

*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. 127: **Mon. 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024**, please, by email at [editor@ccstalbans.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbans.org.uk).  
*Peter Young (Ed.)*

## 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024 PCC meeting

### Standing Committee (SC) membership

Membership of SC was revisited [*Apologies, incorrect information on SC membership was reported prematurely in >imprint< 125*] and the following members were agreed:

Vicar, Church Wardens (David Boyce and Malcolm Blaxland), Hilary Boyce, Sarah Patrick and Jackie Kenealy.

The PCC received and approved lists of proposed sides-persons, greeters and Assistant Church Wardens (ACWs). Chris Patrick was formally acknowledged as replacement Head Steward in addition to his duties as one of the ACWs. It was agreed to review and clarify the role of ACWs at a future PCC meeting.

### Monday Suppers

A summary of net expenditure from Oct 2022 to May 2024 was made available and it was agreed that a weekly breakdown would be provided via a spreadsheet and also figures from a recent grant application, in order better to understand how much was being spent on heating, lighting and cooking on Mondays.

### Finances

The following issues were discussed, following a detailed report from the Treasurer:

**General Fund** – As of end-May there is a deficit of approximately £6,000, mainly due to buildings and maintenance costs, some of which were unplanned but definitely required. Further necessary buildings/maintenance work including EICR electrical testing, would almost certainly exceed the BAGAG budget for this year and the PCC therefore agreed an increase on the BAGAG spending limit (above the revised generic limit agreed at this meeting, see below). It was noted that year on year rolling budgets make no allowance for inflationary cost increases.

Grants -- £1015 has been received from Verulam House for Monday Suppers and a grant of £250 for the Holiday Club.

New Roof Project – It was confirmed that the bill to date from Orion would be treated as capital expenditure for accounting purposes and therefore spread over time, per the depreciation policy.

New Treasurer – Sarah confirmed that the transitioning from Paul to her was well underway but with still some tidying up outstanding. She thanked Paul for his help in this.

Budget lines, limits and holders – the PCC agreed by majority to increase the current budget spend limits of £1000 (without requiring PCC approval) to £2000, noting that most budget holders' budgets were below the £1000 level currently.

### ***Mission Action Plan (MAP)***

Allocations were made to the three subgroups, according to PCC members' individual preferences:

*Community Outreach*

*Resourcing the Mission*

*Unity of Fellowship*

Final allocation of all the PCC members was not yet complete at this meeting.

One of the subgroups will need to take on the examination of the organisation of the budget.

### ***Roofing and fund-raising strategy***

It was reported that the meetings about the roof and the option for replacement with a pitched roof had been well attended with positive feedback. The estimated cost will be in the region of £1.5m. There are uncertainties about the VAT situation and this will be investigated. No final decisions have yet been made regarding internal layout, but the option of the pitched roof design was proposed to the meeting and agreed unanimously. A fund-raising group with the necessary enthusiasm and skills is now needed, with its terms of reference established by the Resourcing Mission MAP subgroup who will then seek out appropriate personnel. Other avenues to be investigated include what diocesan resources may be available; a half-day meeting on fund-raising for major projects in Letchworth (25<sup>th</sup> June); and a meeting about the project between Jeremy and the Archdeacon.

It was proposed that the proposed PCC prayer morning on 6<sup>th</sup> July be combined with the monthly Prayer Breakfast scheduled for the same date, with the invitation for anyone to join in the prayers for PCC matters.

The PCC would next be scheduled to meet on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July.

### **THE JOY OF THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH – *Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi***

**Most people don't enjoy life; they just endure it.** They think that life must be perfect for them to be happy. So they are always looking for a change for the better: "If I could just change my situation, life would be great. If I could just get rid of all my problems, life would be fine." But there's no such thing as a problem - free life.

If you look into the lives of most radiantly happy persons---you will find that these are people who spend a great deal of time alone with God. God is the source of their joy, and

if we come into contact with Him, His infinite joy comes into our lives. It was Lee Strobel commenting on where a person could find joy who wrote: **“Possibly the best explanation comes from an acrostic using J.O.Y. The J represents Jesus, the Y stands for You, and the O signifies zero, or nothing. Joy is found when "nothing" comes between "Jesus" and "You." It's a great, biblical formula!”**

Does it follow that you cannot be joyful without being a Christian? NO! But there is a big difference. The Christian finds satisfaction from within. People of the world borrow all their joy from without. Joy wholly from without is false, precarious, and short - lived. From outside, it may be gathered, but like gathered flowers, though fair and sweet for a season, it must soon wither and become offensive.

Joy is a theme that dominates the letter of Paul to the Philippians. Of the various themes in Philippians, perhaps the most prevalent is “joy.” Throughout the book, the joy we should have in Christ is stressed. Do you find that your relationship with Christ is a source of joy? Does this joy radiate through you to all the people around you? One of the greatest signs of the genuine Christian life, is the ability to rejoice, even in difficult circumstances. This kind of Christian joy is what the prisoners in the Philippian prison saw in Paul & Silas, when they were singing in the prison at midnight. **Paul knew about joy. And this letter to the Philippians is all about joy. Are you perhaps a bit discouraged and want joy in your life? Study Paul’s letter to the Philippians!**

Sometime ago, we experienced a burglary in our house. The break-in must have occurred in the evening, at the time when we were out doing pastoral visit. We were sad that we lost a few valuable items and cash to the thieves, but this did not take our joy away. Bishop Taylor Smith, an outstanding British Anglican bishop of the nineteenth century used to say: “The Christian is meant to live a life of continual rejoicing.” But how is it possible in such a topsy-turvy world as this to continually rejoice? We can do so when we have the conviction that God never stops working out His purposes no matter how things may look to the contrary. We can also rejoice because we know that other believers in Christ are constantly praying for us. The Almighty interweaves our intercession and His intervention into the final tapestry of His strategic purposes. How He does this is the miracle of His grace. I remember an old song which says “I sing because I am happy, I sing because I am free, God’s eyes are on the sparrow, and I know He watches over me.” Why should I not be JOYFUL? Why should I not rejoice?

It was Selwyn Hughes who rightly said that joy is quite different from pleasure. Pleasure comes to us usually from things that affect our senses; a beautiful sunset, a fine painting, a son or daughter’s wedding, the birth of a child, an exquisite meal, and so on. But all these things are vulnerable to disappointment, even tragedy and loss. Joy, the joy which comes from God, however is something that cannot be taken from us.

How do you have joy in spite of what is going on in your life? On this matter, we have a lot to learn from Paul the Apostle. From his letter to the Philippians he seemed positive and happy with his lot, despite being locked up in prison and facing an uncertain future. The last 4 years of Paul’s life were miserable by human standards. He spent 2 years in prison in Caesarea, and then he was put on a ship to go to Rome to appear before Emperor Nero (known for his cruelty against Christians). On the way he was shipwrecked, stranded on an island, bitten by a poisonous snake, survived the winter there, continued on to Rome and spent another 2 years in prison awaiting trial and finally was executed. Yet he was thankful and wrote some of his letters encouraging believers to be joyful while he was in prison! What a lesson and model for us all.

God has a design. We cannot fully see everything in its beauty from this side of heaven. But one day we will, when we see it from His perspective. When things get tough, I need to be clear what is really important in my life and what is not. I want to distinguish the trivial

from the significant.

It is striking that Paul would write to the different people, in all the churches, and tell ALL of them, that he was ALWAYS praying for them. Now, I know that in my own life, I have made a personal commitment, that I will not just “trite” tell someone that I am praying for them. If I tell you that I am praying for you; I really am. When we learn to pray like Paul did, then we will find the JOY that Paul experienced from prayer.

Finally, we can discover that Joy is built on an attitude of thanksgiving, In Philippians 1:3, Paul writes “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you” He is not just praying in general, but specifically giving God thanks for the believers in Philippi. Yet there were challenges to be addressed in Philippi but he never allowed those to blur his attention to what God was doing among those believers.

And this attitude of thanksgiving is one of the most important attitudes in life. One of the biggest problems many of us have, that is really ruining our outlook on life, and our relationships with other people, is that we are not thankful. We are always wanting things to be different; always wanting more, always griping about what we do not have — instead of being grateful for what we do have. If you are continually saying things like: “Why can’t I have this” or “My wife never does that”, or “I just wish my husband were more like so-and-so” or “I wish my job were more this way ...” If you are continually saying and thinking things like that, then you will be constantly dissatisfied, and constantly miserable. (And there are probably a lot of people who wish they didn’t have to be around you!)

So for the Christian person, giving thanks in every situation is not just “positive thinking.” A Christian person really does have a reason to give thanks in every situation, because we have eternal blessings that are greater than any temporary inconveniences we might experience.

## CONNECT GROUPS

The following article appeared in the Faith Focus column of the Herts Advertiser issue of 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

### *‘Small is definitely beautiful*

‘Meeting together regularly, with a small group of friends who trust and respect each other’s backgrounds and seek to learn from each other’s viewpoints, can be both challenging and inspiring.

‘Many churches in St Albans and Harpenden are structured not only for Sunday worship all together but also for mid-week groups to grow faith and care for each other.

‘These may be called ‘home groups’ or ‘small groups’. The ones in my church are now known as ‘Connect Groups’ as we seek to connect with each other and with Jesus Christ.

‘Our groups number from about six to a dozen members and most meet fortnightly. Some meet during the day for those who are available and prefer not to go out at night.

‘Some meet of an evening, and one meets on Zoom-equivalent software . This then enables couples with childcare needs to both take part each time, without the issue of finding baby-sitters.

‘Each group arranges its own programme but some move around different venues and share round the leadership of each meeting. Most groups have occasional meals together.

‘My own group usually starts, after cakes and coffee, with a fun ice-breaker exercise, which can involve plenty of laughter, then time spent reading the Bible passage preached on the previous Sunday and talking it through, before we share needs and pray for each other.

'We know each other pretty well and open up about health problems, work issues, family concerns and other things on our minds.

'The point of going through the previous Sunday's sermon in church means we can talk about how we might apply it to our lives as we seek to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

'The church is just coming to the end of a series on the Old Testament book of Daniel and many of us have been gripped by the vivid stories of God-fearing Jewish people living in exile in a pagan nation. It has proved to be so relevant for today.

'Living for Jesus is becoming increasingly hard in a world that has moved on from a Christian culture that was more evident some years ago. So we aim to encourage each other on.

*'John Truscott has lived in St Albans for 48 years and is a member of Christ Church, High Oaks. He works nationally as a church consultant and trainer specialising in organisation.'*

See John if you are not already a member of a Connect Group and would like to join one. We plan to start a new group in the autumn. Most groups take a break for August.



## Caring for Creation

### Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4) June meeting

C4's latest meeting was on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July. C4 watched the final (12<sup>th</sup>) [Lausanne Classroom Creation Care video: Caring for Creation for Tomorrow Starts Today](#) in the regular agenda item around theology of the topic.

Contributors to this episode included Katharine Hayhoe, Gumisa Ncumisa, Dave Bookless, Ed Brown, Ruth Valerio, Lowell Bliss, Victor Mughongho and Peter Harris. The various messages urged us not to be like the man in James 1:23-24 who looked in a mirror, then looked away and forgot what he looked like, through getting distracted away from the environment we live in. We are exactly the right people as Christians to take action and responsibility. We need to keep a sense of wonder at creation by being observant and recognising the extraordinariness of what God has created. God reveals himself to us through scripture *and nature*. Nature could be viewed almost like another book of the bible, as a place to study God and change our thinking. Our world comes from a good Creator God, so looking after it becomes part of our worship. It was made by and for Christ and he calls us, his disciples, to care for it. There needs to be an integrated practice of evangelism and creation care. We must sustain our environment until Jesus returns. And it has to become second nature for Christians to understand that the Good News starts with us and then extends to others and then to *all* created life.

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

At the July meeting participants had more discussion on the Creationtide events, including the 8<sup>th</sup> September special focus service and a families/community event on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September, as part of which it is hoped to host a (bring your own) picnic after the service and run various activities such as tree identification, bug hotel building and a scavenger hunt. On the topic of grounds maintenance (in partnership with BAGAG), the need to keep it as low maintenance and low cost as possible was emphasised; we need to distinguish between what we class as essential, versus what is desirable; also, particularly for recurring activities, the need to record when things were (last) done, for appropriate scheduling.

There won't be a C4 meeting in August, but in view of the Creationtide events starting in September, it was decided to have the September meeting earlier, i.e. on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept, and meet

in person on that occasion.

Remember, any church member would be welcome to join C4 meetings (details will be in our weekly e-newsletter).

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

There has been one further blog posted since the last *>imprint<*, no.125. On 11<sup>th</sup> July a blog was posted, entitled '[Acts for change during climate change and biodiversity loss](#)' by [Svenja Akwaba](#), a trained safari guide and a Systematic Theology student, in particular creation care theology that motivates action. She divides her time between living in Kenya and Germany and is a friend of both countries' A Rocha groups. The post is subtitled '[Introducing a holistic approach to share hope through addressing climate change and human-wildlife conflicts](#)'.

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

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

There has also been one further podcast to date since the last *>imprint<*.

Episode 43, posted on 11<sup>th</sup> July, features [Caroline Pomeroy](#), executive director of Climate Stewards, which is one of the organisations within the A Rocha family. In this podcast she discusses with Jo Swinney and Nick Faw the topic '[Stewarding the climate in turbulent times](#)' including whether carbon offsetting is just something to make us feel a bit better about our effect on the climate, or whether it actually works and has good science behind the numbers. Also of course she talks about Climate Stewards' tools available to *measure*, and what we can do to *reduce*, our carbon footprint (whether individually, or in families, groups, churches and organisations); *offset* then is the third aspect of the overall process, for any unavoidable additional carbon-based gases we release into the atmosphere, directly or indirectly.

To listen to Field Notes Podcasts go to <https://arocha.org/en/field-notes-podcast/> or from wherever you get your podcasts.

To find more about Climate Stewards and maybe challenge yourself to measure your own carbon footprint and discover ways to reduce and offset, go to <https://www.climatestewards.org/>. Alternatively go to the Christ Church Caring for Creation page on our website <https://www.ccstalbans.org.uk/caring-for-creation> (or from the Home page, <https://www.ccstalbans.org.uk/> select 'Caring for Creation' under the 'GROUP ACTIVITIES' tab), where there is also a link to Climate Stewards and much, much more!