

*An all age community ... on a shared journey of faith ... making the edge the centre*



Registered Charity 1132925

***Merry Christmas!***



## **In this issue:**

November 13 <sup>th</sup> PCC meeting.....	1
DO YOU HAVE ANY ROOM FOR JESUS? -- <i>Rev. Canon Dele Agbelusi</i> .....	2
Advent/Christmas programme of sermons.....	3
Caring for Creation.....	4

Items for *>imprint<* no. 120: **Mon. 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024**, please, by email at [editor@ccstalbans.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbans.org.uk).  
*Peter Young (Ed.)*

## **November 13<sup>th</sup> PCC meeting**

After approving the 11<sup>th</sup> September PCC minutes and those of the Saturday morning special meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> October and receiving the Standing Committee notes for their September and October meetings, the PCC confirmed that the new procedure for disseminating documents via Google Docs seemed to be working well and would be continued.

Much of the meeting was devoted to Finance and the proposed 2024 budget and forecasts for 2025 and 2026. The 2024 budget was based on actual results from the 2023 budget and took into account higher than expected hire income. 2023 income also included donations from Monday Suppers, but there was some discussion about their expenditure and it was agreed to increase the sum allocated for food costs, but any additional equipment costs would need BAGAG approval if they couldn't come out of that budget. Saturday litter pickers' costs were also discussed and the decision was made to fund this from the existing catering and consumables budgets. Other expenditure lines, such as utilities and catering, were reviewed and adjusted for the 2024 budget and the following two years' forecasts, including deferral of the salary of the as yet unrecruited Children's and Families Pastor replacement role to start in 2025, rather than 2024, which would have the effect of increasing the forecast deficits for 2025 and 2026, but render the 2024 budget break-even. With the agreed revisions, the 2024 budget was approved unanimously.

The PCC also received an update on the Roofing Project. It was confirmed that the buildings contractor had been engaged to commission Architect drawings. The Roofing Working Party members, currently Jonathan Carter, Gillian Donald, Debbie Dorman, Jeremy Follett and Tim Medlycott, asked the PCC for approval to continue to consider the next stage of the project. This and the group's membership received unanimous approval. Details of the background of the roofing project, the work done so far and the proposals for the further development of the project (authored by

Jeremy and previously given out as hard copy at the November 19<sup>th</sup> 10 am service), are available in a separate, special edition of [>imprint< no.119a](#) (click the link to open).

The PCC were also informed of Christmas arrangements and publicity, including switching on of the outside tree lights on 27<sup>th</sup> November during Monday Suppers, Seniors tea and carols on 14<sup>th</sup> December, Carols by candlelight 17<sup>th</sup> December (indoors), Nativity/Crib service on Christmas Eve and the Christmas Day service.

Finally Christ Church's existing Safeguarding and domestic abuse policies were reviewed at the meeting. These were approved unanimously to continue, for review again in 2 years or as required, subject to revisions to update the name of the Safeguarding Officer on the policies to Dawn Kennedy.

Next PCC meeting: Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## **DO YOU HAVE ANY ROOM FOR JESUS?** -- *Rev. Canon Dele Agbelusi*

"We are, God knows, a people who walk in darkness...If darkness is meant to convey a sense of uncertainty, of being lost or afraid...If darkness suggests conflict between races, nations or individuals...If darkness depicts a world where we can't see very well (because of sin), then we know enough about the darkness." (Fred Buechner).

However, God in Christ does not run away from the darkness. God sets up residence right in the middle of the darkness, our darkness. In the naked vulnerability of the baby Jesus, God entered the world in the flesh. God came to be with us (John 1:14).

For centuries, God had tried different ways to reach humanity and build a lasting covenant of love. He had tried the Law, various prophets, priests, and kings. Nothing worked to God's satisfaction. People continued to wander aimlessly, living lives filled with activities but little purpose.

When Jesus was about to be born, the innkeeper claimed that he had no room. Isn't the crowded inn a rather appropriate symbol of our lives? So cluttered that there is just no time, no energy, no money, no room left over. Many of us are contented "feeding him" from time to time, as we get involved in charity of various sorts, but have we given Him a place to stay? To many, there is just no room in our lives for the Messiah. Luke's gospel seems to carry this refrain throughout the ministry of Jesus Christ.

There was no room for Jesus in the economic world: When Jesus commanded the demons to come out of a man in Gadara and into a nearby herd of swine, the pigs immediately stampeded and ran off a cliff and were killed. The man was healed.

But what was the response of the community? Did they sing 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow?' No. What they did was to send a committee to Jesus and kindly ask him to get out of town (Luke 8:26-39).

What really got to them was the fact that Jesus destroyed a herd of swine to heal an outcast in their society. It was quite clear to them that if Jesus lingered a little longer, the local economy would be disrupted. What they wanted was business as usual and not some itinerant miracle worker to disrupt the status quo. In economic, legal, religious, and political realms, wherever Jesus turned, there was no room for him. What began first in Bethlehem when the innkeeper turned Him (Mary and Joseph) away, was to become a recurrent theme.

And like the Bethlehem innkeeper, we will be forced to make a decision. Will our lives be so cluttered with incidentals that there will be no room for Jesus? Or will we open

the door and gladly welcome him in? To the innkeeper, the knock that came that night was just another of a long series of bothersome interruptions. That is how some respond to Jesus in their life. “Okay. Take the stable! Do anything; just leave me alone.” Jesus knocks at the door of every heart. The question is-will there be room enough in your life to let him in?

Christmas is the fulfillment of hundreds of years of prophetic predictions about the coming of the Messiah who would change the world. With joy, they anticipated Christ’s arrival. As a humble servant, Jesus loved all He encountered from the cradle to the cross. The world came know the peace of God, who had come near.

Over the years of being a Christ-follower, I have known both the importance and delight of making room for Jesus, and living with the consciousness of His presence. And yet it has also been one of the most challenging things to do consistently. When I am with Him, the rewards are undeniable in both small and big ways. Jesus gives joy, He imparts strength, He directs, He protects, and much more. Intimately walking with Jesus transforms and enlarges my heart.

Being with Jesus is a spiritual practice, but it only works if I get really practical. I have learned to be with Him in the early hours of the day. The psalmist says, ‘In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly’ (Psalm 5:3 NIV).

Meeting Him in the first moments of my day in an unhurried way has been one of the most rewarding practices. But, life doesn’t always work as I would like. Trials, temptations, disappointments, or simply an overfilled schedule at times have thrown me off course. Jesus gets squeezed out. The way back is always simple: do what I did at first (Revelation 2:4-5). Ask Jesus for help. Pour out my pain in prayer. Jesus desires authentic intimacy more than I do. Make room for Him.

God made Christmas for us. But there is a sense in which all of us have to make our Christmas. All the salvation of God is finished and complete, but it is not mine until I claim it. “No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive Him still the dear Christ enters in.” You are forgiven. You are loved. Peace on earth and goodwill to everyone who will welcome Jesus into their life.

## **Advent/Christmas programme of sermons**

The sermon series on Exodus has now completed. Apologies: in >imprint< no. 118 the date of Advent Sunday, which is actually 3<sup>rd</sup> December, was dated in error one week too early, since the fourth Sunday in Advent is on Christmas Eve this year. The following table shows the themes and/or type of service as known at present up to the end of 2023.

If you want to catch up or listen/view previous services again, the YouTube recordings of full services (<https://www.youtube.com/@christchurchstalbans360/streams>) are available and so are the audio versions of readings and sermons posted to the Christ Church website ([www.ccstalbans.org.uk/sermons](http://www.ccstalbans.org.uk/sermons), which are under the ‘Media’ menu). The website postings now also contain links to the respective YouTube audio/visual recordings of entire services, in addition to (or in a few cases, e.g. intergenerational services, instead of) audio-only versions of just the readings and sermons taken out from the services. It means that you can search for and access specific YouTube recordings from our website, according to theme/teaching topic as well as by date, in addition to going direct to the YouTube channel.

Date	Text	Theme	Families
Advent 1: Dec 3	Mark 1:1-8	John the Baptist	Preparing the way
Advent 2: Dec 10	John 1:6-8,19-28	John the Baptist, part 2	Who is John? Who is Jesus?
Advent 3: Dec 17 - 10:00 am	1 Thess. 5:12-28	How to live	What does God want from us?
- 6:30 pm	Carol Service -- <i>Intergenerational</i>		
Advent 4: Dec 24 - 10:00 am	Luke 1:26-39	The Annunciation	Mary and the Angel
- 3:00 to 4.00pm	Crib Service -- <i>Families/Intergenerational</i>		
<b>Christmas Day</b> Mon Dec 25 10am	Christmas Day Service - <i>intergenerational</i> Luke 2:1-14 -Angels and Shepherds - and the whole story really		
First Sunday of Christmas: Dec 31	Luke 2:15-21	Shepherds visit Jesus (details tba)	

## Caring for Creation

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

Christ Church Caring for Creation



The most recent C4 meeting was on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November when we watched the fifth of the [Lausanne Global Classroom Creation Care video series: Critical Issues facing Creation Today](#). In it we learnt that that there are four big problems affecting creation today: climate change, lack of water, especially ground water, loss of arable farm land and toxins in the atmosphere, in the water and in our bodies. Infestation of water has led to lack of pollinators, in turn leading to failures of crops and sources of some medicines for poor communities. Wells running dry have contributed to high numbers of suicides among farmers, especially in India. In communities that do not have access to *clean* water sources, there are high infant death rates. Added to this, unregulated mining activities (e.g. for gold) have resulted in environmental degradation from polluted water supplies and through use of chemicals for extraction: urban environments are dirty and filled with trash, although responsibility for keeping environments clean should be everyone's; infant mortality caused by lack of food (malnutrition affects more than 40% of the population of Malawi), a recurrent problem despite relief programmes; extinction of life, earth-wide, of extraordinary proportions, estimated to be around 2000 times the expected rate. There was a sense expressed of the need to apologise to young people for having to inherit a crisis not of their own making but which they will have huge work to do to address. But we must trust that God is ready to work alongside and help in the power of the Holy Spirit. Contributors in this video include Ed Brown, Tiwonge Mzumara-Gawa, Rachel Mash, Seth Appiah-Kubi, Steven Mbogo, Victor Mughongho, Peter Harris and Lowell Bliss. See [imprint<115](#), p.7 for the full programme.

The revisitation of the Eco Church questionnaires continued, this time starting to look at the Global and Community Engagement section (to be completed in the first meeting of the New Year). It was suggested that C4 should organise another tour of the church grounds after a morning service in the New Year, and possibly a summer birdwatch (and insect spotting?) in the grounds in addition to participating in the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch which usually happens towards the end of January (when it often seems a bit depleted of birds!).

Just a reminder that C4 meetings are open to all to attend, both when we have face-to-face meetings in church, or (more usually) by Zoom. They normally happen on the third Monday evening of each month at 8.00pm, except when it would clash with a PCC or other church meeting, which is the case in January 2024, when it will be on 22<sup>nd</sup> January instead. The venue or Zoom link, as appropriate, will be publicised in the weekly e-news.

## ***COP28***

**COP28** is taking place in Dubai from **30<sup>th</sup> November** until **12<sup>th</sup> December**. Much prayer is needed for all countries to be willing to make concessions in order to tackle climate change, to deliver on promises made in previous years (notably the Paris Agreement at COP21 in 2015) and to help bring about climate justice, since poorer nations are affected disproportionately more by the effects of climate change. Read more about COP28 in the latest, November 2023, newsletter from...

### ***[Green Christian St. Albans](#)***

...which also contains lots of other news of environmental endeavours from local organisations and churches. Click [here](#) to check out their newsletter archive.

## ***A Rocha Blog***

There has been one further blog so far posted since the last *>imprint<*, no.118. It was posted by **Jo Swinney** on 8<sup>th</sup> November and entitled: "[Mental health and a beautiful but groaning creation](#)". This reflects on the beneficial effects of the natural world on mental health and as an antidote to the stresses of our normal lives. She advocates we: 1. See the world with the eyes of faith (recognise God's divine nature and eternal power, e.g. Ps. 19:1); 2. Put down roots (get to know our local patch and make home), and 3. Take care (of God's World).

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

## ***Field Notes Podcasts***

There has been one further podcast since the last *>imprint<*. The most recent is:

Episode 36: posted 4<sup>th</sup> October, featuring **Leah Kostamo**, Co Founder and Spiritual Care Coordinator of A Rocha Canada, who is now also a part-time psychotherapist. In this podcast, entitled '[How nature both hurts and heals poor mental health](#)', she is in conversation with Jo Swinney, and Rick Faw and discusses eco-anxiety and 'nature deficit disorder', but also the hope, comfort and healing God can give us in community and engagement within His creation.

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