

21st July 2025 PCC meeting

The minutes from the July PCC meeting were approved at their recent September meeting, owing to the break in the meetings schedule over the summer holiday period. Generally, meeting summaries will appear in >imprint< around 6 weeks after the respective meetings.

At the July meeting the subject of an appointment of a **minutes secretary** was again raised. Some possible candidates were suggested and would be sounded out to gauge interest.

There had been a request from the Diocese to update our existing **Mission**

Action Plan to align with the format specified in the Diocesan website and its priorities for “Living God’s Love”. Our current vision statement and core values were re-examined to help identify three top priorities and objectives. After a wide-ranging discussion it was agreed that *initially* we should try to discern what God’s vision is for Christ Church is and *then* ensure our priorities align with this. It was felt the whole church could participate in this activity and make it the focus of the proposed weekend of prayer. It was then agreed to set aside Friday 17th – Sunday 19th October for this weekend for the whole church community to seek God’s direction and the vision for Christ Church. Meanwhile the Standing Committee and others would be responsible for setting the weekend’s agenda and topics for approval at the September PCC meeting.

The Treasurer provided the PCC’s regular update on the church’s 2025 financial situation. No issues were raised.

It was again noted that some of the information on our Christ Church website is out of date. The Communications Co-ordinator’s current priority is updating our social media content, but it will be investigated whether updating key website content could also be included.

In this issue:

21 st July 2025 PCC meeting	1
Shake it off and Step up – Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi	2
Connect Groups	4
What’s in a “name”? – Michael Thompson	5
Sermons at Christ Church:	7
Caring for Creation	7
Peter Harris video talk 5 th October	7
John Stott London Lecture 2025	8
A Rocha Blogs and Field Notes Podcasts	8

Shake it off and step up

– Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi

Εμπόδια (empodia) is a Greek word translated in English as Obstacle, barrier, hurdle, impediment, hindrance, obstruction and a variety of trials common to all. We encounter obstacles everywhere as we go about our daily duties. They are normal and to

be expected. The desert and the Red Sea were obstacles to the Israelites as they fled Egypt. The religious leaders were obstacles while Jesus Christ was doing ministry here on earth. It is possible that you are currently dealing with some life-challenges and considering options that include overcoming, evading, or giving up altogether. However, despite life's inherent unfairness and suffering, our faithful God offers grace, purpose, and steadfastness. He encourages individuals to find hope and meaning by, trusting in His divine sovereignty, coping with hardship, and developing resilience.

Obstacles come from different sources, and could be accompanied by stress and anxiety. God's prescription is: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phi. 4:6). Every obstacle is, therefore, an invitation to seek God who knows all things and can resolve every matter. Nothing is impossible with Him. He promises peace, which will mitigate anxiety and eliminate stress. However, you need to start with a personal relationship with Jesus in order to benefit from the privileges of being an adoptee into God's family. So, does belonging to Jesus offer a guarantee of a stress-free life? No!

Life isn't always easy and living it as a Christian won't always make it easier. Although, some people expect it to, because after all "If God is for us, who can be against us?" However, one thing we all eventually learn, is that God won't always move when and in the way we want him to. Every Christian will at some point, experience challenges to their faith because not every prayer will be answered as we desire and not every situation will go how we expect. This can often lead to disappointment and everything else that follows. But don't worry, you're not alone. With the right (i.e. Christ's) mind-set and strategies, you can overcome these challenges and thrive in your faith. You can **shake them off and step up** if you know how.

How?

The first step is to learn **NOT** to put any blame on God. Yes, your feelings hurt, but God isn't responsible for your suffering. **Disappointment is the gap between expectation and reality** and this is something every Christian will experience with God. It is inevitable. The difference between a Christian who is firm in their faith and one who is struggling can be the response to their disappointment. **"If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small"** (Proverbs 24:10).

As your Father and Protector, there are many situations God protects you from, so if He didn't protect you from this particular situation in the way you expect, that does not mean God isn't good, or that he doesn't love you. The Bible teaches us to "Trust in the LORD with all {our} heart, and lean not on {our} own understanding. Paul, a diligent apostle of Christ prayed three times that God should remove a thorn from his flesh and God said *no*, but assured him that His grace was sufficient for his needs. Paul consequently shook off the feeling of self-pity and stepped up by faith into the glorious light of walking in-step with the LORD.

Know who you believe

Having a skewed image of God will definitely cause struggles in your faith. One way to overcome this is to renew your mind. Sit down with God and write down how you are feeling and how you view God in this season. Be completely honest no matter how challenging it may seem, then open the Bible and find the things that God has said about himself that counters or supports the doubtful view you currently hold. Also encourage yourself by listing the past and current goodness of God as you count your blessings. One thing the Israelites failed to do in the midst of their hardship was to meditate on their past miracles and let that fuel their faith that God would come through for them again. Counting your blessings will remind you of everything God has done for you and his faithfulness to you. One “unanswered” prayer does not negate dozens of answered ones.

Trust HIM Completely

Put all of your faith and trust in God alone. He is the only One who can truly guide you through whatever you are facing. God always knows what is best for you, and He knows everything about you too. He is absolutely trustworthy! *Always choose faith over fear. Things can be stressful and overwhelming at times, but we must never give in to the fear. “For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV*

Abstain from Sin

“Abstain from all appearance of evil.” 1 Thessalonians 5:22 KJV

Whenever you face challenges, do not give in to, or entertain, sin. The devil knows your weaknesses and will do whatever he can to drag you down and away from living a life that is pleasing to God.

Overcome Obstacles by Casting Down Imaginations

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:5_ This is a fancy way of saying, “reject negative or sinful thoughts.” As Christ-followers, we are called to fill our minds with true and godly things (Philippians 4:8-9). We should not entertain every thought or feeling that comes into our minds. This process will strengthen and equip us for the many trials and tribulations we will face in our faith walk.

Let Jesus be your model

Just because your life does not look as glamorous as another Christian’s life does not mean God loves you less or that he is unfair. You don’t know the struggles that person faced or the hard work they put in to get to where they’re at. Besides, their journey does not have to look like yours. With multiple people documenting their lives on social media, it is easy to fall into the comparison trap, but you do not see what goes on behind the scenes. So many picture- perfect marriages have been revealed to be abusive and so many “successful” people have also been revealed to either be corrupt or struggling in some way. You have to focus on your journey, making sure that you are aligned with the will of God. As long as you let God direct the path you take and approve the decisions you make, then things will work out for you. **Romans**

8:28 ~ *And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. **HOW?***

SHAKE IT OFF AND STEP UP

Once upon a time a farmer's mule fell into a dry well. When the farmer heard the mule's braying and realized what had happened, he determined that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving.

Instead, he called his neighbours together and enlisted their help in burying the old mule in the well and putting him out of his misery. Initially, the old mule was very upset. You would be, too, if you were in a deep hole and people started throwing dirt in on top of you! But as the dirt rained down on his back, the old mule had a thought. It decided that every time a shovel of dirt landed on its back, it would shake it off and step up. And that's what it did.

As the dirt cascaded down the well, the old mule kept shaking it off and stepping up. Hours later, the exhausted mule finally stepped over the wall of the well. What was meant to bury him actually helped him! The next time you find yourself trapped in a seemingly hopeless situation, you know what to do: shake it off and step up! (See James 1:2.)

Connect Groups: Celebratory lunch

- John Truscott

Our seven Connect Groups hosted a bring-and-share lunch at church for everyone on Sunday 21st September.

The event started with short presentations from each Group, including a suggested answer for the question, 'If your group was an animal, what animal would it be?' Answers included elephant, eagle and hyena!

There were also three short individual presentations or interviews on 'What I appreciate about my Connect Group'. Speakers were Janet Anstee of Pilgrim Group, Kate Kent of Kingfishers and Nigel Sellars of the Berean Group. "What inspiring testimonies!" said one person afterwards.

One theme that came through was the value of a personal invitation to join a Connect Group.

The presentations were followed by a delicious lunch. Somehow or other our 'bring and shares' always seem to work out well and this was no exception. "It was the best bring and share lunch I've ever had at Christ Church," was one response.

The event had been the idea of the Connect Group Co-ordinators meeting some months earlier. The plan was to celebrate the life of the groups and to keep their profile high in church life.

We have seven groups, five meet in person and two meet online. Six groups meet fortnightly and one monthly. Most groups seek to apply a recent Sunday sermon to daily life and then share personal news and pray for each other. There are over 50 Christ Church members involved in at least one group.

If you are not yet a member of a group and would like to join one or find out more, speak to anyone you know who is in a group or any Group Co-ordinator. For a list of groups and their Co-ordinators, pick up the bright blue A4 sheet in the foyer or the red A5 sheets that were placed on every table for the meal.

What's in a "name"?

– Michael Thompson

In this and possibly a few more short articles, I would like to ponder in print on the meaning of a word or phrase which we often use as Christians, but seem to take for granted, perhaps missing its full meaning.

First off is the phrase "**in the name of Jesus**" or "**in Jesus's name**". Why do we say it so often at the end of prayers? At least when others are listening, do we simply say it as a convenient way of indicating that we are coming to an end, to elicit an "Amen"? Or are we using it as a kind of incantation to give extra force to what we are asking? A kind of "Abracadabra"?

The phrase *in Jesus' name* is often used in the New Testament in the context of diverse things such as baptism, healing and miracles, preaching and teaching, greetings and benedictions and even suffering, but it's our use of the term in prayer that I would like to focus on here.

It's in the Gospel of John that Jesus himself is recorded as saying: "And I will do whatever you ask *in my name*, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask for anything *in my name* and I will do it." (John 14: 13-14). "The Father will give you whatever you ask *in my name*" (John 15:16 and 16: 23-24).

Surely these statements don't mean that we need to call out the name "Jesus" in our prayers, like waving a Jesus flag to get his or the Father's attention. And yet praying *in Jesus' name* seems to be a condition of having one's prayers answered - otherwise, why would the phrase be added in each place to indicate when Jesus and the Father will listen?

The Bible seems to be using the term *name* here in a way which goes beyond the meaning which we are normally used to- i.e. simply as referring to what someone is called; a label, as it were, to identify them. In modern English usage, that is pretty much the only way we use that word, but if we go back in time a bit, we find the word being used in other ways, to refer to how one is known in a wider sense (e.g. protecting a family's *name* in the sense of reputation) or a person's "authority" (e.g. in "Stop *in the name of the Law*").

In other contexts in the New Testament, "authority" might well be the right way to paraphrase "name", but it doesn't quite fit when Jesus says we are to pray to him "in his name". But the wider meaning of how one is known seems closer to its sense here.

In ancient times, and certainly in the Old Testament, we find the term *name* is used in a much more significant way than its normal use in modern times. A person's *name* is often referred to by reference to their nature or character; that is, as the whole package that a person represents.

For example, in Exodus 34:5-7, God declares his name in terms of his character and nature: "Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his *name*, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin..."

To take another example, in Psalm 20, verse 7, David says “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God”. The Psalmist is referring not to what God is called, but to his power, character and covenantal relationship with his people.

In the New Testament, at John 17:6 and 17:26, Jesus is saying, in his prayer to God the Father, and by reference to the ancient Greek original, that “I have revealed your name” and “I have made your name known”. (Interestingly, the modern NIV simply says “you” instead of “your name”). Jesus here is of course referring to God’s essential person, character and nature.

In the references, therefore, to praying “*in my name*” earlier in John’s Gospel (in chapters 14, 15 and 16, mentioned above), Jesus is pointing to his own nature and character. We are asked to pray in accordance with that revealed nature and character.

This comes as a blow to many selfish prayers. Jesus is saying, in effect, that the kind of prayers that he and the Father will hear are those that are in alignment with their own character... in other words, in alignment with God’s will. Our assessment of whether our prayers are what God will hear and grant depends on our identification and understanding of God’s will, revealed in the words, life and death of Jesus Christ.

Is that any different from teaching elsewhere in the New Testament? In 1 John 5:14, we are told: “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything *according to his will*, he hears us.”

In that familiar verse, Matthew 6:33, Jesus says “But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well”. So, more generally in life, we need to seek first the kingdom of God by voluntarily submitting ourselves to him as our Lord (not prioritising ourselves) and pursuing what he reveals to us as the right thing to do. Praying in Jesus’ name is part and parcel with that, in terms of our putting God’s character and will at the forefront of our prayers.

So I suggest we should not focus on tacking on the words “*in Jesus’s name*” at the end, but, even before praying, pause to consider how we can pray in a given situation in alignment with the person and character of Jesus Christ as revealed to us in the Bible. That then will be a sincere attempt to pray *in Jesus’s name*, whether we claim it at the end of our prayer or not.

Sermons at Christ Church

Sin and Forgiveness

The series on Sin and Forgiveness continues during October and November. The introduction and first 4 sermons in the series are now on the

Christ Church website <https://www.ccstalbans.org.uk/sermons> and the services are recorded on our YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@christchurchstalbans360>

Here is a revised list with dates of remaining sermons:

	Text	Sermon Topic	Families Plan
Oct 5 Harvest Sunday	Peter Harris video (Genesis 9:8-17 and other texts)	'Why Creation is waiting for the Christians' (See next item for details)	Young people's creation-themed activities with Susie & Oliver
Oct 12	Exodus 20:1-21 (Mark 12:28-34 The summary of the Law)	The ten commandments	Defining sin: the transgression of boundaries
Oct 19	Joshua 6:24-7:26	Jericho, Achan & defeat at Ai	The seriousness of & penalty for sin
Oct 26	Hebrews 9:11-28	The cost of forgiveness (Intergenerational)	The precious blood of Jesus
Nov 2	Judges 2:6-3:6	Introducing the Judges	Idolatry and disobedience
Nov 9	Remembrance Sunday: the Sin of not remembering		
Nov 16	1 Corinthians 10:14-22 (Mark 12:13-17 Paying taxes to Caesar)	Fleeing Idolatry (Intergenerational)	Worshipping Jesus
Nov 23	2 Samuel 11:1-27	David, Bathsheba and Uriah	Lust, greed, abuse of power, cover up – a combination of transgressions creates havoc

* "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us."

Caring for Creation *Peter Harris talk 5th October.*



As an epilogue to the Season of Creation we are using the occasion of the Harvest Festival at Christ Church on 5th October to show a video of a sermon given by **Revd. Peter Harris**, principal founder of *A Rocha*, entitled '**Why Creation is waiting for the Christians**' given at a Damansara Utama Methodist Church (DUMC), Malaysia service in February this year. The first 15 minutes of the sermon will be shown during our service, but because the whole talk lasts just over 45 minutes, the remaining 30+ minutes will then be shown back in the church straight after the service and the

opportunity to grab refreshments. You are welcome then to join in a simple lunch of soup and bread and the chance for further discussion together.

If you are unable to attend or stay after the service on 5th October, here is the link to the sermon: <https://dumc.my/sermons/why-creation-is-waiting-for-the-christians/> and there are sermon notes at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i3RWDJIN_cDstox_g0Zuy9HAY3KJ_nswQtOkeaj6CUY/edit?tab=t.0

John Stott London Lecture 2025

This year's John Stott Lecture on **Thursday 20th November at 7pm** will follow a theme resonating with Peter Harris's DUMC sermon. It will be entitled **'Creation Care: Mission or Mission Drift?'** and will be given by **Kuki Rokhum**, A Rocha's International Director of Church Engagement, based in North East India and with many years' experience in relief, development, and justice work around the world. She will be challenging the global church to integrate creation care into its missional theology and practice, without compromising the centrality of Christ. Tickets to attend the talk in person at the **London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC), St Peter's, Vere Street, W1G 0DQ** cost £10 each, or £5 for an online ticket. Find out more at <https://licc.org.uk/events/the-john-stott-london-lecture-2025-creation-care-mission-or-mission-drift/>

A Rocha Blogs and Field Notes Podcasts

There have been two further A Rocha blogs and two additional Field Notes Podcasts posted since *>imprint<* no.138 was published. The latest blogs are entitled **'How do you protect a forest?'** posted on 4th September by **Anna Radkovic**, about A Rocha Kenya's work in the Dakatcha Woodlands on the Kenyan coast and **'Around the Table'**, posted on 2nd October by **Jo Swinney**, Peter and Miranda Harris's daughter, including an excerpt from Jo and Miranda's book, **'A Place at the Table'**. The podcasts include **episode 54**, entitled **'Battling Bull Creek's invasive species'**, with **Verónica Godoy**, Texas Conservation Project Director for A Rocha USA which was posted on 4th September, and **episode 55**, **'Why does nature matter?'** with **Peter Harris**, in conversation with his daughter, Jo and Rick Faw, posted on 2nd October, exploring the different explanations he has encountered for the worth of the non-human world and why he believes money lies at the heart of it all.



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