you have a garden to sit in and would like Greg to pop round, he would be glad to spend time with you. Just let him know on 07902 794653 or rector-pontstip@gmail.com

Online Broadcasts

The online morning worship broadcasts continue to be produced. These are available after 10.15am on Sunday, from either the St George's or the Stiperstones websites, or directly from YouTube (search for Media Pontesbury Stiperstones Churches).

Discipleship Explored

A reminder that the Discipleship Explored course, subtitled "What's the best love you've ever known" is running on Tuesday evenings and it's not too late to sign up. Please contact Ian Williams at irw01@live.co.uk

Community Good Neighbours

Many of you will be aware of the Community Good Neighbours scheme, which has 40 volunteers willing to offer practical support such as light shopping or picking up medical prescriptions, while also offering telephone support to the socially isolated. If you are aware of anyone who might benefit from this, the contact number is: 07944 891953

QUOTE:

Blessed are the peacemakers; they will never be unemployed. - Anon

Looking at GOD

Pentecost: *The Revd Canon Paul Hardingham considers how the Holy Spirit can change our lives.*

The celebration of Pentecost this month could be described as a birthday party for the Church, as we remember the gift of the Holy Spirit to the first disciples (Acts 2:1-13). What are we celebrating?

God's Promise:

The disciples obeyed Jesus' instructions as they gathered in the Upper Room: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised' (1:4). They met expectantly in prayer for God's promised gift. Just as we look forward to birthday presents, how eager are we to receive more of the Spirit in our lives?

God's Power:

'All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit' (4). The disciples needed the power of the Spirit to be different: not fearfully gathered behind locked doors, but energised to make Christ known. The Spirit can transform our lives into the likeness of Jesus and give gifts to equip our witness. Although the disciples' experience of this power was overwhelming, it was essentially an encounter with God's love. For us, this can be equally emotional or quiet, but all are included, and nobody is excluded from this experience.

God's Purpose:

The disciples 'began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.' (4). The Spirit empowered their witness, so that everyone heard them speaking in their own 'native language' (lit: dialect, v8). We all have a story to tell of God's activity in our lives and it's the Spirit who translates our words and actions into a language that those around can understand! At Pentecost, 3,000 people were added to the church in one day! What do we expect of the Spirit in our day?

'Let the Church return to Pentecost, and Pentecost will return to her. The Spirit of God cannot take possession of believers beyond their capacity of receiving Him' (Andrew Murray).

The Revd Dr Jo White continues her Reflected Faith series on the freedom that May brings....

Reflected Faith: Hiding, waiting, hoping – FREE!

After many long months during the Covid pandemic we are at last beginning to be able to come together again. Some countries and some areas of some countries will be more open than others and we can only hope, pray and wait for all of us to be able to be 'free' again.

May, in the Church's calendar, is supremely the month of freedom.

During the first few weeks we continue to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus and reflect on the Bible stories of those who met Him after His crucifixion and resurrection.

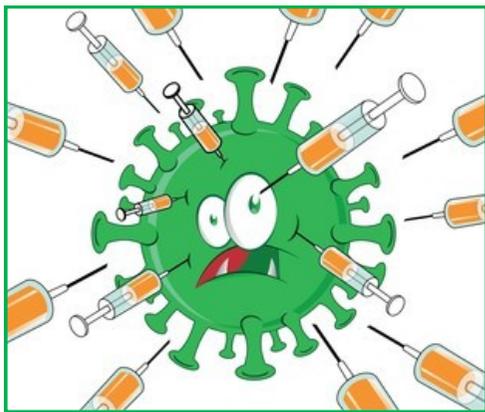
Then we celebrate His Ascension – Jesus' return to His Father.

And finally, we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and all those locked in that Upper Room – with the subsequent birth of His Church.

Freedom indeed!

This last year has for most of us felt like a waiting time to see and hold friends and family again. We have some understanding of fear and the hope within us.

What a celebration there must have been when Jesus returned to His Father – and what a celebration also when the Holy Spirit so powerfully descended.



It is the story of those 'simple' men who were scared and hiding one day and the next day bold and outspoken, that speaks to me of something outstanding happening.

As I received my anti-Covid vaccination I felt that same freedom from fear. Not that I would be 100% safe and never ill again, but rather that whatever happened now would be manageable.

This month: Have a think this month about fears that you may have held inside you in this past year and how you have been able to manage them. Have you known the Spirit of Our Lord by your side as you have walked these roads? I hope so, and I hope also that together we can help others to know His reassurance from fear. Freedom indeed.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of all people and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.



Pentecost this year is on 23rd May.

Prayer for Pentecost by Daphne Kitching

*Loving Father God,
Thank you for sending your Holy Spirit;
Your Spirit who knows no restrictions or barriers;
Your Spirit who can reach us and be with us and in us,
wherever we are, whatever our circumstances;
Your Spirit who comforts and heals and empowers us to live
with confidence that, ultimately, all shall be well;
Your Spirit who connects us, through the life, death, resurrection
and ascension of Jesus.
Because of Jesus' victory over death we have hope
and life forever.
Thank you, loving Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

Julian of Norwich also lived in a time of plague.

Julian of Norwich, also known as Dame Julian or Mother Julian, was an English anchorite of the Middle Ages. She wrote the best known surviving book in the English language written by a mystic, *Revelations of Divine Love*. The book is the first written in English by a known woman author.

How long, O Lord?

How long until life gets really back to normal, and the pandemic is brought under control?

If you feel like asking God that, you're in good company. This past year has taken its toll on our relationships, our economy, and on our collective mental health.

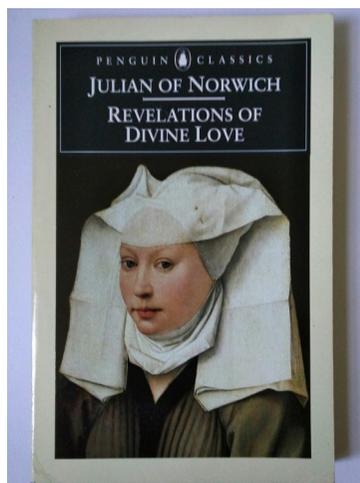
'How long, O Lord?' is a question that has been commonly asked by the Bible's poets, as well as many saints down the centuries. Mother Julian of Norwich, whose feast day we remember this month, asked the question back in the 14th century. She was no stranger to pandemics herself, having suffered from the plague in 1372.

After much prayer and meditation, she was given an answer that has echoed down the centuries. In her *'Revelations of Divine Love'* she wrote that God had revealed to her that:

"All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well." "He said not 'Thou shalt not be tempested, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be dis-eased'; but He said, 'Thou shalt not be overcome.'"

That is a promise that we can hang on to: all shall be well in the end. But it is also necessary to add: if it is not well with you today, then it is not yet the end.

This is a perspective on life that is full of faith, of hope, of trust in the goodness and victory of God. The psalms are full of it, and always trust in God for the final outcome. We can have this perspective, too, and perhaps share it with our neighbours.



Tony Horsfall considers what happens when you have no courage left.

Being brave?

Some time ago I was helping my grandson George into his car seat in the back of my car, when I accidentally banged his head. He started to cry. 'Come on, George, be brave,' I said.

'But I don't want to be brave,' he objected.

I guess we all know that feeling. Sometimes life is hard, and we know we have a need for courage, but somehow, we just don't want to be brave. We would rather give in, surrender to the difficulties, and wallow in self-pity.

The Bible seems to constantly exhort us to be brave, to be strong, to take heart, to be courageous. And life during a pandemic certainly calls for us to make a courageous response. But occasionally we may feel overwhelmed and ready to give in or give up.

Perhaps you are reading this at just such a moment. Maybe this comes as a message to you from God so that you do not lose heart. He knows you, and He sees your situation. And He speaks to encourage you, as He did to the church at Philadelphia: 'I know that you have little strength' (Revelation 3:8).

He is the compassionate and understanding God who draws alongside us, to give strength to the weary and power to the weak (Isaiah 40:29). You don't have to do anything, simply turn to Him in your need and ask for help.

You will discover, as the apostle Paul did, that when you are weak, then you are strong. His power will be demonstrated through your weakness. You can do whatever is required of you because He will give you strength.



A green rectangular advertisement for Samaritans. The text reads: "TALK TO US" in large white letters, followed by "If things are getting to you" in smaller white text. Below that is the phone number "116 123" in large white letters, with "FREE" in a white speech bubble to its right. A small note says "This number is FREE to call round the clock." At the bottom, the Samaritans logo is displayed in a white box with a black border.

A white oval-shaped advertisement for The Silver Line. The text reads: "The Silver Line" in bold black letters, followed by "helpline for older people" in smaller black text, and the phone number "0800 4 70 80 90" in bold black letters at the bottom.

A white rectangular advertisement for ChildLine. The text reads: "ChildLine" in large black letters inside a green speech bubble. Below that is the phone number "0800 1111" in black letters, followed by a small icon of a telephone handset.

The
Tale of the
**TWO
BUILDERS**



**JESUS OFTEN TOLD
STORIES WITH
HIDDEN MEANINGS**



**ONE WAS ABOUT TWO MEN WHO
BUILT THEIR OWN HOUSES**



**THE FIRST BUILDER SEARCHED HIGH
AND LOW FOR A GOOD SOLID ROCK ON
WHICH TO BUILD HIS HOME.**

**AT LONG, LONG LAST HE
FOUND THE IDEAL SPOT.**



SO HE BEGAN TO BUILD.

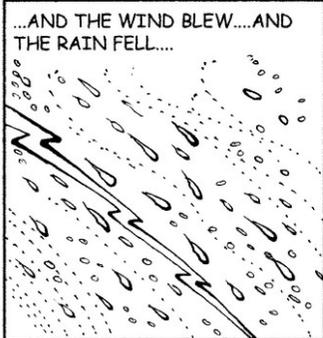


**THE OTHER BUILDER
DIDN'T CARE WHERE HE
BUILT HIS HOUSE**

**HE THOUGHT SOME NICE FLAT SAND
WOULD BE AN EASY PLACE TO BUILD.**



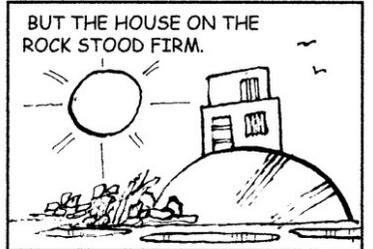
**BUT ONE DAY THE
STORM CAME...**



**...AND THE WIND BLEW....AND
THE RAIN FELL....**



**...AND THE HOUSE ON
THE SAND COLLAPSED!**



**BUT THE HOUSE ON THE
ROCK STOOD FIRM.**

**JESUS EXPLAINED -
IT'S IMPORTANT OUR LIVES HAVE
A FIRM FOUNDATION.**

Looking at CHURCH

The Ven John Barton considers the arrival of the people from Hong Kong.

Foreigners?

Among the estimated 130,000 people from Hong Kong who are making their way to the UK, there are bound to be thousands of Christians. What kind of reception will they get from the churches here?

We shudder when reminded of the cold shoulder shown to the 500 Jamaicans who disembarked the SS Empire Windrush at Tilbury in 1948, and others who followed. They came in response to a recruitment drive by London Transport and the NHS. Many were practising Anglicans, so naturally they made their way to English parish churches. Many were told they didn't belong there.

St Paul's nightmare about the Church had become a reality, with the eye saying to the hand, "I don't need you." (1 Corinthians 12.21) As a result, the Church of England missed out on the faith, experience, and witness of brother and sister believers from the Caribbean.

Hong Kong citizens who hold British National Overseas passports can now apply for a work visa, enabling them to live and work in the UK, after which they may apply for permanent UK citizenship. They will bring a wealth of knowledge with them, including the experience of living under an increasingly repressive regime.

This is our chance to learn from past errors and to turn hostility into hospitality. We will soon discover that we have at least as much to receive as we have to give. UK society has already been enriched by immigrants, especially those who belong to ethnic minorities in this country, but are in the majority, worldwide. The NHS alone would collapse without them.

In Bible times, Christians who were from Jewish backgrounds found it hard to believe the Church could accommodate foreigners. First there was a division between Hebrew-speakers and Greek-speakers. An even bigger row followed, when new Christians in other countries were regarded as sub-standard. Then St Peter had a visionary experience which contradicted his narrow up-

bringing. This is how he summarised it:

"I now realise it is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. Those who fear him and do what is right are acceptable to him, no matter what race they belong to." (Acts 10.34)

Chinese? African? Caribbean? European? British? The real Church will accommodate all of them and then look for others to welcome.

The Revd Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, and a former communications director for the CofE, considers the modern martyrs.

Pope's visit underlined why martyrs still matter

The history-making visit by Pope Francis to Iraq earlier this year made headlines around the world.



Pope Francis and Iraqi President Barham Salih

It was the Pope's first overseas visit since the start of the pandemic and the first-ever papal visit to the Middle-Eastern country.

While in Iraq, he declared "Let us remember our brothers and sisters who have paid the extreme price for their fidelity to the Lord. May their sacrifice inspire us to renew our trust in the strength of the Cross and its saving message of forgiveness, reconciliation and rebirth."

The visit in March came against a background of many thousands of Christians in Iraq being persecuted or killed for their faith, and many of the nation's Christian believers fleeing abroad. One of the world's oldest Christian communities has seen its numbers plummet over the last 20 years to less than one per cent of the country's population.

The historic visit also underlined the enduring role of martyrdom in

the story of the Christian faith.

Open Doors, a non-governmental organisation supporting the Persecuted Church around the world, estimates that more than 4,700 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons last year. North Korea, Afghanistan and Somalia top their list of the most dangerous places to profess the Christian faith.

Open Doors places Iraq at No.11 in their 'World Watch List' of 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. It states: "Persecution faced in public and private life has not changed significantly, but the level of violence faced by Christians has increased sharply in the past year."

In St Albans, Hertfordshire, where I live and minister just north of London, the city is named after Alban, Britain's first Christian martyr. Each June, St Albans Cathedral celebrates the Saint's day with a colourful procession and special services.

Wherever Christians face persecution and death for their faith, their witness is a challenge and encouragement to our own faith, and a call for us to support Christians facing persecution wherever it occurs.



In last month's church magazine, mention was made of the 100th birthday of the PCC. This article, written by The Revd Peter Crumpler, explores its origins a little further...

More history of the PCC

*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. **Romans 8:28***

The Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1921 was an important stage in the birth of PCCs. During the First World War army chaplains found that many men who thought of themselves as church goers were ignorant of the basics of religion. This led to a new interest in mission for the church. There were national days of prayer during the war and in 1915 there was a National Mission of Repentance and Hope. The public were more in the mood for victory than repentance. After the Armistice there was a desire for change in the national church and this led to a discussion about the links with the state.

There was a concern that Parliament was often slow to enact laws for the church and many people felt the national church should have more authority to govern itself. The setting up of Parochial Church Councils was part of that process. In the past a lot of local secular administration had been the responsibility of churchwardens in the vestry meetings. Gradually their functions were passed to local councils. Most of their remaining powers were transferred to PCCs by The Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1921.

The purpose behind these new councils was to give the laity a more prominent role in parish life to go alongside the deaconry, diocesan and national councils which became the synods and have an important role in church life. Some conservative clerics were concerned at this reform and felt that congregations would pick and choose clergy or object to a new incumbent chosen by a patron. The process of starting PCCs to share in decision making in parishes was widely accepted but a few older incumbents and those in more rural areas, failed to do either out of reluctance or ignorance.

A leading churchman in the reform movement was William Temple who became leader of the 'Life and Liberty movement' which

hugely influenced the move towards democratic government in the Church of England. He was Bishop of Manchester in the 1920s, Archbishop of York from 1929 to 1942 and Archbishop of Canterbury (1942-4).

He had been a secretary of the National Mission of Repentance and Hope in 1916 and became chairman and joint leader with H. R. (Dick) Sheppard of the Life and Liberty movement. 'We demand liberty for the Church of England' he declared at a meeting in July 1917. One difficult issue was what level of commitment to church life enabled a person to be eligible to serve on a church council. It was decided that anyone on the electoral roll whether they attended services or communion regularly could participate. The then Bishop of Oxford resigned over the issue because he thought that councils must only be made up of committed regular communicants.

The next Bishop of Oxford in his monthly diocesan magazine endorsed the principle of democracy and reassured people that it was a not negative step or would limit the powers of clergy or wardens. He encouraged the congregations to consider how to use each other's gifts. In Aylesbury the idea of the new PCCs had been discussed as early as 1918. It was felt that they would support the clergy particularly with financial issues.

It is strange to think that the proposal for clergy and congregation to work together for the benefit of the church could be controversial. The birth of PCCs was a major step in the life of the church. I wonder what the next one hundred years will bring?





From the Archdeacon of Hereford, Venerable Derek Chedzy

Pentecost or more traditionally Whitsun is, I think, the Cinderella of Christian festivals; it has never really had the impact of Christmas and Easter. It doesn't have the same traditions or social events around it which make it stand out in the wider culture either. I think increasingly the church doesn't really know how to mark the occasion and even the recent 'Thy Kingdom Come' prayer campaign which has actually taken off across the churches in recent years doesn't really make much of Pentecost itself. Yet Pentecost is perhaps one of the most exciting of the church festivals for it marks the moment when God started the church! It is in effect the Church's birthday, the day that God sent the Holy Spirit to inspire and empower ordinary Christians to do extraordinary things for Him.

The Holy Spirit is given freely to all of us as a free gift from God. Jesus promised his disciples that we would receive this gift so that we might know his presence with us as we live out our faith on a daily basis.

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another comforter to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you..."
- John 14:15-16

The problem is when most of us think of comfort we think of the luxuries of life, or being wrapped up in a warm blanket or duvet. We also think of comfort as something that consoles us when we are upset or in need. Whilst all these things are true the word used in the New Testament has a completely different meaning to those we might expect. The word comfort is the same word that we find in relation to prodding, strengthening or stirring into action.

The Bayeux Tapestry has a wonderful panel of Bishop Odo, forcing his men into battle, at the end of his battle club, with the abbreviated Latin words which when translated means: "Here, Bishop Odo, comforts his troops." As individuals we might not find such 'comfort' comforting but the Holy Spirit is given to equip and spur us into action! In fact, the word comfort has traditionally also meant to give or add strength to someone or to encourage, urge or exhort. When we see the coming of the Holy Spirit in that way it makes much more sense of both Jesus words and what we see in the book of Acts as the early church begins to emerge.

The Holy Spirit also empowers us to be the people God created and knows us to be, in that sense the Holy Spirit fills us with God's wisdom and power for the tasks which he has called us to. On the day of Pentecost it is the Holy Spirit that takes the group of timid and bewildered disciples and equips them to declare the gospel message. Jesus before his Ascension had promised them that they would receive the Holy Spirit to equip them as His witnesses throughout the world.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- Acts 1:8

This power that comes with the Holy Spirit is very real and is available to us just as it was to the first disciples. It is power to live our lives as God intended, power to encourage us and to strength us for acts of service. It is not to make us feel better, or for our own benefit but it is the power to build one another up and to inspire the Church. So as Pentecost approaches perhaps we need to re-evaluate this slightly misunderstood Christian Festival and celebrate the birthday of the church with a bit more style and flair! Our prayer certainly needs to be 'Come Holy Spirit!'

*May the Spirit, who set the Church on fire upon the Day of Pentecost, bring the world alive with the love of the risen Christ.
Amen.*



Deanery of Pontesbury

DEANERY NEWS

Rural Dean: **The Revd Bill Rowell**

telephone: 01938 552064 • email: wkrowell@btinternet.com

Thought for the Month from Rev Graham Phillips

On 10th March 1985, I was living in Hong Kong serving with the Queen's Gurkha Engineers as a squadron second-in-command. For some months I had been attending the Sunday worship in Hang Fook camp with Jackie Pullinger. Jackie had been in Hong Kong since 1966, and had built up an amazing ministry particularly among the Triad gangs and drug addicts in the Walled City, a place of lawlessness within Kowloon city.

I was drawn to Jackie as a person. There was something attractive, something spiritually powerful about her and I wanted to know more. So I was often at her meetings on Sundays and learnt about Spiritual gifts especially the gift of tongues. This is a heavenly language that is given to some Christians. Like all Spiritual gifts it is a gift - given by God for the furtherance of God's purposes and will, and to build us up in our faith and to reveal God to others. It is part of the empowering that God gives to us in our ministry and mission.

I had come across the gift of tongues before and over the weeks had come to understand its value and importance and so one afternoon I asked to receive the gift of tongues. Three of us prayed together but nothing happened.

Some weeks later, on 10th March, I am not quite sure why, but I was feeling quite low. I had gone to the morning service had lunch with some Christian friends and decided to go to the evening meeting which was held in a small flat on Hong Kong Island. There were about 80 people of all nationalities crowded into the small place. During the meeting, a man had a word of knowledge that someone present was afraid and that God was saying to them that they need not be afraid. At the end of the meeting Jackie asked us to split into twos or threes and pray for each other.

My friend turned to me and asked me what I wanted to be prayed for, and as she said the words I was overwhelmed with a sense of fear. I realised that the word of knowledge applied to me. Jackie and some others prayed for me and the fear went. She then asked if I wanted to receive the gift of tongues. I numbly nodded and as she prayed I was filled with a strong sense of peace and joy. Then I began to

Speak in tongues.

Speaking in tongues is like speaking a foreign language. There are definite words, a sense of grammar, and I often get a sense of what the words mean and a sense of God doing something. Jackie encouraged me to pray every day in tongues for 15-30 minutes, and I am sure that this was instrumental in bringing about the many changes that happened in my life over the following 18 months leading to my leaving the army.

I have recently been challenged to pray in tongues for 15-30 minutes each day and within a week I have noticed more of God's interaction in my life - important chance meetings with people, more sense of God at work. It seems that the discipline of praying in tongues every day unlocks things in the spiritual realm. We become more active partners with God in what he wants to do. Jackie certainly found this in her ministry.

There are some misunderstandings about using this gift in public. Paul in 1 Cor 14 is responding to a church situation where so many people were speaking in tongues in a service that there was disorder. Do not take this to mean that you must limit speaking in tongues. Allow the Holy Spirit to flow and seek the Spirit's will. In tongues we are a conduit for the Holy Spirit, we become the mouthpiece for God. This is so helpful especially when we do not know how to pray in a situation - we open ourselves to God and God steps in and provides the words. Yet we always remain in control - we can always stop the speaking in tongues, and of course the Holy Spirit will stop once we have prayed what she wants prayed.

So I encourage those who do speak in tongues to pray for 15-30 minutes each day, and see God more at work within and around you.

If you would like to know more about the Gift of tongues then do speak with your minister or give me a call. I would love to talk further on this especially as we approach Pentecost on Sunday 23rd May, the birthday of the church when we remember and celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the first disciples.

*Blessings,
The Revd Graham D Phillips*

Rector of Great Hanwood, Longden and AnnsCroft with Pulverbatch
The Rectory, Plealey Lane, Longden, SY5 8ET, 01743 861003

Footnote - not everyone receives the gift of tongues. This does not mean you are a second-class Christian. There are other Spiritual gifts that God may be wanting to give to you, ask for them - wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirit, interpretation of tongues. See 1 Cor 12.

Millions join worship online during the pandemic

The Church of England's national online services have attracted more than 3.7 million views since the first restrictions on gatherings for public worship to limit the spread of Covid-19 were introduced, while clips from the services have been seen 40 million times on social media channels.

The Church of England's prayer and discipleship apps – through which people can join in services of morning and evening prayer from wherever they are – have been accessed eight million times, up 50 per cent on the previous year.

The figures for the online services are thought to be just the tip of the iceberg, as churches' response to the pandemic triggered a major change in the way Christians worship and reach out to their neighbours.

As churches look ahead, many are assessing how to incorporate the lessons of the last year into their regular patterns of worship and outreach after the pandemic.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said: "The last year has been a time of loss, separation and pain for everyone. Not always being able to meet together for prayer and worship has made that even more difficult and I long for the day when we can gather together before God's face.

"Yet amid all of this, God has been with us and has done something new which we could not have imagined a year ago. We have sung the Lord's song in a virtual foreign land. As we look and plan ahead it's not a question of either online worship or meeting in-person, but of how we will be shaped by the experience and commitments of the last year, to try new things, to value the things we perhaps took for granted before, and to reach out to more people with the invitation to participate in the good news of Jesus Christ."

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell said: "I think there has been a digital coming of age.

"Of course we long to meet in person, but online services can be very beautiful. People of different ages, from different parts of the country or even the world, families sitting together, people watching whilst having a cup of coffee are all coming together to worship

online in ways that we just couldn't have imagined a year ago."

Many of those attending online services were worshipping for the first time.

A survey of some of the online congregation found 19.7 per cent of people asked were engaging with the Church of England online for the first time.

These national services have also been made available on the DailyHOPE free phonenumber, launched in April last year, and welcomed by those without internet access.

The need to find new ways of meeting for worship amid lockdowns has helped the wider public engage with a broad range of Anglican traditions. For example, Book of Common Prayer services have seen a large increase in people attending as a result of being available online.

Amaris Cole, the Church of England's Head of Digital, said: "The last year has shown the extraordinary creativity of our local churches, which have worked quickly to engage with their communities, despite restrictions.

"It's been incredible to hear the stories of those being reached through these online services.

"With the national weekly services shared on our Facebook page and YouTube channel, we've been able to connect with people who may have never engaged with church services before and have seen communities form in the comments while these services are streaming on a Sunday morning.

"They regularly share prayer requests, ask questions about the Christian faith and offer to support others online.

"With services being led by bishops, chaplains, vicars and lay people, featuring classic hymns or worship bands, readings from television presenters and children from our primary schools, the diversity of the Church of England has been showcased through our national social media channels and we've ensured corporate worship is accessible wherever people may be."

The prayer apps include the Church of England's Daily Prayer app, offering traditional services of Morning, Evening and Night

Prayer and the Lectionary app, which includes the calendar, readings and prayer for the Church's year;

Other apps include Time to Pray, offering Daytime and Night Prayer services with audio. Reflections for Daily Prayer with daily Bible reflections, Sunday Worship, Reflections on the Psalms and Daily Prayer for Thy Kingdom Come all saw significant increases in their numbers of accesses compared with a year ago.

The Travellers *By Megan Carter*

They travelled together sad and forlorn
With all of their dreams shattered and torn,
It started so well, their hopes were high
Never to guess that He would die.

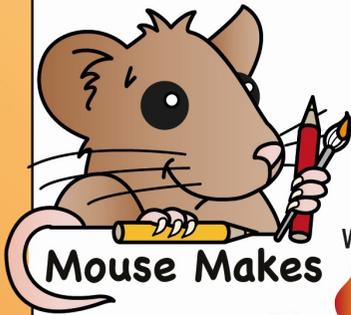
The Man joined the two as they walked along,
He asked why their faces were sad and long,
'Have you not heard' disbelieving they cried
'How the One we followed was crucified?'

Opening the scriptures He began to unfold
How the Christ should suffer as written of old,
It was not a disaster, but all of God's plan
That one should come as Redeemer of man.

They listened enraptured as slowly they saw
The purpose of God revealed in the Law
The Prophets and Psalms, it's all about Him
The One who should come and rescue from sin.



O that eyes should be opened and scripture
made plain,
To see Christ in its pages again and again,
That just like the travellers I too should see
The Master, the Saviour dying for me.



Mouse Makes

Re arrange the scrambled letters to find the missing words.

 The Holy Spirit
V S E I L
with us and in us.

The Holy Spirit helps us to
W K N O
we belong to God.

The Holy Spirit
H C T S E E A
us about God.

The Holy Spirit 
K P E S S A
God's word to us.

The Holy Spirit
P H L S E
us to tell others about Jesus.

The Holy Spirit helps us when we
A Y P R



On the day of **PENTECOST** the disciples were gathered together in one place...

What sound did they hear?

Acts 2:2

What did they see?

Acts 2:3

What filled them?

Acts 2:4



How did they speak?

Acts 2:4



What did the crowd hear?

Acts 2:6



Which countries had they come from?

Acts 2:9

What was their reaction?
Acts 2:12-13



Who explained what was happening?
What did he say?
Acts 2:14-36

How many people were baptised that day?

Acts 2:41



Change each letter to the letter before it in the alphabet and see what the **Holy Spirit** produces in us:

KPZ
IVNJMJUZ
TFMG DPOUSPM
GBJUIGVMOFTT
LJOEOFTT
QBUJFODF
QFBDF
MPWF
HPPEOFTT

Galatians 5:22

What is the work of the **Holy Spirit**? What does He do?
Fill in the missing letters.



TEAC _ ES

COMF _ RTS

REVEA _ S



IN _ OU



TRAN _ FORMS



HEL _ S

GU _ DES

GENEWS

CONV _ CTS

SANC _ IFIES



From the Dragon's Den

Message from Bob the Builder:

George, Uncle Sam and Idris are feeling quite cross. They are stuck in the Little Dragon cupboard, keeping an eye on things in church.

We, (that is Bob the Builder and the teddy bears from the Children's Corner) are enjoying quarantine at Val's house. We have all been washed or sprayed with an anti-bacterial spray, and are hoping that it won't be too long before we are able to take part in Little Dragon sessions once more.

anti-bacterial spray



It is very pleasant here, but we would rather be back in church, where we can see everything that is going on. Still, we mustn't complain. An exciting trip in the washing machine, plus the spray, is possibly nicer than having to have something called a vaccination.

Best wishes, Bob and Friends.

And best wishes from Val and we three:
George, Uncle Sam & Idris.



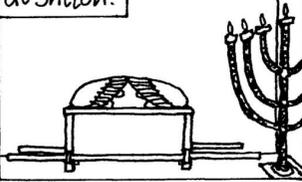
Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
1 Samuel 4:1-10, 5:1-7:1

God gave Moses two stone slabs with His laws for the Jews on them. They were kept in a special chest, the Ark, and carried with them

When the Jews got to Israel, the Ark was kept at Shiloh.



The Jews did not keep God's laws so the Philistines attack and defeat them.



The Jews took the Ark into battle with them to make God help them win.



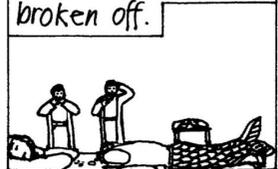
But the Philistines won. They took the Ark to their city of Ashdod and put it in the temple of their god Dagon.



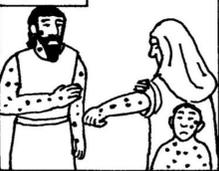
The next day they found Dagon's statue face down.



The next day it was over again and its head and hands had broken off.



Then the people became covered in sores.

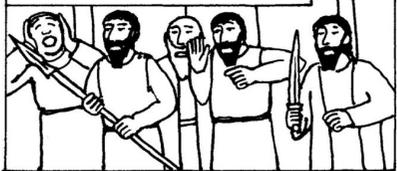


They moved the Ark to the city of Gath.



People began to have sores there too.

They were going to move the Ark to Ekron, but the people there wouldn't let them.



So they put the Ark on a new cart with a gift of gold.



God led the cows pulling the cart.

At Bethshemesh, people harvesting saw the Ark.



They celebrated its return.

But some treated it without respect and died.



So it was moved to Keriath Jearim for safe-keeping.

Part 2 of the story next month ...

Looking at Our COMMUNITY



Did you know that as you enter the church through the front door, there are **128 steps** to climb to reach the top of the church tower?

Michael Carding from Meole Brace, a volunteer with Shrewsbury Food Hub, is undertaking a sponsored challenge to climb 5000 tower steps between Easter Sunday and Ascension Day, to raise money for Shrewsbury Food Hub as it celebrates 5 years of rescuing good food, and sharing it between community groups who then feed our community.

The hub sources surplus food from local supermarkets, and distributes this to where it is needed. During the pandemic there has been a growth of community *Foodshare* events to help families who are struggling and to reduce the scandal of food waste.

The Food Hub charity is powered by volunteers but needs funds to cover the cost of coordination and food safety. As Michael Carding climbed the steps of St. George's tower, he completed around 800 steps so far, and left us to continue on to the towers of the churches in Westbury and Worthen, before nipping up the one in Habberley on his way home.

For information the Hub website is well worth a look

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

And if you would like to donate

go to <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/MichaelCarding/1>

As well as the Food Hub, Shrewsbury Food Bank are always grateful to receive monetary donations. Follow them on Facebook or look on the website for details of how you can help this good cause.



<https://www.barnabascommunityprojects.org/donations>

Open Garden

There is an Open Garden at Rorrington Lodge (under the NGA scheme) on 15th May, 2 - 5.30 pm, £5 per person.

Refreshments are being provided in support of Middleton parish.

St. George's PARISH VISITORS

Would you, or someone you know, appreciate some help or a phone call? Maybe you're feeling lonely, isolated, in need of support and friendship?

We may not be able to visit you at this time, but St. George's Church has a team of friendly people who would love to **phone** you -
if we can help, we will!



Call in confidence:
Phone **Marion Elliott 01743 792256**

ST. GEORGE'S PRAYER CHAIN is a small group of people who believe that prayer can make a difference. Each person within the group offers daily prayer for anyone who asks for prayer.

If you yourself or someone you know needs special prayer for any reason, please contact **Mary Worrall 01743 791069**.

All information given is given in confidence.
A name is enough if that is all you wish to give.



Have you tried this yet... ?



Just register with easyfundraising.org.uk and turn your everyday online shopping into **free donations** for our church.

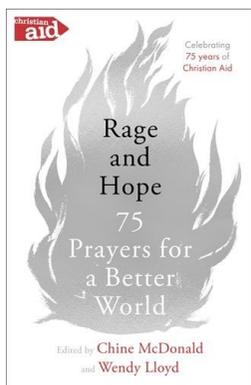
It's really easy! Once you have registered and chosen your charity (our Church!) you just log onto this site as you start your shopping; choose your retailer from the list given, and you will then enter the shopping site and be able to purchase in the usual way.

(It's like entering the Pride Hill Centre, and then once you're in, go into a shop and start shopping!).

A small percentage of the cost of your shopping will be donated by the retailer to your chosen charity—**it costs you NOTHING!**

St. G's has 3 supporters so far—try it today,
to help our church raise much needed funds.

New book helps mark *Christian Aid's 75th anniversary*



Christian leaders, activists, writers and theologians world-wide have written prayers for a new book to celebrate Christian Aid's 75th anniversary.

Rage & Hope: 75 Prayers for a Better World includes prayers on climate injustice, Black Lives Matter, violence against women, discrimination against Dalits in India, the coronavirus pandemic, from extreme poverty in Burundi, and inequality in Myanmar.

Christian Aid's work began in 1945, when it was founded by British and Irish churches to help refugees following the Second World War. Since then, it has provided humanitarian relief and long-term development support, while speaking out against injustice.

Christian Aid helped during the Biafra war, advised Martin Luther King during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, campaigned to make poverty history in the 2000s, and is now fighting climate injustice in countries around the world.

Rage & Hope: 75 Prayers for a Better World from: <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/rage-and-hope>

100 years of the British Legion by Tim Lenton

One hundred years ago, on 15th May 1921, the British Legion was founded in the aftermath of the First World War, to provide support to veterans of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependants.

It was created at a time when two million people were unemployed. More than six million had served in the war: of those who came back, 1.75 million had suffered some kind of disability, and half of those were disabled permanently.

Four organisations came together at the instigation of Lancastrian Lance Bombardier Tom Lister, who was angered at the Government's unwillingness to help, and Field Marshal Earl Haig, who had



been Commander in Chief of the British Forces. The Legion campaigned for fair treatment of those who given everything for their country, and it continues this work today.

In 1922, the Legion's poppy factory opened in the Old Kent Road, London, with 40 disabled men manufacturing 1000 poppies a week. The first Poppy Day was held that same year. The Festival of Remembrance began in 1927, and the Legion became 'Royal' in 1971 – 50 years ago – on its golden anniversary.

At first membership of the Legion was confined to ex-Service personnel, but it was expanded to include serving members of the Forces in 1981.

Amnesty International celebrates 60 years by Tim Lenton

Amnesty International was founded in London 60 years ago, on 28th May 1961.

A non-governmental organisation with its headquarters in the United Kingdom, Amnesty International focuses on human rights and is believed to have more than seven million members and supporters around the world. It was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 for its "defence of human dignity against torture".

Amnesty came together following the publication of an article in *The Observer*, 'The Forgotten Prisoners', by Peter Benenson, a Jewish lawyer whose mother Flora Benenson was Russian. His father Harold Solomon was British, but he died when Peter was nine. Peter, who was tutored by W H Auden and went to Eton and Balliol, took his mother's name much later as a tribute to his grandfather, a gold tycoon.

With a group of lawyers and as a member of the Labour Party he founded Justice, the influential human rights and law reform organisation, in 1957, but the following year he fell ill and moved to Italy to convalesce, where he converted to Roman Catholicism.

Amnesty campaigns to put pressure on governments where human rights abuse takes pace. It considers capital punishment to be "the ultimate, irreversible denial of human rights."



Looking at YOU

Emails - a blessing or a problem? By David Pickup, a solicitor

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. (James 3 v 9-10)

I wonder what St James would say about emails! He had plenty to say about how what we say can cause lots of damage. He wrote that the tongue is a like a spark which starts a forest fire. It is easy to say a thoughtless thing or inadvertently spread gossip or speculation.

Emails are a great way of communicating. You can send a message to someone in the same parish or across the world almost instantly. Lawyers always ask, "have you got evidence in writing?" Telephone calls or face to face conversations are still evidence but it is difficult to prove what was said. Conversations are recorded so you can see the chain of who said what and when. Emails are quick and free.

Emails can, however, easily be harmful. You can accidentally send a personal or private message to the wrong person or even worse copy it to lots of people. It is also difficult to judge the tone of an email, whether it is light-hearted or serious, cross or joyful. When are on the telephone or speaking face to face it is easier to tell whether the speaker is feeling angry or light-hearted.

Sometimes we need a break. Emails are good but many people find you can never get away from them and constantly check for business messages while at home or on leave. Perhaps we should not send emails to the vicar on a Sunday night while he or she is watching *Strictly*. Some discussions are better face to face, and always double check who you are sending it to or copying to.

QUOTE:

It's easy finding reasons why other folks should be patient. -George Eliot

Is there life without the BBC?

Could you live happily without the BBC? Just try it for two weeks.

That was the recent challenge of the corporation's outgoing chairman, Sir David Clementi, to a group of critics who said they resented the licence fee.

Apparently, nine days later, two thirds of the critics had changed their mind and said that the licence was worth every penny. Sir David observed that when "things that they took for granted are removed from them, they realise how valuable the BBC is."

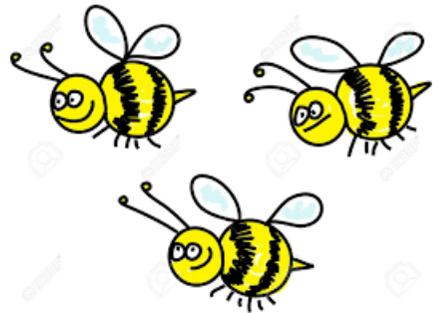
So he encourages anyone else who thinks that the licence is not worth £3 a week, to try life without the BBC. "I think that most people would find it very hard to cope."

Nectar in your garden

Our home gardens are now the largest source of food for insects such as bees and wasps in towns and cities.

They yield 85 per cent of the nectar produced in urban areas, according to a study published in the Journal of Ecology.

Three such gardens will generate about a teaspoon a day of the sugar-rich liquid which is found in the flowers that the pollinators drink for energy. A teaspoon of nectar is the equivalent of more than a ton of food for an adult human, and it is enough to fuel thousands of flying bees.



One ecologist has called home gardens "pivotal" in promoting biodiversity in urban areas across the county. Gardens are thought to cover 29 per cent of the land in urban areas, which is six times the area of parks and 40 times that of allotments.

The research was carried out in partnership with the universities of Edinburgh and Reading and the Royal Horticultural Society.

God in the Arts *by the Revd Michael Burgess*



'May Morning on Magdalen Tower' by Holman Hunt. This painting hangs in the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Liverpool.

I wish you a joyful May

When Van Gogh painted 'The Raising of Lazarus', he turned to Rembrandt for inspiration. But in place of the figure of Jesus, he painted a warm, glowing sun, radiant in the sky, and shining out to bring renewal of life to Lazarus and his sisters.

From time immemorial people have placed the sun at the centre of life and worship. As Christianity grew and spread, it took over ceremonies and practices associated with that belief, but then moved the focus from the sun above to the Son, Jesus, on the earth below.

We can see that in the traditions and worship of Christmas and

Easter. In May we celebrate the goodness and fruitfulness of nature brought by the sun with Maypole dancing, the crowning of the May Queen, and games and sports, just as the Romans went dancing in the fields at this time, rejoicing in the gifts of Flora, the goddess of nature. In May the druids would greet the sun in the sky as they gathered on a high place.

That custom persisted for several centuries, particularly at Magdalen College in Oxford. In 1840 Dr John Bloxam revived the ceremony. Holman Hunt, one of that group of artists known as the Pre-Raphaelites, visited Oxford in 1851 and so enjoyed the Christmas festivities that he decided to honour the college life in one of his paintings. That decision took many years to reach the canvas: his painting of 'May Morning on Magdalen Tower' is one of his last complete works in 1890.

We can easily identify the choristers gathered to greet the rising sun in music and song. Amid the clouds and blue sky above, the birds are flying and the floor where the choir stand is bedecked with flowers. It is a glorious celebration of the fruitfulness of May and the summer: God's creation bringing so many gifts. The president of the college is the man with the dark beard at the right of the painting, and Dr Bloxam is beside him.

But there is an unusual character there also, at the side of the painting – a Parsee, an ancient worshipper of the sun from Persia, perhaps representing not just those who look to the light of the sun, but are also searching for the light of truth. The young chorister in the middle looking out at us holds a lily, the symbol of Mary, the mother of God's Son.

All creation is gathered to greet the dawn and the rising sun of May – the birds above and people below, young and old, Christian and non-Christian - all united to proclaim the goodness and renewal promised by the sun.

Holman Hunt said that he wanted to represent 'the spirit of a beautiful, primitive and in a large sense eternal service.' Here is a vivid reminder that the faith we profess opens our eyes to God's goodness and glory symbolised in the rising sun, and that He welcomes everyone to share in those gifts.



God in the Sciences

... written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge.

Finding Expression – and God’s Response – in Lament

The question of suffering comes up regularly in discussions about science and faith. I once visited a school to speak to some of the older teenagers. One of the pupils had sadly passed away from cancer a few weeks before and his classmates asked, “How God could let this happen?” Of course, these young people’s questions about where God was in this situation were important. But the chaplain also gently reminded the class that their friend’s family were Christians, and that they were finding that their experience of loss had brought them even closer to God than before.

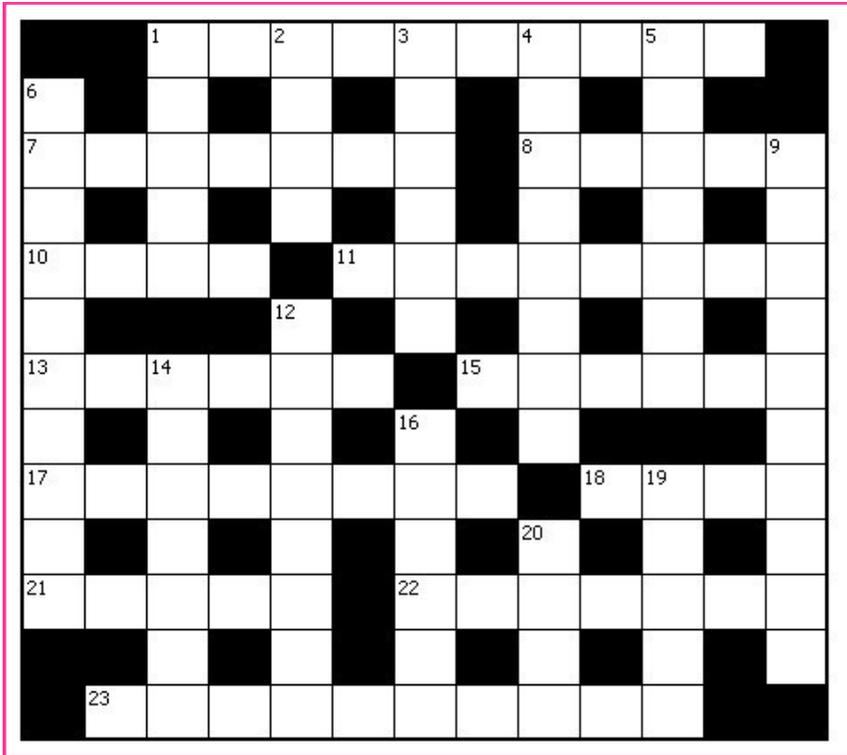
One way that grief can bring us near to God is when we share it with Him, telling Him exactly how we feel. The biblical writers had no scruples about expressing themselves to God, giving vent to emotions we often hold back in a church context. As my colleague Roger Abbott has written in his book on *‘Unanswered’ Prayer*, “Let us not confuse reverence with spiritual prudishness. Perhaps honesty, the way it feels, is precisely what God is waiting to hear from us.”

About one third of the Psalms express some form of grief. The book of Job is a series of responses to one man’s suffering as he loses his children, property and health in quick succession. Lamentations is also one long outpouring of sadness at what happened to Israel under the Babylonians. Some of the prophets, especially Jeremiah, also express their pain at these sorts of events – which reflect something of God’s own feelings at the suffering of His people.

Most of these biblical authors would have had access to Scriptures that encouraged them to turn to God whatever the circumstances. Emboldened by their knowledge of His character and promises, these divinely inspired writers even express their anger to God about the things He lets happen, or complain that He seems to act unfairly or ignore them in their plight. Not only do these people let out all their feelings without fear of reprisal, but they also clearly expect a helpful answer. Some record a resolution to their troubles – often simply because God speaks to and comforts them, enabling them to keep going.

The biblical writers demonstrated that God can handle pretty much anything – anger, blame, bitterness – if we are actively looking to Him for help. As Pete Greig of the 24-7 prayer movement has written, “pain that is not expressed can never be transformed”.

Your Puzzle for this month



Crossword clues

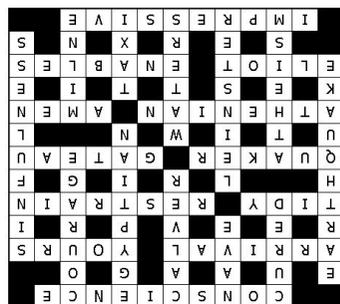
Across

- 1** Sense of right and wrong (*1 Corinthians 8:7*) (10)
7 Coming (*John 11:17*) (7)
8 'All I have is — , and all you have is mine' (*John 17:10*) (5)
10 Smarten (*Acts 9:34*) (4)
11 Hold back (*Job 9:13*) (8)
13 Member of the Society of Friends (6)
15 At ague (anag.) (6)
17 Citizen of the Greek capital (8)
18 So be it (*Galatians 6:18*) (4)
21 Twentieth-century poet and dramatist who wrote *Murder in the Cathedral*, T.S. — (5)
22 Empowers (*Philippians 3:21*) (7)
23 Imposing (*1 Samuel 9:2*) (10)

Down

- 1 Healed (*Luke 7:21*) (5)
- 2 Central space in a church (4)
- 3 Co-founder of Spring Harvest and General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance 1983–97, Clive — (6)
- 4 Moses killed one when he saw him beating a Hebrew labourer (*Exodus 2:12*) (8)
- 5 Bravery (*Acts 4:13*) (7)
- 6 It interrupted Paul and Silas singing hymns in a Philippian jail (*Acts 16:26*) (10)
- 9 Transgression (*Psalms 36:1*) (10)
- 12 Irish province in which Dublin is situated (8)
- 14 Same hit (anag.) (7)
- 16 'The Spirit of God was hovering over the —' (*Genesis 1:2*) (6)
- 19 Author of the immortal stories of Winnie the Pooh, A.A. — (5)
- 20 Cab (4)

Solution: →



Lessons of Lockdown

This past year may have altered your perspective on life. Some of the following statements may be worth thinking about...

- * Life is precarious
- * A nurse is worth more than a professional footballer
- * Spare time isn't a waste of time
- * A smile is precious
- * Being alone isn't the same as loneliness
- * Hard work doesn't guarantee employment
- * I'm spending more on food & drink and less on church & charity
- * Silence opens us to creative ideas
- * Social media are a mixed blessing
- * Shopping needn't be addictive
- * Driving less and walking more is good for humanity
- * Isolation teaches us we need each other to generate energy
- * Getting back to 'normal' isn't God's plan for the human race
- * When everything else is shut, God is open



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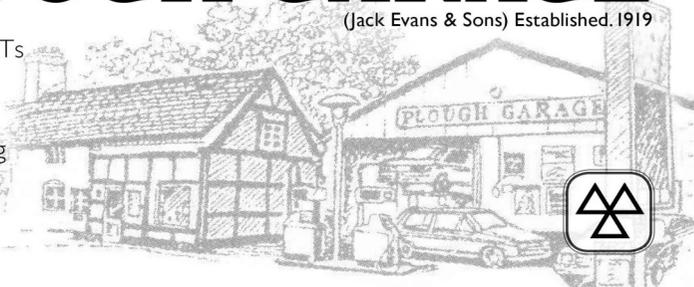
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