

*An all age community ... on a shared journey of faith ... making the edge the centre  
so that Jesus can be known*

Registered Charity 1132925

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Items for *>imprint<* no. 122: **Mon. 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024**, please, by email at  
[editor@ccstalbens.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbens.org.uk). *Peter Young (Ed.)*

## PCC meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2024

The minutes of the previous (November 2023) PCC meeting were approved and those of the Standing Committee were received, subject to minor corrections. The latest BAGAG meeting notes were also received.

Updated **Mission Action Plan (MAP) proposals** in a report to the PCC were reviewed. There was discussion regarding the extent of work of the further subgroups proposed to look at elements of the MAP and also the extent of future needs for full PCC review. The PCC agreed by majority to the work in subgroups. It was recognised that the other proposals in the report will be subject to ongoing work.

The PCC discussed the existing **Christ Church Mission Statement**. There was some discussion around whether the phrase “making the Edge the Centre” is sufficiently clear or helpful, but the meeting came to a majority decision to amend the statement with the addition of “...so that Jesus can be known”. The full Mission Statement will henceforth be **“To be An All-Age Community, on a Shared Journey of Faith, Making the Edge the Centre, so that Jesus can be known.”**

The PCC received updated information on **Monday Suppers**. There has been a very positive effect on relations with the people who attend. New equipment funded out of the BAGAG budget has been very helpful to the project. However, income from donations does not yet cover costs, with approximately a £40 shortfall per week. It has been agreed the group will monitor the financial aspects monthly. There has been a donation from a charity which will be ring-fenced for Monday Suppers use and a decision on another application for a different charitable donation is awaited.

A paper was presented on **church building hire rates proposed for 2024**. A five-percent increase in rates and a new “party” rate have been adopted. Other proposals include a deposit for key fobs and some discretion on who the church agrees can hire our premises. The PCC unanimously approved the hire rate proposals.

It was agreed that the Resources (MAP) sub-group will be responsible for discussion of **staffing issues** and reporting to the PCC.

The church forum and prayer meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January had raised a number of issues and ideas on the proposed **church** (original building) **roof replacement**, which the PCC discussed (including: the comparative costs of a roof replacement versus a complete rebuild; a two-stage approach, i.e. initially a free-standing canopy, followed by integration into structural improvements and refurbishments to the building; and holding a pledge day to gauge the likely funds obtainable). The PCC did not arrive at any decisions, however the Roof Working Party will continue to evaluate.

The **minutes of PCC meetings** will, for the time being, be taken by its members on rotation, but other options, including involving non-PCC church volunteers, will be considered.

## **GETHSEMANE AND CALVARY – THE GATEWAY TO EASTER – *Dele Agbelusi***

“Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples ... ‘Stay here and watch with Me’ ...” (Matthew 26:36, 38).

We can never fully comprehend Christ’s agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, but at least we don’t have to misunderstand it. It is the agony of God and man in one Person, coming face to face with the reality of our sin. Gethsemane and Calvary represent something totally unique—they are the gateway into life for us. It was here that Satan’s final assault against our Lord as the Son of Man was unleashed. As Jesus fell on His face in the garden and prayed, *His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground*. The weight of sin must have proved so tremendous that Jesus distilled drops of blood.

Satan must have had a field day telling Jesus that He was alone. There may be sterner trials than this, but surely it is one of the worst, to be utterly forsaken. “See,” said Satan, “You do not have any friends! Your Father has shut up the bowels of his compassion against you. No angel from the throne of God will stretch out his hand to help you. See your companions with whom you have shared your life, what are they worth? Son of Mary, see there your beloved disciple John, and your bold apostle Peter, how the cowards sleep when you are in your pains! Lo! All hell is against you. I have sent my message throughout all regions summoning every prince of darkness to set upon you this night, and we will spare no arrows, we will use all our infernal might to overwhelm you: and what will you do solitary one?”

Was it really true that all men had forsaken Him? However, He must have had some faint comfort from the thought that they were sleeping, not from treachery, but from sorrow, the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak. What anguish must have filled our Saviour as he saw his very close friends snoring away! This was one bitter ingredient in his cup; but that cup is drained dry.

We have a lot to learn from our Saviour’s prayer at Gethsemane. It was a lonely prayer where no ear hears but God’s.

It was a humble prayer where only the glory of God was sought. Luke says he knelt, but another evangelist says he “fell on his face.”

It was a filial prayer. Jesus addressed God as Abba, Father. We have no rights as a subject because we forfeited such rights by our sinfulness; but in Jesus, nothing can forfeit our

right to our father's protection. Do not be afraid to say, "My Father, hear my cry."

It was **persevering prayer**. Jesus prayed three times. We need to be like the importunate widow, whose continual coming earned what her first supplication could not win. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Lastly, it was the **prayer of resignation**. "Not my will, however, but your will be done" (Luke 22: 42). Be content to leave your prayer in God's hands, who knows when to give, and how to give, and what to give, and what to withhold. So pleading earnestly, importunately, yet with humility and resignation, you will surely prevail.

Alas, the victory to take the Father's cup of wrath on behalf of sinful humanity was won in the Garden of Gethsemane. In sorrow and tears, but with determination to carry through his mandate to die for sinners, Jesus went willingly to Calvary. Where the first Adam failed and listened to the lie of Satan, Jesus, the second Adam, triumphed when He said, "*not my will Father, but yours be done*". There was no plan B, no other way, to reconcile sinful humanity to Holy God. The price for sin had to be paid and compassionate Jesus did not look back.

The Cross was not something that was forced on Jesus. It was His purpose for coming to the world. He is "the Lamb that was killed" (Revelation 13:8). The incarnation of Christ would have no meaning without the Cross, because the purpose of the Incarnation was Redemption. God came in the flesh to take sin away, not to accomplish something for Himself. The Cross is the central event in time and eternity, and the answer to all the problems of both. The Cross was the place where God and sinful man merged in a tremendous collision and where the way to life was opened. But all the cost and pain of the collision was absorbed by the heart of God in Christ Jesus.

With the natural eye, the place of the Cross is not awe-inspiring and only inspires the masses as it is related to Jesus and His death for sinners. Once a man or woman becomes convicted of sin, convinced by the Holy Spirit of the Savior's death for sin, and in brokenness and repentance, receives Christ, the place takes on a new meaning and beauty. To those of us who have been Born Again, Calvary becomes a symbol of new life after death. We sing "On a hill Far Away, stood an Old Rugged Cross..." with meaning and joy. It becomes to us, "The emblem of suffering and shame" where our sin was put on Jesus, and He paid our debt of sin.

The central theme of God's redemptive plan runs through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. On each page is that thin red line that leads all the way to God's purposed plan, and at its heart is a place called Calvary.

Calvary was the place where divine love met sinful man. -John 3:16. Were it not for that place and the death of Christ on the Cross of Calvary, we would all be hopelessly lost and helpless to get to God and go to heaven.

It is a sweet thought that Jesus Christ came with his Father's permission, authority, consent, and assistance and anyone who knows the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit as he should know them, never sets one before another in his love; he sees them at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane, and on Calvary, all equally engaged in the work of salvation. He who knows Jesus the Christ, and put his confidence in Him, and is fully united with Him must know that he is united with God the eternal One.

**Get connected!** – *John Truscott*  
*introduces our new Christ Church CONNECT GROUPS*

Over two recent Sundays we have heard, via Share Chair, of the support that the Christ Church home groups have been to people.

We currently have five groups:

- Barnabas meet every other Wednesday evening
- Kingfishers meet every other Tuesday afternoon
- Pastimes meet at church monthly on Tuesday afternoons
- Pilgrim meet every other Thursday evening
- Ridgeway meet by Zoom every other Tuesday evening

We have had groups off and on for many years. We have called them 'home groups' or sometimes 'small groups'. Most meet over coffee and cake – and there is often a considerable amount of laughter!

These groups mean a great deal to their members so we are now encouraging more people to join and to discover what they are currently missing. Hence a relaunch under the new overall name of **CONNECT GROUPS**.

The existing groups continue but we hope to be able to add some new people to two of the groups that are quite small and we plan to start one or two new groups.

**CONNECT GROUPS** are a vital part of our church family. Groups number from about 5 to 12 members.

The aim is to help each other grow as disciples of Jesus Christ through:

- applying the Bible to our daily lives (several groups take a recent Sunday sermon and think through its practical application);
- growing in love and service for each other, supporting each other in prayer and encouragement (sharing news of our joys and concerns);
- and, hence, 'connecting' with Jesus Christ and 'connecting' with each other.

Future issues of *>imprint<* will enable different members to say why they value being part of one of these groups. Eleanor and I have found our group to be one of the most valuable features of our Christ Church membership over many years.

If you not already a member of a group, talk to me and I can suggest a group, perhaps a new one, that might suit you.

Fill in the bright yellow form given out on 25<sup>th</sup> February (there are more copies in the foyer), call me on 01727 568325 or email me on [joel@john-truscott.co.uk](mailto:joel@john-truscott.co.uk). If you have questions, do ask.

## **A week in the life of Homes of Promise** – *Written by Martin* *(who has given permission for Jackie to publish in Imprint).*

I am staying in Kampala with Jane, CEO of Homes of Promise [*HOP*], and spending a couple of weeks with her and the boys and staff. It's my fourth visit, although the others were all pre COVID and at the old house at Gabba. This is a brief reflection on what has been going on and my observations. I arrived on Thursday morning having flown overnight and went straight to the new George's Place at Garuga. George's Place was bursting and bustling with boys as they were mostly still there. I was greeted enthusiastically as Uncle Martin by some very large, tall boys who had grown enormously in the last four years. They were desperate to know about "Professor Mike", my son who came in 2019. Mike has significant learning disabilities, no Luganda and limited English conversation, however he established a warm bond with several boys at the time and it was really affirming to see him remembered.

The HOP office is now a small secure room with proper internet etc., in a church/charity

conference centre in central Kampala. It's much more efficient than when it was in the garage at the old house in Gabba. No boys rushing in for a hug after school or to complain about lost gym kit etc., and a calm space to do all the back office stuff that a large professional place has to keep up with. Just observing the amount of work that goes on there shows the complexity of dealing with forty boys, each of whom carries a lot of emotional bruises and needs bespoke care and attention. Saturday saw me off to accompany Jesse (driver) and Tresor with Cassita to Mukono to take Cassita to the secondary school where he boards. Traffic was appalling and it took about four hours each way to do a ninety-minute journey. The school looked really smart and inviting. It was a real joy to see how Cassita was greeted by some of the staff and how keen he was to be back. Fees are very low by UK Standards but still out of reach of most Ugandans.

On an odd note, boys are required to arrive at school at the start of each term with reams of branded white paper, brooms, floor mops, gallons of detergent and disinfectant, two dozen toilet rolls and other stuff all for the use of the school. Goodness knows where it goes. It's enough to block the drains permanently and bleach the floors white. We also called in to the Connect Africa vocational school where Victor and Saviour had started early in the week on a catering course. They claimed it was boring but I rather suspected that work was about to ramp up in a big way, and some shocks would follow. Much of this week has been taken up with visiting the homes of two of the older boys who have completed vocational training and work experience. The plan is for them to take up work in their village or with a family relative. The purpose of the visits is to make sure that the boys are fully connected with their families and that boys and family understand their responsibilities to each other. It's an important part of moving them from largely being supported and dependent on George's Place and Homes of Promise to being fully independent young men. Experience shows this is an uneven process with the potential for a few hiccups along the way. Most of the other older boys have gone back to trade and vocational school, particularly the Don Bosco college which I visited four years ago. This provides both practical and theory-based training in skills such as plumbing, welding, auto mechanics and catering.

The younger ones living full time at George's Place are still in day schools and also restarted in the week. It was suddenly quiet when we called in mid-day on Friday.

Some reflections on the week. There is still a great need for assistance of the type that HOP provides, and that as government initiatives to remove young people from the streets increase that need will continue to expand. At the moment HOP receives no funding from the Ugandan national or local government, although the authorities remain keen to send new boys along. Operating in Uganda remains difficult. There is increasing involvement from local officials who bring little to the work except their job titles yet expect to receive compensation and thanks for doing what, in the UK, we would expect as a normal part of their duties. Although in theory inflation rates for Uganda are similar to the UK, local prices do not seem to reflect this, and in particular school fees almost doubled since COVID 19. There have been a lot of staff changes over the last four years and the current team seem a well-integrated and enthusiastic bunch. So, thanks go to Jane and all the staff and the boys. It's always a joy to see you.

*Martin*

## **Sermons at Christ Church**

The previous edition of [>imprint<, no.120](#), on p.3, provided a list of sermons and themes until Easter, then through to 21<sup>st</sup> April. (go to the website at <https://www.ccstalbens.org.uk/sermons> to listen to sermons again, or watch/listen to the entire services on our YouTube channel by using the links on the website postings).



## St Albans Good Neighbours Scheme (SAGNS), Coffee Morning at Christ Church

*Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> April 9.45 to 12.00*

The Good Neighbours scheme has been in action for over 40 years. It originally grew out of Churches Together in St Albans, so has Christian roots though open to those of all faiths or none. Everyone is a volunteer, there are no paid posts.

Volunteers commit to only what they can realistically manage, it could be once a week or more, or once a month, or just occasionally. Most of the volunteers act as drivers, taking clients to hospital appointments, dental clinics, eye appointments etc., but others may offer regular shopping, befriending, or practical help.

Others manage the computer system one day a month to match up the volunteers with requests. Some limit their work to St Albans itself and others are happy to go further afield. Any costs involved can be reclaimed from SAGNS.



Clients are usually allowed to use the scheme twice in a calendar month, so they will often only seek help from SAGNS when friends or family are unable to help. Currently there are over 1200 clients using the scheme and on average there are between 80 and 100 requests each week. No payments are requested but clients are invited to make a small donation to the scheme to help off-set costs if they want to.

With so many clients using the scheme and only about 120 volunteers signed up, new volunteers are always needed. If you have any spare time you could offer, if you are good with people or computers, or practical help do come to the Coffee Morning and learn more. There are currently 4 from Christ Church who volunteer and a good number are clients.

SAGNS often now chooses to hold its events and AGM at Christ Church—it is the preferred venue because they find the facilities here among the best.

On 6 April the Coffee Morning is for all volunteers with the scheme with an open invitation for visitors to come and find out more. The local MP, Daisy Cooper, will attend for the first half-hour.

## Caring for Creation

*Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4) meeting 26<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024*

C4 last met on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February. We watched the seventh [Lausanne Classroom Creation Care video](#),: 'What science and faith can teach us about creation care', in our regular agenda item around theology of the topic. Featuring Tiwonga Mzumara-Gawa, Victor Mughongho, Peter Houston and Peter Harris, the video talked about God's creation giving opportunities for Christian witness and science and faith as tools to uncover the wisdom of God in Creation (read also the section on the latest Field Notes podcast below). However our viewpoint and response to this wisdom is marred and changes we are making are leaving many people behind.

See [>imprint<115](#), p.7 for the full programme.

We also reviewed another short section of the Eco Church questionnaire: [Worship and Teaching](#). When we got our Bronze Eco Church award, we scored silver for this section, although we didn't detect significant improvement in score for this section since then. Remember we would need to score silver in all five categories to qualify for the Silver award. Our reviews of other categories will continue in future meetings. Remember C4

meetings, usually on the third Monday of the month, are open to all church members to join by Zoom or occasionally face-to-face (details in our weekly e-newsletter).

### ***A Rocha Blog***

There has been one further blog so far posted since the last *>imprint<*, no.120. It was posted on 6th February by **Debbie Wright**, a former trustee, long-term A Rocha UK volunteer and a producer and director for the BBC, and entitled: “City homes for all”. In it she looks at London, how it developed, its green spaces and opportunities for wildlife, but with increasing pressures resulting from human population growth. She then discusses the coexistence of wildlife environments and local communities.

Click the link above or go to <https://blog.arocha.org/> to read this and other A Rocha blogs.

### ***Field Notes Podcasts***

There has also been one further podcast since the last *>imprint<*. The most recent is: Episode 38, posted 5th February, featuring **Federica Marsi**, an Italian freelance journalist who has reported extensively from various parts of the Middle East, until lock-down and its aftermath resulted in a change of direction. In this podcast, entitled ‘A cynical journalist finds redemption at the Kenyan coast’, she talks with Rick Faw and Jo Swinney about her time at A Rocha Kenya’s coastal field study centre at Mwamba and the challenges and transformation she experienced as a non-believer at the time, when connecting with nature.

Go to <https://arocha.org/en/field-notes-podcast/> or wherever you get podcasts.

### ***Earth Hour, Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 8.30-9.30pm***

Find out how you can take part in this by going to <https://www.earthhour.org/>

This is an opportunity to join millions around the world switching off their lights (and/or other energy saving activity) for an hour and devoting 60 minutes (or more) to learn more about biodiversity, nature loss or climate change, by attending an event, watching a documentary, or using resources to help identify plants and animals in our neighbourhood.

### ***Plastic recycling guides***

Confused about what types that are or are not recyclable? Try these websites:

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/a-very-easy-guide-to-recycling-plastic/>

<http://www.sustainabilityguide.co.uk/2018/02/05/recyclable-plastic/>

But bear in mind these are general guides and you may still need to check specifically about which plastic types (printed or embossed on the item) can be recycled in our local area. [*I notice I’m widely recycled!* – Ed.]

Also read about The Big Plastic Count on the next page.



# THE BIG PLASTIC COUNT 11-17 MARCH

In 2022, nearly 250,000 people from schools, households and communities across the country made **The Big Plastic Count** the biggest ever investigation into UK household plastic waste. It showed that nearly 100 billion pieces of plastic are thrown away in the UK each year, with hardly any of it recycled. The rest is burned, sent abroad or ends up in landfill. We can't recycle our way out of the plastic waste crisis, so The Big Plastic Count is back – and this time we've got an even bigger target in our sights – The Global Plastics Treaty. By joining thousands of people across the country and **counting all the plastic you throw away for a week**, you can gather the vital evidence we need to convince UK ministers, supermarkets and big brands to lead the way at the global talks that could finally phase out plastic production for good.



Let's get counting to make the Global Plastics Treaty as big and bold as it can be.

The UK Government needs to push for a strong and ambitious Global Plastics Treaty. The treaty needs to include an end to plastic pollution, a phase-out of new plastic production, and ensure a just and inclusive transition to a low-carbon, zero-waste, reuse-based economy.

## WHEN and HOW TO TAKE PART... from

**Mon 11<sup>th</sup> March morning until Sun 17<sup>th</sup> evening, count as you throw!**

Simply mark every piece of plastic as you throw it away on the

### [Let's Count Tally Sheet](#)

Paper copies will be available in Church for anyone who needs one. See Susie Ryan.

#### TOP TIPS

Put the [Let's Count Tally Sheet](#) up on your fridge, or near your bin or recycling.

- Use the [Plastic ID Tool](#) to look up plastic items if you need to.
- Remember to write down any piece of plastic packaging you use while out and about, then mark it on your tally sheet when you get back home.

Once your household has completed the survey, bring the [Let's Count Tally Sheet](#) back to Church on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March so we can record all of Christ Church results together.

Find out more about The Big Plastic Count here: [thebigplasticcount.com](https://thebigplasticcount.com)

**Together, we can build even more evidence about what really happens to our plastic and think about where we can make household changes to better care for God's creation.**