

Wishing you Easter Blessings!

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Peter Young (Ed.)



March PCC meeting

A meeting of the PCC was held by Zoom on 8th March 2021.

Updates following February PCC meeting

As of 8th March, a quotation for fixing the Hall floor lifting tiles was awaited.

Also awaited was the approval for opening a new current account from the bank (Charities Aid Foundation).

Following the failure of the original provider of a platform for online giving to respond in a timely manner, another provider is now being looked into. As a contingency, the provision of bank account details in the Christ Church website to facilitate online giving is also being considered.

APCM: 2020 Accounts and other Annual Reports

The Trustees' Report and 2020 Financial Accounts was presented for acceptance by the PCC, in order for them to go for approval at the APCM. The original 2020 budget was based on a predicted deficit of £4000, whereas the actual deficit was £6000, which was not as much as it might have been, given the unforeseen constraints of the year, because a number of costs ended up below budget., including staff costs, admin and buildings. After clarification of a few items, the PCC accepted the report, which will now go for independent examination by the auditor. However there may be a slight delay in getting the auditor's final sign-off, potentially limiting the time for advance review by church members prior to the APCM, but if this is the case the accounts will be issued with final sign-off pending.

The PCC also received the Deanery Synod and Church Wardens' reports. There will not be a separate report from the PCC this year; instead it will be deemed part of the Trustees' Report and Accounts.

As at the date of the March PCC meeting, it still wasn't clear whether having a virtual APCM, e.g. via Zoom, will be permissible this year, whether or not it will then be possible to meet face-to-face for the meeting. There had been no specific guidance from the

Church of England, although unofficially the Diocese seemed to believe it should be acceptable. This will be checked, however. Even if it is possible to have the meeting in person by then, it is recognised that it will be unlikely that everyone eligible to attend will be willing to do so, so some form of online meeting, or a hybrid arrangement, seems desirable.

Hong-Kong Ready Church

Paul Bailey was invited by the PCC to introduce this topic. He explained that up to 130,000+ Hong-Kong residents, holding British National Overseas Passports are estimated to migrate to the UK in 2021 and arrivals have already begun. They will need a lot of practical help and churches in the UK have a unique opportunity to welcome and support arrivals, and, where applicable, provide a home church in the locations where they settle in this country. Therefore an initiative has been launched on 12th February: Hong-Kong Ready Church, with this aim in view, spearheaded by Krish Kandiah and others. Churches irrespective of denomination are invited to sign up to this initiative, so that arriving Hong-Kongers can locate a church from a map where they can be assured of a Christian welcome, fellowship and assistance, also bearing in mind the possibility of racial abuse in their neighbourhoods. In St. Albans a number of churches have already signed up, including St. Peter's and Marlborough Road Methodist Church. Representatives of churches signing up will receive appropriate training, organised by 'Welcome Churches'. The PCC were invited to consider to what extent Christ Church should become involved in this initiative, which they did in break-out groups. There was general agreement that Christ Church should sign up for this, particularly since some contacts with Hong-Kong immigrants are already starting to come our way. Paul was asked to liaise with GMAG about carrying this forward and promoting it within the church. *[for more information see Paul's item on this on p.5 – Ed.]*

Mission Action Planning

Jeremy had prepared some thoughts about what a Missionary Action Plan (MAP) could usefully include, with what he saw as minimum requirements, breaking it down into 3 categories:

- „ Things we are currently doing that we will no doubt want to continue
- „ Families' outreach is central to our vision, and families do appear to like doing things together, but there is a potential danger of separating peer groups within the church, to the possible detriment to 'whole-church' activity. So how could that work in practice?
- „ Worship, the main thing that we do together.

The PCC once again broke up into 2 groups to discuss whether the MAP needed to say anything else.

In feedback, the PCC thought the anticipated duration of the plan needed to be considered. A longer-term plan would need to mention (and possibly commit us to) more things, whereas a shorter-term plan could be updated/revised when appropriate. It was felt we need to be prepared for the unexpected, too, as we have already been experiencing, and also anticipate future needs, which favours the shorter time-scale. The next stage will be the formulation of a questionnaire.

Conclusion

It was noted that this was the last meeting of the current PCC, prior to the APCM on 18th April, where some elections are anticipated. Three PCC members (Kate Kent, Jackie Kenealy and John Sear) have completed their first 3-year term, but could be re-elected if they are agreeable, or replaced by newly-elected PCC members.

SNIPPETS FROM JESUS' GETHSEMANE (Matthew 26:36-46) – Dele Agbelusi

It is very instructive that human history began in a garden. It was in that garden that Satan tempted the first Adam – our first parents. They fell into sin, by doubting the goodness and love of God and preferring, instead, the lies of Satan presented to them as the good life. It is emblematic that Jesus, the second Adam (1 Corinth. 15:45-48) was tested to see if he would accept God's will as perfect, even if fraught with danger, pain and anguish spiritually and physically. Jesus yielded to the Father's will. He chose to carry the sin of humanity and consequently, was crushed, as a result of that choice. What love for the Father's will and sinful humanity!

The word Gethsemane comes from two Hebrew words: *GAT* which means press, and *SH'MANIM* which translates to oil (Oil press). At Gethsemane, olive is grown, harvested, pressed and crushed in order to obtain oil. The optimum value of the olive is derived from the oil after crushing. Sometimes oil is used as an emblem of the Holy Spirit. In John 16, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit after his bodily death and resurrection, indicating that the Holy Spirit would come after he had been crushed, in order for the oil of His Spirit to flow. (Isaiah 53).

The whole scene at Gethsemane happened under the cover of darkness. Jesus says in Matthew 26:38, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death." It is possible to become so sad, or heavy, that reality becomes distorted, the future seems hopeless, and action seems impossible. Perhaps you have been on this road before. This is a serious matter. Jesus' mission is in jeopardy. He must fight against the immobilizing effects of this horrible weight of sorrow.

In the garden of Eden, the first Adam ran away from God after deciding to be independent of Him. In the garden of Gethsemane, the second Adam ran towards God in absolute surrender to His will. He fights the dictates of the flesh by crying out to his Father in heaven (Matthew 26:39). My Father, if it be possible, may this cup be taken from me; Yet, not as I will, but as you will." The cup translates to all the horrors of the next eighteen hours — the physical torture, the abandonment of his friends, the turning away of his Father while he becomes sin for us on the cross.

In the first prayer (verse 39), the taking away of the cup meant not drinking it. In the second prayer (verse 42), the reference to the cup is by drinking. "If it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it . . ." In other words, Jesus did not go on praying that he would *not* have to drink the cup. He went on praying for success in drinking it. The battle lines shifted between the first and second prayer. The first battle line was, "Keep the cup of death and judgement from me if possible." The second battle line was, "As I drink the cup, don't let me fail to do your will and accomplish my mission." Wow! My God! May I have the mind of Jesus which is totally yielded to the Father, when I face my own Gethsemane (hour of decision).

He cried out to be saved from death. And God answered him so that death did not have the final say. Easter tells us so. Death did not destroy him. The fear of death did not destroy his obedience before death, nor did the experience of death destroy his life after death.

The Cup symbolized All Sin Ever Committed. My sin and your sin were in that cup. The cup is the cup of judgement; God's wrath against sin. (see Isaiah 51:21; Jeremiah 25:15). The next day Jesus would take the wrath of God's judgement on his body against sin. We hear his cry on the cross – "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" The fellowship with the Father was broken as he was made sin for us. The Father turned his face away. The Father could not have fellowship with the sin he judges. Alas! Christ was judged, so that I will no longer be judged. He was forsaken so that I will not be forsaken. If God could have

saved humanity by being nice, being sincere, being religious, being philanthropic, He would have done so but there was only one way, the way of the cross. How Jesus dreaded this hour!

When Jesus prayed in the garden, He did not have a “name it and claim it” attitude which would look like arrogance and presumption in this context. **Jesus made his request and rested. He rested in the goodness, love, and character of God.** It’s like he was saying, “whatever you want is my command, because it is the best way, and I know that you are not an idle and careless bystander.” That is the prayer of faith. Is that you?

In Luke 22:43, after Jesus’s first prayer, “An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.” Strengthened him to do what? To drink the cup. “*My Son, there is no other way. I will strengthen you, I will help you, We are in this together*” is what the Father seems to be saying to him. May our ears be tuned to the voice of the Holy Spirit when our road is rough, the garden is dark and the stakes are high.

When Judas finally approached with swords and clubs, and the battle at Gethsemane came to a climax, Jesus did not say to Peter and the others, “Farewell as I go.” He said, “The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go...” (Matthew 26:45–46). **He calls us then and now, to follow him.**

Gethsemane, changed the course of history because it was there that the battle for humanity’s redemption was fought and won. But the war raged on till sin was dealt the fatal blow on the Cross at Calvary. How do you face your Gethsemane? Can you rest assured and secured in the will and character of our heavenly Father as you present your request to him? As a church or a Christian **if we want to make a difference in this world, Jesus has taught us in Gethsemane how to fight and win. The Word of the Father and a willingness to submit to it, trusting in his faithfulness is the key.** Amen.

Our next sermon Series

In the last edition of *>imprint<* we publicised that, after the current sermon series using lectionary readings, the next sermon series on the book of Malachi would start after the APCM. The date for starting the new series has been brought forward, however, so it is intended that it will now start on 11th April (i.e. one week *before* the APCM), not 25th April as previously stated. The 25th April sermon will therefore be the second in the series. Here is the complete programme of sermon titles and proposed dates:

1	The honour due to ‘The Master’	April 11
	Introduction to the whole book (ref. Malachi 1:6)	
2	The challenge to appreciate God’s love (1:1-5)	April 25
3	The greatness of the King (1:6-14)	May 2
4	The challenge to honour God’s name (2:1-9)	May 9
5	The challenge to be faithful (2:10-16)	May 16
6	The justice of the Messenger (2:17- 3:5)	May 23
7	The challenge to give what is due (3:6-12)	May 30
8	The challenge to serve God (3:13-15)	June 6
9	The day of the Lord (3:16-4:6)	June 13
10	The message from ‘The Messenger’	June 20
	Résumé of the whole book (ref Malachi 1:1)	
11	Talkback on the series	date to be decided

The key to the colour coding used above is:

'challenges' (no.s 2,4,5,7,8), features or acts of God (no.s 3,6,9), and introduction/résumé/talkback (no.s 1,10,11).

You can still catch up with audio recordings of the current and earlier sermon series on the Christ Church website. You will find them at www.ccstalbans.org.uk, click the **MEDIA** drop-down menu and select **Sermons**. The main sermon page includes the most recent Lent series on Bible Covenants. Clicking the button at the bottom of the page will direct you to a 'Past Sermons' page where previous series are available.

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me" – Hong Kong Ready Churches – Paul Bailey

As the summary of minutes above show, the PCC discussed and approved Christ Church being a part of the UKHK Network. In the service on 28th March I set out why it was thought we should be part of this and how as a church and as individuals we can participate.

Four questions Christians might ask about new arrivals from Hong Kong:

- 1 Are Hong Kongers likely to be our neighbours?
- 2 How should we regard new arrivals from HK?
- 3 What can we do as a church?
- 4 What can we offer as individuals?

Are Hong Kongers likely to be our neighbours? The 130,000 mentioned is an estimate and some doubt that the Chinese government will allow so many out. Others say it will be up to 300,000. However, about 9,000 Hong Kongers have already arrived and the final numbers will dwarf the 27,000 Ugandan Asians who arrived in the UK in 1972. Many are likely to work in London and live in satellite settlements like St Albans. In the PCC meeting 3 members said that they had already had some sort of contact with families from Hong Kong.

How should we regard new arrivals from HK? - in our local area or at work, school, college or university? As Jesus tells us: Matt 25:35 "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." In verse 40 He says, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." In Mark 12:31 he tells us that the second of the two greatest commandments is "love your neighbour as yourself." For the definition of who our 'neighbour' includes, Jesus leaves us his parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10). There are also many other Biblical verses which reinforce how we should show hospitality to strangers.

What can we do as a church? Being part of the network of UKHK Ready Churches. This would involve:

- Committing as a church to welcoming Christians from Hong Kong who are looking for a congregation to join.
- Offering to help new arrivals who need assistance settling in by training up members of the church to be welcomers.

UKHK Ready is an organisation headed up Dr Krish Kandiah, a well-known evangelical leader, speaker, charity director and theologian. He and his team have met with the Prime Minister as well as the Home Secretary, Priti Patel and other officials and organisations to work out how as a nation we should respond to the needs of those arriving. Hong Kongers offer a great deal in terms of experience in various professions such as in the financial services industry. However, they arrive amid a climate of increasing hate and prejudice, where abuse of people of east Asian appearance has increased by 300% in this country

since the start of the pandemic. They also present competition in a shrinking jobs market. UKHK offer training which a few from Christ Church have already signed up to. This is online in the form of some videos and a live event. Do contact me if you would like a log-in to look at the videos. They also have a website which anyone can access and is a 'one-stop shop' which you can share with new arrivals: <https://ukhk.org> . Over 1000 churches have expressed an interest in joining this, over 300 churches have already signed up (including Christ Church) and at least 80 Hong Kongers have asked to be connected to their local church.

What can we offer as individuals?

Understanding – we should try to put ourselves in their position as strangers in an unfamiliar land and grasp something of: their culture; history (including the 'legacy' UK colonialism – the opium wars etc.); diversity within Chinese community in the UK (mainland / Hong Kong, native Chinese / British born, English speaking / limited English); racial discrimination they will face.

Practical support – advice on: schools, NHS, housing (see website) as well as such things as driving licences, buses, community groups / clubs. We can visit with gifts or food and offer and be prepared to accept hospitality (restrictions permitting). Some may be able to offer accommodation for weeks or months.

Emotional support – they are no different to us, in fact we are all one in Christ (Gal 3:26-29). However, they *are* different to us – should we expect them to assimilate, or should we adapt to be more diverse? Chine McDonald (Christian Aid) whose parents having arrived from west Africa, went to their local church and were told to go to the black church down the road!

Spiritual support – invite to Christ Church; point out Chinese church (see website); witness by our actions. Pray for the new arrivals, the role of the whole church and role of ourselves as individuals.

However, as one supporter of UKHK said, 'It is not a big task to be UKHK church' (Nicola Thomas, Southwark Diocese)



[Hong Kong Ready Churches Launch Event](https://ukhk.org)—5th Feb. 2021: A special event featuring contributions from Pete Greig, Danielle Strickland, Bishop David Walker and Chinese leaders from around the UK.

<https://ukhk.org> the 'one-stop shop' resource to share with new arrivals