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Items for >imprint< no. 114: **Mon. 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023**, please, by email at [editor@ccstalbans.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbans.org.uk). *Peter Young (Ed.)*

## Annual Church Meetings 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023

### Annual Meeting of Parishioners

The purpose of this meeting, open to all parishioners, was to appoint Church Wardens for the year 2023-4. Jonathan Carter had expressed his wish to stand down at this meeting, however Chris Patrick had agreed to continue in the current shared role with Sarah Patrick. David Boyce had agreed to be nominated to replace Jonathan as Church Warden, so there being no other nominations, was appointed. The Wardens, particularly Jonathan as outgoing Warden, were warmly thanked for their hard work and dedication over the last year.

### Annual Church Parochial Meeting (APCM)

This meeting was open to all church members on Christ Church's Electoral Roll. There were fifty one attendees.

The minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022 APCM and those of the subsequent extraordinary meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2022 to approve the Accounts (which had not been independently examined at the time of the APCM) were both approved.

The church's Electoral Roll currently stands at 124 members (48 residing in the Parish and 76 non-resident), there having been 6 additions and 6 deletions from the Roll since April 2022.

The formal reports from the Church Wardens, our Deanery Synod representatives, and Vicar on behalf of the PCC were accepted by majority vote, with one abstention and none against.

The financial report for 2022 (including the budget agreed for 2023) was presented to the meeting. It was explained that the surplus of around £9,000 over budgeted expenditure in the General Fund in 2022 was mainly due to reduced staff costs, the Children's and Families' Pastor having left her post during the year, and substantial rectification of deficits in rental income that was outstanding. In terms of the 2023

budget, which the PCC had approved in November 2022, income of around £158,000 had been estimated, but which had been based on a possible overestimate of likely congregational giving, although balanced by a possible underestimate of the rental income. Although the financial situation is in a fairly stable position at the moment, we do not have the funds to enable use to appoint a replacement for the Children's and Families' Pastor or an alternative role. There was a short time of questions and discussion following the presentation of the accounts and thereafter the meeting agreed to the recommendation to reappoint the current Independent Examiner for the following financial year.

Elections/Appointments to Deanery Synod representative and PCC roles followed.

There were 2 nominations for the 3 Deanery Synod vacancies: Jane Sellars and Meriel Dixon were reappointed with no election required and one vacancy unfilled.

There were 4 PCC vacancies this year, one for a 1-year period and three for a full 3-year tenure. Jonathan Carter was appointed for the 1-year tenure and Paul Bailey, Samantha Brown and Andrew Walker for 3-years. Those PCC members, who had completed their 3-year tenures and were stepping down from the PCC as from this APCM, were thanked for their contributions.

The open discussion forum that followed included a verbal report from Christ Church Families, the written version of which had been omitted from the papers circulated before the APCM, and there were several other favourable comments on Families Church and its central role in church life. The other initiatives, including Monday Suppers, Warm Spaces and the Hardship fund were also commented on, particularly Monday Suppers which received warm commendation. However there was some concern about the ongoing workload for the devoted and committed leaders and team providing the suppers and that donations do not quite cover costs at the moment. However the Monday Suppers have provided opportunities for conversations and prayer with some of the people who come and also for surplus food which is given away. Following on from the Vicar's sermon that morning about Jesus being the centre, a fact that has been taken for granted, but not explicit in our 20-year old Mission Statement, there were some views that it probably now should be. Encouragement for more volunteers to come forward to lead weekly church intercessions also prompted requests for people to be reinstated, who had previously been on the bible reading rota, and the list of people who are authorised communion helpers to be re-ratified.

## **CONFRONTING DISAPPOINTMENT: A WALK TO EMMAUS**

*- Rev Canon Dele Agbelusi*

If you're a Christian, you will not be a stranger to disappointment. All of us, whether new Christians or lifelong believers, battle feelings of disappointment when life goes wrong. Deep down in our hearts, we think that following Christ should give us special immunity against trouble. We are like Peter, who tried to remind Jesus, that "We have left everything to follow you." (Mark 10:28). Or perhaps the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), who narrated their story of woes to the risen, but yet unrecognised Jesus (Luke 24:20-21) about their disappointment that Jesus had died. They had hoped He would be the Messiah, the king of Israel, but now all their hopes were dashed. This Jesus had now been dead three days! All Jews believed that the Messiah would lead Israel to victory over its enemies. They did not yet believe in a Messiah who would be killed on a cross.

Maybe we haven't left everything like Peter to follow Jesus, but we have made some painful sacrifices. Doesn't that count for something? Shouldn't that give us a free pass when it comes to disappointment? Definitely Not. This has been a niggling bother to many saints in times past and now.

The Psalmist almost lost his "faithhold", sorry foothold, when he became '*envious of the arrogant and considered the prosperity of the wicked: "For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind"*' (Psalm 73 3-6). As we're each struggling with our own private setbacks, godless people seem to be thriving. We wonder why they're doing so well and we're not. We fight our way through loss and disappointment and wonder what's going on.

The psalmist got it wrong because he was not engaging with the right questions and he had developed an envious liking for the seeming easy life and goodies of the wicked (unbelievers). After personal experiences of hurts and frustration, I now know that **the question I should ask God isn't "Why, Lord?" but rather, "What now, Lord?"**

Asking "What now, Lord?" instead of "Why, Lord?" is a hard lesson to learn. It's hard to ask the right question when you're feeling disappointed. It's hard to ask such a question, when your heart is breaking. It's hard to ask "What now?" when your dreams have been shattered.

**But your life will begin to change when you start asking God, "What would you have me do now, Lord?" Oh sure, you'll still feel angry or disheartened by disappointments, but you'll also discover that God is eager to show you what he wants you to do next.**

Not only that, but he'll equip you with everything you need to do it. The Psalmist found relief when he "went into the sanctuary of God; then "I discerned their end...But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works". (Psalm 73 17, 28).

Going back to our main text in Luke 24, Jesus began to teach the two disciples what had been written about Himself in "Moses and all the Prophets", that is the Old Testament. It is only after suffering and dying would the Messiah, Christ, enter his glory. The Jews thought the suffering servant and the Messiah would be two different people. It was Jesus himself who taught that the suffering servant was, in fact the Messiah. Jesus had taught his disciples over and over that He must suffer and die, but they had not been able to accept it (Mark 8:31-32; 9:31-32; Luke 18:31-34).

As they drew near to their destination, the two disciples invited Jesus to their home. If they had not invited Him in, perhaps He would have passed on, and they would never have known who had walked with them on the road to Emmaus.

Let us ask ourselves, "How many times has Jesus spoken to us along the road and we have not invited Him in? (Revelation 3:20) After they had reached the house and were ready to eat, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them And suddenly their spiritual eyes were opened. And they recognised it was the Lord Jesus. Even though it was dark, the two disciples hurried back to Jerusalem, to tell the other disciples that they had seen the Lord and how he gave them an unrivalled teaching on Theology 101. An encounter with Jesus in their disappointment made all the difference.

## Where to Take Your Heartaches

In the face of trouble, our natural tendency is to complain. Unfortunately, whining to other people rarely helps solve our problems. Instead, it tends to repel people. Nobody wants to hang around a person who has a self-pitying, pessimistic outlook on life.

But we can't just let it go. We cannot deny our circumstances and feelings. We **need** to pour our heart out to someone. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus poured out their heart's disappointment to Jesus and so did the Psalmist in Ps. 73.

**Disappointment is too heavy a burden to bear. If we let disappointments pile up, they lead to discouragement. Too much discouragement leads to despair. God doesn't want that for us. In his grace, God asks us to take our heartaches to him.**

If another Christian tells you that it's wrong to complain to God, just send that person to the Psalms. Many of them, like Psalms 31, 73, 102 and 109, are poetic accounts of hurts and grievances. God listens. He'd rather have us empty our heart to him than keep that bitterness inside. He is not offended by our discontent.

### The Answer to 'What Now?'

When we pour out our hurt to God and find the courage to ask him, "What do you want me to do now Lord?" we can expect him to answer. He will communicate through another person, our circumstances, providence, instructions from him (very rarely), or through his Word, the Bible.

The Bible is such an important guidebook that we should immerse ourselves in it regularly. It's called the Living Word of God because its truths are constant yet they apply to our changing situations. You can read the same passage at different times in your life and get a different answer--a relevant answer--from it every time. That is God speaking through his Word.

No matter how painful your disappointment may be, God's answer to your question of "What now, Lord?" always begins with this simple command: "Trust me. Trust me."

### Rachael Howson writes...

Dear friends at Christ Church,

I'd like to take this opportunity to update you on what I've been up to and pass on some of my learning. Firstly, thank you so much for your continued financial giving, love and prayers. It is hugely valued and very much appreciated. This year has been full of wonderful stretching adventures so far: 72 hours of worship and prayer in Luton; sharing with an amazing group of teenagers in FireStarters Wales, ongoing fun with The Pottery ministry as well as various intercession trips and studying. I have now finished my first year with Westminster Theological Centre and I'm now in Scotland about to start running this year's School of the Word and Spirit.

As I'm sure anyone who has studied on top of other responsibilities can tell you, sometimes it requires grit determination to keep going and see it through, although overall I'm loving it! In a recent essay I was studying Matt. 7:7-11: Ask, Seek, and Knock in relation to the themes of the Gospel of Matthew. As with quite a few of my essays, my heart learning was so much more than what was included in the essay. This time Holy Spirit took me through a journey of healing, in areas where I have asked and knocked and there has been no answer. I'm sure we can all identify. When you pray the

same request, in line with Biblical truth, for years and there is no apparent answer, hope dwindles. Yet, in seeking His face and knocking on Jesus' door, He responds with peace, love and joy and I find I have more patience to keep on praying and keep on believing for those situations.

Following that, Holy Spirit took me into recognising more deeply what I'm truly asking, seeking and knocking for. God is hope and as I sat with Him, hope for more of His kingdom life was strengthened in me again. We ask for revelation of what the Messiah has already given – He has given His peace, He sacrificed His life so that we (all of us on earth) may have the fullness of life, His love is sufficient and His joy abounds. We seek the Kingdom of Heaven. We knock on Jesus' door to meet with Him.

As I write this, I pray the same for you and the people you love, because whatever we ask for, in His name, will be given, and what we seek, we will find and as we knock, the door will be opened. It feels audacious to write, yet this is exactly what the Bible says. Have you recently asked God what bold requests does He want you to ask for recently? Give it a go, not to be selfish or presumptuous, but to ask what is on His heart for you and for those around us. I know it's scary; what if He doesn't answer? Yet, He is able to do more than we ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20). Perhaps He wants to heal your heart; perhaps it's time to dream. I invite you to take time with Father and dream His dreams, maybe again or maybe for the first time. I pray God's blessing over you as you ask.

With love and blessing,

Rachael

## Caring for Creation

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



At its most recent meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April C4 watched the ninth and final film in the Tearfund Christianity and Climate Change video series entitled 'It's not too late' (all these videos may be found at <https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/christianity-and-climate-change-film-series>). In this last of the series, Katharine Hayhoe argues that there is actually no magic threshold for the irreversible consequences of climate change (where we would be fine on one side of the line, but doomed on the other, which is analogous to the increasing health risks of smoking). In the same way the more carbon we emit, the worse the climate-related consequences will be. For some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world, the effects are already causing great suffering, but for the richer nations it may not (yet) really be a problem, so the agreements (e.g. Paris 2015) have put an arbitrary goal for limiting global average temperature increase (1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels), but this is not a 'magic' figure. Even though some damage has already been done, weaning ourselves off using fossil fuels, may prevent ever worsening damage and this is critical for the survival of the poorest and most vulnerable on our planet. And we know this is possible through sustainable methods, e.g. clean energy sources and increased energy efficiency and sustainable lifestyle changes. However a just transition to a clean energy economy is also vital, to minimise negative impacts on communities reliant on existing industries.

At the next C4 meeting at 8.00pm on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May, Felicity's sister, Dr Avice Hall will be giving a talk on how to set up a 5-year church grounds plan. It is planned to hold the meeting in person in the church hall, rather than virtually, on this occasion. The meeting will be open to any church member to attend.

## **A Rocha Blog**

There have been two blogs posted since the last *>imprint<*, no.112, both by **Rev. Dave Bookless**, founder of A Rocha UK and currently Director of Theology and Churches for A Rocha International: 'How churches can engage with A Rocha', posted on 4<sup>th</sup> April, which encourages all churches to understand creation care as part of our biblical calling; and 'Mangrove Theology', posted on 5<sup>th</sup> May, challenging us to ask God whether he may actually be calling us to stay and work where we are, recognising Jeremiah 29:4-7 as a manifesto for Christian engagement at the local level.

Go to <https://blog.arocha.org/en/> to read these blogs.

## **Field Notes Podcasts**

There have also been two further podcasts since the last *>imprint<*:

Episode 29: featuring **Dave Bookless** (again!) on the topic 'Conviction, courage and the changing church', in which he expresses hope because he believes that today's church is a force to be reckoned with and because God's love and faithfulness is eternal and unchanging.

Episode 30: featuring **Avinash Krishnan**, National Director of A Rocha India, on the topic 'Deep roots, long trunks: a lifelong commitment to making peace with Indian elephants'.

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