

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. 123: **Mon. 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024**, please, by email at [editor@ccstalbans.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbans.org.uk). *Peter Young (Ed.)*

## 12<sup>th</sup> February PCC meeting

The PCC approved the January minutes and received minutes from BAGAG and the Standing Committee.

The PCC discussed the distinction between the church's mission focus and evangelistic activities, noting that at the moment there are fewer evangelistic opportunities (e.g. Alpha, or similar) than in the past. No decisions on this were made at this meeting, but issues were the subject of prayers during a time of intercession, following this item, which also included prayers about Sunday services, the forthcoming APCM, the PCC, Monday Suppers and the roofing project.

The PCC received updates on the following:

**Roofing project:** Reports on the drainage and asbestos surveys were awaited and a digging of a number of exploratory holes were also awaited at the time of the meeting – *since completed*.

**Monday Suppers:** The number of guests was broadly stable and a core team of eight people were working on optimising procedures and considering future aims and direction.

**Staffing:** Issues will continue to be monitored by the Resources sub-group and brought to PCC as required. The Communications role is still vacant.

**BAGAG:** The group asked PCC to approve a spend exceeding their budget self-approval threshold, for replacement of smoke detectors and a heat sensor, as recommended from a recent fire inspection. This was approved unanimously. It was flagged that the BAGAG self-approval threshold was set many years ago and probably warranted review, but no decision was made on this at this PCC meeting.

APCM reports: These will need to be received at the March PCC meeting and include those from the PCC, the Wardens, Deanery Synod representatives, and Electoral Roll Officer, all of which are in progress. Additional reports from leaders of various church group activities were also being requested.

## **I SING BECAUSE I AM HAPPY – EASTER GIVES ME A SONG** – *Rev. Canon Dele Agbelusi*

As far as thanksgiving and praise are concerned, humanity can be divided into two categories: those who take things for granted and those who take them with gratitude. Which category do you belong to?" It is said of Sir John Templeton, the world famous financier and philanthropist who is also a Christian: "every morning when he wakes he lies quietly on his bed and thinks of five new ways in which he has been blessed. He lifts his heart to God in praise and thanksgiving, and he claims that this simple spiritual exercise is one of the chief reasons why so much peace and contentment floods his life." Consider adopting Sir Templeton's practice. **Better to lose count when naming your blessings than to lose your blessings by counting your troubles.**

I must tell you, the greatest blessing ever bestowed on humanity is the resurrection of Jesus. For any follower of Christ, the resurrection of Jesus is proof and preview of our own. This is so true that even Satan cannot deny it. **The Gospels do not explain the Resurrection; the Resurrection explains the Gospels.** Belief in the Resurrection is not an appendage to the Christian faith; **it is the Christian faith.** Christianity is in its very essence a resurrection religion. The concept of resurrection lies at its heart. If you remove it, Christianity is destroyed.

How real is Easter – the resurrection of Jesus Christ- to you? Easter did not become real to Mary (Mark 16) until it became personal. As the risen Christ called her by name...when He said "Mary" it became a personal experience for her. It became real, genuine, powerful, authentic, and life changing and at that moment Mary got a new life too.

It was Rev. Baring Gould who remarked that when we wander through a graveyard and look at the tombstones, or go into the church and examine the old monuments, we see one heading to them all, "Here lies." Then follows the name with the date of death, and perhaps some praise of the good qualities of the deceased. But how different is the epitaph on the tomb of Jesus! It is not written in gold nor cut in stone, it is spoken by the mouth of an angel; and it is the exact reverse of what is put on all other tombs: "He is not here."

The stone which had been covering the opening to the grave had been rolled away, not to let Jesus out but to allow us verify that He is risen. Easter has overtaken the sighs, the pains, the trial, the rejection and the death of Good Friday. Christ has won! Goodness, mercy and love have triumphed. And through faith in Jesus Christ, the victory is mine as well. Tell me. Why should I not be happy? Why should I not give thanks to the Lord who has done this great thing?

Sometimes the "Good Fridays" of the world do indeed make us shake our heads and mutter: "The nailing to the cross, the pain, trial and rejection of the mob, the death on the cross and the hopelessness for those who had put their hope in Christ as the conquering Messiah. What a pity. What a shame." But then along comes Easter to remind us that:

- There is no grave deep enough,
- No seal imposing enough,
- No stone heavy enough,
- No evil strong enough to keep Christ in the grave.

He has won!

Goodness has triumphed!

Truth has won!

Love has won!

And, through faith in Christ, the victory can be ours as well.

If that doesn't encourage you, I don't know what will. That's the joy of Easter and that's the encouragement of Easter.

The resurrection was a star which shone brightly in the darkness evoked by the crucifixion. The grave could not hold Jesus. He arose, and the resurrection brings great results to all who believe. The truth, the forgiveness, the resurrection, the peace, the power, and the task which Jesus gives us is no small offer. Accept these today. Live as someone who believes that Jesus is alive.

### **Why I so value my Connect Group membership** – *Marion Jones explains*

When asked to write a short account of why I value my 'home group' membership, I didn't hesitate in saying "yes" and I'm writing this now with a smile on my face because, when running through a list of things I'm grateful for, it features highly.

My experience of 'home groups' began over 25 years ago – some ten years or so after I first came to Christ Church, when my children were in their teenage years. It was amid life's more difficult times that I, (both guarded and fearful!) took the tentative steps of joining a nearby group. Certainly, I wouldn't have envisaged then that it would be the start of something so good and enriching.

What is it, then, that makes these meetings so priceless? Some churches call such groups 'Growth' groups or 'Life' groups. Here at Christ Church we've recently opted for another appropriate, positive sounding name – '**Connect Groups**' and it's the 'connection' aspect that I, personally, value so much. So here are three specific things that I've discovered for myself and hold dear.

First, home groups are where you find **relationships developing** more meaningfully than from the post-church chatter of a Sunday, where some people might feel a bit 'lost'.

They are the place where being "devoted to one another in love" (Romans 12:10) can be put to the test/learning what it truly means to love indiscriminately – putting discipleship into practice, helping and being helped in needy times – in both prayer and practice....being 'one another' people.

Secondly they are the place where I feel I **belong**, where everyone's presence and contribution is valued and where in the sharing of scripture and of our lives – the joys, celebrations and struggles, we get closer to both Jesus and each another.

And, so importantly, they are, thirdly, where we can **re-align ourselves to truth** that is **immovable** when the world will try to tell us otherwise... the getting together with others on the same journey to fight the good fight and be refreshed, strengthened and encouraged in the process.

Homegroups at Christ Church come in different shapes and sizes on various days and times, each with their own style, flavour and mix of people – helping each other to learn and grow in God’s Word. Alongside the home group collective name, ‘Connect’ is the heartfelt appeal to ‘Get connected!’ I really don’t know why I waited so long all those years ago!

*Marion helps to lead the Pilgrim Connect Group. If you are not already a member of one of our groups, have a word with John Truscott. He may fit you in to an existing group or we are hoping to start at least one new group. But the decision will be yours.*

## Update from Rachael Howson

Dear CC family,

Thank you so much for your continued support of me in my various ministry activities. 2024 started with School of the Word and Spirit (SWS) in YWAM Amsterdam. Fourteen participants and seven staff, aged 20 to late 60s, took a journey through God’s big story with Holy Spirit. It was a precious time of deep revelation for many. Our theme for this school was ‘Purity of Heart’ and we kept coming back to the power of the blood of Jesus, recognising with pure hearts all that He has done for us – He really has broken every curse, given us complete healing, freedom and eternal life (Isaiah 53:5; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 9; 13:20-21; Romans 5:9; 1 John 1:7).



Here are some testimonies: ‘For me, the Word of God came alive these past 6 weeks. I have never read the Bible with so much joy, and feeling so alive after reading it’ (Lois); ‘If the SWS made me aware of anything, it is the Truth we reside in when we recognise the Holy Spirit for who He is’ (Megan). What a joy!

Throughout this school, I felt the conviction of the Lord to keep a full day off – a Sabbath

– not easy to do leading a residential course and studying at the same time. Yet, I did, which meant to get to explore the city and enjoy Amsterdam as well – it really is a beautiful city. I will try to keep this habit, as I know I need it. We will be taking a sabbatical year for the SWS in Seamill, Scotland and having a reunion for all alumni in the summer instead, which will be so much fun!

Since that finished, I’ve shared with FireStarters in Wales, a ministry discipling and equipping teenagers, which was brilliant and so encouraging as I heard some of them really keen to read their Bibles after. Then, I joined the YWAM Mosaic team in Luton to run 72 hours of continuous worship and prayer – staying up ‘til 4am praying messed up my body clock a bit, but so worth it to go deep with God. In between these, we celebrated my Grandad turning 100 years old!! Such a milestone; he is mostly healthy, still driving short distances and writing jokes into his speech! I’m grateful to have the legacy I have.



Next, I am getting more connected with THE SEND UK & Ireland ([www.thesend.uk](http://www.thesend.uk)). I'm seeing desire to gather in corporate worship and celebration of Jesus increasing, especially in young people. THE SEND globally is a ministry that have faith to fill stadiums, and in the UK & Ireland, we have faith to see many gathered in several arenas across these isles leading to a stadium event in 2025, with the aim to mobilise and equip many to share the gospel in their local environment and the nations. I, with a team, will preparing the land through prayer, so we are looking to gather people to pray and as a smaller group to visit various revival sites where the Lord has mightily moved in this nation before, welcoming Him to 'Do it again!' in our time.



I know I can't do all this, and see God move as I do, without prayer backing and support and I am so grateful for the loving church family that I have. THANK YOU! Please do ask me further about any of what I'm up to (studies are also continuing to challenge me into growth), always happy to share.

God bless, Rachael.

## Sermons at Christ Church

Just a few updates for sermons in April:

April 7	John 20:19-end	Resurrection
April 14	Luke 24:36-48	Emmaus Road
April 21	John 10:11-18	The Good Shepherd

## Caring for Creation

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

C4 last met on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March. We watched the eighth [Lausanne Classroom Creation Care video: 'Creation Care and the God of Hope'](#) in our regular agenda item around theology of the topic. Featuring Ed Brown, Frederico Catihe, Rev Rachel Mash, Katharine Hayhoe, Peter Harris and Ruth Padilla DeBorst, the video countered a current prevalent attitude that the state of creation is beyond hope, since God is a God of hope. He is good and what he created is good and he has not given up on it and will continue to intervene. It is not something we humans can achieve on our own. Creation is remarkably resilient. A few examples were cited where seemingly puny small scale efforts of Christians have had a marked impact. Conservation works, we just need much more of it. Restoration takes time, but healing of creation is possible and is worth it.

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

We also made a start at reviewing a longer section of the Eco Church questionnaire -- [Buildings](#), and covered about half of the questions, a number of which will need to be checked to identify the current correct answers and possible changes since the last time we submitted for the Bronze award. Remember any church member will be welcome to join C4 meetings, which are usually on the third Monday of the month, by

Zoom or occasionally face-to-face (details in our weekly e-newsletter).

### ***Sunflowers***

We'll be making small packets available on Easter Day, each containing about 10 sunflower seeds for you to enjoy growing. The seeds have been taken from the heads of flowers that were planted last year, one of which in the Editor's garden reached 3 metres tall! We suggest you plant them fairly soon in pots kept indoors, e.g. on a sunny windowsill, with the option of planting seedlings outdoors in warmer weather when they are established. You can always plant more than one to a pot and prick out any excess. However, if you end up with any seedlings you don't need, please feel free to donate them to church for planting in the church grounds as we are planning to start a small sunflower patch this year to provide natural food for wildlife. .

### ***Plastic Count***

If you took part in the count of various types of plastic you disposed of between 11<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> March, please don't forget to return your tally sheet to Susie Ryan.

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

There has been one further blog so far posted since the last *>imprint<*, no.121. It was posted on 5<sup>th</sup> March by **Mrs. Shanitah Nalukenge**, Communications Officer, A Rocha Uganda, on the topic: ['Is there hope for creation care in the church in Uganda'](#). She writes about the uphill struggle A Rocha sometimes experiences in communicating creation care in some Ugandan churches. The following quote from the blog is an example: "When A Rocha Uganda reached out to the church directly opposite our West Bugwe project, we were astonished to find that the pastor and his congregation could hardly *understand the connection between caring for God's creation and their faith.*" A Rocha Uganda tries to guide the Ugandan Church towards a more integrated gospel and more unified engagement in caring for God's creation through education, practical projects, advocacy and more. Working with children in schools and churches has been a particular source of hope.

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 39, posted 5th March, featuring **Kuki Rokhum**. From Mizoram in North East India, she has recently been appointed as A Rocha's first Director of Church Engagement. She has preached, taught and written on creation care to audiences around the world for decades. In this podcast, entitled ['An inconvenient challenge to the Church'](#), she talks with Rick Faw and Jo Swinney about her hopes for the role and what spurs her on, despite the challenges of lack of engagement of Christians. Even when there is acknowledgement of God's call to care for creation, we tend to resist taking action, she believes, largely because of our love of convenience.

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