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Items for *>imprint<* no. 97: **Mon. 27<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2021**, please, by email at [editor@ccstalbens.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbens.org.uk). *Peter Young (Ed.)*

## PCC meeting, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021

The PCC reviewed some of the matters arising from previous meetings, including:

Parish Profile update: Using the version originally written in 2018 as a basis, graphics have now been added and some of the text has been edited, but in the light of changes brought about during the pandemic, further amendments will be required on an ongoing basis and it is planned that the PCC will review the Parish Profile again in September.

Creation Care: The reconstituted C4 group has met and has discussed a range of items and ideas; however one of the major projects will be to investigate to what extent Christ Church can meet criteria for a possible Eco Church award in future (this being a scheme devised by A Rocha with Church of England support, among others).

### *Mission Action Planning*

Having looked at 2 of the ‘fruits’ of the ‘Mission Tree’ in the Diocesan ‘Living God’s Love’ initiative in the June meeting, the PCC considered 3 more at this July meeting and they filled in questionnaires on each of the topics, covering current status and future aims/priorities and comments were invited. The recording of any further views other than just ticking boxes on the questionnaires was encouraged. It was observed that with the size of our church congregation it may be necessary to focus our efforts in particular areas. The ‘fruits’ reviewed on this occasion were:

Effective Communication (which also includes information on our church’s identity, values and purpose) – ensuring it is reaching intended audiences in a timely and regular manner and is readily accessible.

Inspired and Shared Leadership – of all ages and abilities, who can influence and encourage others through healthy relationships with the hope of the Gospel.

Deepening Discipleship – aiming to help people from whatever current level of involvement grow and live as disciples.

Two more surveys will be covered in a subsequent PCC meeting.

## *Financial Update*

Predicted congregational regular giving, based on the income for the first 5 months of the year, will probably be slightly below what was budgeted for 2021, taking into account a few reductions in individual regular donations which are likely to occur. This shortfall may be offset by any one-off additional donations. However other income, largely from room hire and Cabin rental is likely to be significantly reduced, because of fall-off of lettings during the pandemic, even though it is hoped that the situation may improve after lifting of restrictions. Also Cabin rental may have to be discontinued after the end of this year. It was confirmed that PCC had previously approved a budget deficit for the current year, on the grounds that we can justify use of the reserves we have accumulated in recent years as God's provision to cover this deficit.

**Payment card readers:** Research into this was presented, sourced from the Church of England guidance for parishes on their website, which resulted in 3 possible options from 2 providers being considered. Two of these require pairing with a tablet or mobile device to key in donation amounts, which then enables contactless, or chip and pin, payment from cards with the reader. The third contains its own SIM card which enables the donation amount to be input *and* the card to be read on the reader. After discussion of the various attributes, it was agreed to purchase the latter.

## *Approval for Reader Training*

It was noted that Sara Head, having almost completed a year's CofE Foundation Course to explore Readership training, has now been accepted for the 2-year Reader Training course. It was recognised that she has unique gifts in communicating the gospel and it was proposed that the PCC approve her going forward for her training and hopeful eventual licencing to our Parish, which was agreed.

## **THERE SHALL BE SHOWERS OF BLESSING** – *Dele Agbelusi*

Our present generation places a great premium on self-help and self-assertion. The emphasis is usually upon what "we" can do. We are told that we can determine our own security with wise investments; guarantee our health by going to a health spa, swimming, jogging... or dieting. We are told that we can enhance our personal appearance by visiting a tanning booth, having cosmetic make-overs, or plastic surgery. We can tuck this in, relocate that, and spray on all kinds of fragrances to create an impression and reinforce confidence.

In the spiritual realm we are forever devising new strategies and programmes to advance Church ministry and secure growth and efficiency for the gospel. This trend has a tendency to lose sight of the person or sink him/her in the plan or organization, whereas, God's plan is to make much of the person. Men (and women) are God's method. **The contemporary Church may be looking for better methods; God is looking for transformed and willing men and women.**

You may wonder what I am up to in this article. Have I been day dreaming or caught up in a vision? I cannot tell, but I have been sitting in God's presence for quite some time and I am fully awake! My thoughts have taken flight down memory lane. I have been in this church for about two years now and have heard a lot about what was done in the past through God's Holy Spirit, but it is still a far cry from the showers of blessing I am praying for. Will you join me?

I am constantly being reminded that only God can do in people's lives, what counts for now and all eternity. Genesis 17 records that Abraham was informed in his old age that he was going to be a father in the same way that I have a witness in my spirit that God is

going to do great things in our midst. In verse 17 Abraham laughed so hard that he literally fell down on his face, saying, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" I can guess how Abraham felt. A similar story is found in the first chapter of Luke. Zechariah and Elizabeth, who were old, received the unbelievable news that they were to become parents of a son (John). Zechariah was dumbfounded and expressed his trend of thought in his statement: "But I am an old man and my wife is well on in years."

Abraham and Zechariah were not what we would call "possibility thinkers" in their old age. They were tired and the light was going out of their eyes. **At their age, they were more conscious of limitations than they were of possibilities.** "It cannot happen," they responded. But God said, "It is within my will and it not only can happen, it shall," and it did.

God, I am listening even as the voices of doubt are also struggling to be reckoned with today.

I dare not play down the Scripture which says: "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, He shall give you power to be..." This is the power that sees God call forth things from nothing; the power that transforms wimps into God's firebrand. We are always the wrong age to do something for the kingdom, aren't we? It seems we are either too young or too old. God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to the nations. Immediately, Jeremiah disqualified himself on account of his age, "Oh Lord God, I do not know how to speak. I am only a child." What a pity! God was not simply calling him to address a tribe or a community, but raising him up to be a witness to the "nations." How could God **make** such an obvious mistake as to place so staggering a responsibility upon a child/youth? We can almost hear Jeremiah thinking, "I cannot command listeners, I cannot pronounce prophetic words, and I cannot conceive how you could possibly use me." However, God addressed Jeremiah's reluctance by replying, **"I know you cannot, but I can!"**

It is my conviction that God wants to move our ministry forward at Christ Church and He is looking for men and women like you. The Holy Spirit is looking for people whom He can use—people of prayer, people mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men and women who are faithful and looking unto Jesus. He does not come on machinery, but on people. He does not anoint plans, but people—people of prayer and desirous of learning at the Master's feet.

There are times when our resources are diminished and our strength is spent; all of the marvellous things which we know count for nothing; when we are out of ideas and physically and mentally immobilized. Like Gideon in his contest with the Midianites (Judges 7), he looked at the odds against his army, he must have cried out: "the odds are against us and we are vulnerable on every side. There is no way we can overcome this hopeless situation". **But God can, and he did.**

**It is not so much a matter of giving God permission as it is getting out of God's way.** God can, if we will let him, and be available to heed His call. As I dream of the showers of blessings of God's Spirit on our congregation, dream along with me and open your heart to the Holy Spirit as He speaks to you. First of all, be determined to be a man or woman of prayer. Spend time in God's presence and let His Spirit flood your soul as you daily and intentionally meditate on His Word.

I am aware that some of us may be going through a tough time which may be taking its toll on our lives. Maybe it came all of a sudden and we do not know how to respond. I want to reassure you that no matter how large or small or painful the problem is; God is interested in what his children are going through in life now. See for instance what God says in the Bible: Psalm 27:5 For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling.

Psalm 62:8 Trust in him at all times; O people, pour out your hearts to him: for God is our refuge.

Those verses just underline the fact that God is interested in every single aspect of our lives. Therefore, whatever my problem, however big or small, I can start out with this bottom-line promise, '*God is interested in my crisis. And God is bigger than my crisis.*'

Now, what is the first word that comes out of your mouth when you face a crisis? It should be God, Father, or Jesus. When you say Father, you have already set a sense of direction, you are inviting him in all of his power and might into your life to deal with this issue. Isn't it true that often people go to all kinds of extremes first to find a solution to a problem and then as a last resort they finally go to God? This should be our first choice.

Can we afford not to trust in and walk with a great God who does incredibly big things? LORD, Your showers of blessing are what we need.

## News from Rachael Howson

*Psalm 33:8: Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!*

It's time for an update from Rachael: I have just returned from Scotland, where the School of the Word and Spirit 2021 has just finished. After 18 months of online meetings and very limited in-person interaction, it has been fantastic to be able to be to live in community for the last 2 months. With 11 participants and 5 staff, half of whom had to quarantine before the school started due to travel, we adjusted to being around each other all the time pretty quickly - thankfully.

It always blesses me how transformational it is to read the Bible in a group and see what Holy Spirit highlights. Although we learn the whole story of the Bible in every school, this element of the SWS really caught this group; seeing God's faithfulness throughout history and how we fit into that eternal story has had deep impact. Yolanda and I, as school leaders, had felt the prompt to read the whole Bible as part of this school - a big challenge that we haven't attempted before during SWS - yet we all rose to it, taking turns to read. It truly is the Living and Active Word of God (Heb. 4:12). Doing this really solidified the big picture of the whole story for so many of the participants, increasing hunger in all of us to know the Word better - a fantastic desired outcome.

The last few schools, the call to more 'fear of the Lord' has stood out to many. I believe the Lord is drawing His people into a greater holy awe and reverence of Him in these times (as the body of Christ, not just this school, although we saw it evident in the school). Looking at what it means to walk a life of repentance and holy living in our world today, what is truth and how do we live by it, which also naturally increases passion for relationship with God.

Please feel welcome to ask me further questions. I love to talk about God and His word. Thank you once again for your continued prayer and support. I am always so grateful for your love. I look forward to seeing you soon.

## Creation Care

### *A Rocha Field Notes Podcasts and blog and other resources*

Episode 8 of the **Field Notes Podcast** features **Rachel Mander** talking to Bryony Loveless and Peter Harris on the topic of '**Activism, beauty and the possibility of change**'. In this podcast she speaks honestly and insightfully about her struggles and internal and external opposition she faces in challenging the status quo. Rachel is part of A Rocha's Theology

and Churches Team, she co-ordinates the Young Christian Climate Network and also works for Hope for the Future, helping UK churches to take political action on climate change and build relationships with MPs.

Go to <https://www.arocha.org/en/field-notes-podcast/> to listen to the interview, or from wherever you get your podcasts. Episode 8 was posted a few weeks ago, but Field Notes Podcasts is taking a break over the summer, however it will return as a fortnightly release in September. All previous episodes are still available.

The latest **A Rocha International** blog, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> August has **Naomi Bosch** writing on the topic, '**Snapshots of A Rocha: the kingdom of God is here!**'

see <https://blog.arocha.org/en/snapshots-of-a-rocha-the-kingdom-of-god-is-here/>

Naomi is a freelance writer, currently based in Croatia, and has previously volunteered at A Rocha France's centre Les Courmettes in the hills north of Cannes and Antibes, where our own Felicity Hall is a frequent volunteer.

**Robert Sluka**, A Rocha's Lead Marine Scientist, has written a Grove Booklet entitled '**Marine Plastics**', highlighting the issue of plastic pollution in the marine environment and hopefully providing us with a better understanding of how plastic can play a positive role in healing our relationships: with God, each other, nature and ourselves. It is available to order for £3.95 in paper or digital format from the Grove Books website: <https://grovebooks.co.uk/products/e-201-marine-plastics>. He will be talking about this topic at a **free online event** on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 17:30-18.30. To register go to <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/taking-on-marine-plastics-tickets-165739789171>

Videos of all three talks given by **Prof. Katherine Hayhoe** at an A Rocha virtual conference, and several others, may now be found at <https://vimeo.com/arochaint>

### ***Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4)***

C4 met (on-line) for the second time on 20<sup>th</sup> July. The next meeting will hopefully be in person on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> September at 7.45pm in the Church Hall, and *anyone* interested will be welcome to attend. There's just a chance that it could be brought forward a week, so please watch out for any updates via the weekly e-news-sheet.

### ***Hope in Action - local activities (see <https://www.hopeinaction.uk/regional>)***

The August news is in the archive section of the Hope in Action website at

<https://us4.campaign-archive.com/?u=38128d83eaf82d7f9b5ef6e87&id=689690921e>

and you can also sign up to receive emails when new newsletters are released.

It provides advance news of '**Plenty!**', a 6-week course, small discussion group resource for churches at St. Peter's, from 16<sup>th</sup> Sept - 21<sup>st</sup> Oct, each Thursday at 8pm on Zoom and in-person. It will be looking at the economic drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss, what the bible has to say and what we can do. To take part, please contact [Alex Huzzey](#) at St. Peter's Church.

There are also details about '**Count us In**', an international movement calling on us to take at least one of the [16 highest impact carbon-cutting steps](#), between now and the COP26 climate talks in November, and you can also join [St Albans CAN Count Us In](#) to inspire others to take steps too.

The newsletter invites us to take part in the **Season of Creation**, from 1<sup>st</sup> Sept - 4<sup>th</sup> Oct, a worldwide celebration of prayer and action and there is a 50 page [celebration guide](#) available for download, too.

There is also mention of **Tearfund's COP26 Church Service** on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> November with Pete Greig, Carol Ng'ang'a and Celtic Worship in a climate themed service mid-way through the COP26 conference. It will be available as pre-recorded content for integration into local church services, or as a live-streamed event. Go to

<https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/cop26-church-service> in order to register your interest and for further details.

## **Christ Church sermons for autumn 2021**

The following are the topics for two sermon series, scheduled from early September until just before Christmas.

### *Nourishment sermon series for September*

- Sep 5        Nourishment by meditation on the word
- Sep 12      The fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom
- Sep 19      Nourishment from the shepherd
- Sep 26      Jesus is the bread of life

### *Marks of Mission sermon series for October to December*

- Oct 3        To share good news of a crucified Saviour
- Oct 10      To proclaim Jesus Christ as the risen Lord
- Oct 17      To serve the poor in our local community
- Oct 24      To nurture disciples so they flourish in the faith
- Oct 31      To seek out and baptise new believers
- Nov 7        To respect and enhance God's good creation
- Nov 14      To seek God's truth in a confusing culture
- Nov 21      To stand for justice in a godless society
- Nov 28      (Advent Sunday)
- Dec 5        To have compassion on a needy world
- Dec 12      To not be ashamed to testify to our faith

*This sermon series is based on the five marks of mission for the Anglican Communion:*

- 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom*
- 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers*
- 3. To respond to human need by loving service*
- 4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation*
- 5. To strive and safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth*