

*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. 124: **Mon. 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024**, please, by email at  
[editor@ccstalbens.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbens.org.uk). *Peter Young (Ed.)*

## PCC meeting 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024

*This was the last meeting of the PCC before the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) when some new members filling vacancies would be appointed. Hence some of the business of the March meeting concerned what would be presented to the APCM.*

After approval of the minutes of its February meeting, the PCC received reports intended for inclusion in the papers for the APCM, including the Deanery Synod and Church Wardens' reports.

The Treasurer, Paul Collis, presented the 2023 accounts, which had not been independently examined at that stage, and remarked that the year had ended with a small surplus, which was explained by unused budget due to non-recruitment of two staff positions. He stressed, however, that increasing current staff levels going forward would be a significant financial challenge. The PCC had agreed a break-even budget for the current year. A number of technical queries on the 2023 accounts were raised and clarifications provided. There was unanimous approval for the proposal that the accounts now be submitted for independent examination prior to APCM approval.

Proposals for safeguarding provisions for a proposed summer sleep-over for children at church were discussed and a number of useful comments and suggestions were raised. The paper was proposed for acceptance by the PCC which was approved unanimously and it was also agreed that it should form an addendum to the church's safeguarding procedures.

There was a Mission Action Plan (MAP) update from the PCC subgroup considering Community Outreach, which evoked much discussion of the remit of the group's responsibilities, in view of the extent of the list of activities. It was clarified that much of the involvement was in partnership with the activity-groups but not directly

supervisory. The Community Outreach Group's scope of responsibility in the multiplicity of activities at Christmas was an example and they will need to consider further whether the group should adopt an overall planning role.

Jeremy updated the meeting on staffing issues and lack of progress in recruiting either of the two vacancies (Communications Co-ordinator, and Children & Families Pastor replacement or an alternative role). In particular there was lack of clarity regarding the latter and it was hoped that the MAP Community Outreach and Resourcing the Mission sub-groups might be able to provide some input at some point.

Regarding the Roofing Project, as at the date of the meeting a report from Orion on the results of surveys of drainage, services and foundations was awaited, although it was received in time for presentation at the APCM. Tim Medlycott was also planning to present some internal layout and elevation drawings to the church at that the APCM.

The topic of evangelism at Christ Church also formed a significant discussion, with two break-out groups considering a paper prepared by Jeremy highlighting what he viewed as the differences between mission, evangelism and 'being evangelical'. Feedback from the two groups helped to define where we might make changes and use opportunities which we are currently not fully utilising; also whether we know who in our church have particular gifts of evangelism and how they can be encouraged.

It was noted that electrical inspections were due, or possibly overdue in the newer area of the site. Two companies had quoted for undertaking this and the lower quote was proposed for PCC approval as it exceeded the Building and Grounds Action Group (BAGAG) sign-off limit. This was approved unanimously.

A paper on the possibility of Christ Church involvement in the Youthscape Satellites Teen Summer Camp 2024 was requested for the new PCC to consider.

Jeremy thanked the Church Wardens for their work, noting that there would be a vacancy due to Sarah taking over as Treasurer from Paul, who was thanked for his 11 years' service. Jonathan was also thanked as his term on the PCC would also finish at the APCM. There would therefore be vacancies for 1 church warden, 2 Deanery Synod representatives (and 4 PCC members) at the APCM and he asked the PCC to pray that the right people would come forward to fill these vacancies.

## **Annual Church Meetings 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024**

*[The following reports are not taken from formal minutes of these meetings, as is the case with the PCC report above, but from the Editor's own notes, - Ed.]*

**Meeting of Parishioners** (open to church members and anyone resident in the Parish)

The minutes of the 2023 meeting were accepted.

There were 2 nominations for church wardens, therefore no election was required: **David Boyce** to continue to serve; and **Malcolm Blaxland** newly appointed, to replace Chris and Sarah Patrick who needed to stand down to take on other responsibilities.

**Annual Parochial Church Meeting [APCM]** (open only to those on the church electoral roll)

The minutes of the 2023 meeting were approved, subject to correction of dates for the period of standing for Diocesan Synod representative, which should be 2021-24, not

2017-22 as stated.

## Electoral Roll

David Boyce, in his capacity as Electoral Roll Officer, reported on changes to the Roll since last year: 2023 – 124 members; 2024 – with one addition and three deletions (one deceased, two retired), the roll now stands at 122 members, 52 of whom reside in the parish and 70 who do not.

## Reports and Finances

The meeting formally accepted the Parochial Church Council (PCC), Deanery Synod and Church Warden reports for 2023.

Paul Collis, in his final formal act as Treasurer, outlined the status of the church finances for 2023, referring to the independently examined Financial Report, part of the Annual Report. He stated that the church was on a good financial setting at the end of 2023, with a surplus of around £6,000, although that was mainly due to the fact that staff appointments that had been budgeted for had not materialised. There had so far been no material costs for the roof replacement project. A break-even budget, based on anticipated income, had been set for 2024; however if the staff vacancies get filled this could result in an additional spend of an estimated £2,000 per month. There was a query on the financial impact of providing Monday Suppers. Paul confirmed that donations received (weekly and one-off) were not shown separately in the accounts; however the project was still being subsidised and had a budget of around £8,000, so even if that could be cut, it would not cover additional staff salaries. Fundraising for the roofing project has not yet started and ideas need to be investigated. Griffin, Moscrop and Stone would continue as the independent examiners, with a new partner liaising with the Treasurer. The audited accounts were approved unanimously by the APCM and Paul was thanked for his 11 years of service. **Sarah Patrick** had agreed to become the new Treasurer, having stood down as a joint Church Warden together with Chris.

## Elections

Deanery Synod – There were two nominations for two vacancies, therefore appointed without an election: **John Truscott** and **Jonathan Carter** (who will therefore be *ex-officio* on the PCC)

PCC – There were 4 vacancies, with two nominations received prior to the APCM: **Brian Williams** and **Jackie Kenealy**. **Hilary Boyce** and **Paul Collis** were also verbally nominated at the meeting itself and so were also appointed, subject to receipt of their nomination paperwork.

## Forum

A number of points were raised; although this is not an exhaustive account.

Roofing Project Update – This comprised an introduction by Gillian Donald, who emphasised this would be an overview of current plans, which would be fleshed out in more detail with opportunities for feedback at two meetings on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May (9.30-11.30) and Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May (19.30-21.30) [*second date has been corrected post-meeting -Ed.*].

It was confirmed that the report on the structural and services investigation carried out

on areas of the original building likely to be impacted by the roofing project had revealed no issues with the foundations, pipework or asbestos.

Tim Medlycott provided and described some plan and elevation drawings of the currently preferred roof option which would be a single, cantilever, mono-pitch roof, supported on columns, chiefly external to the current building, but also needing 3 columns internally. The drawings also included a possible option of a store at the rear of the building.

The concerns raised at previous forums would be addressed (best option, funding guaranteed, fundraising, etc.).

### Staff Vacancies

The need to appoint at least a Communications Co-ordinator was emphasised and an update on current state of play requested. Could the job specification go on the website and possibly shared on the St. Albans Mums Facebook page, and were there any job-share possibilities?

### 2:67 events

It was noted that the number of adult leaders currently available to support 2:67 events was limiting the number of children who could attend and it was requested that anyone who could join a pool of volunteers to help at future events could contact Gillian Donald who would pass on the information to Mike Palin.

### Worship

There was a request to reconsider restoration of elements of ministry lost since the pandemic, e.g. prayer ministry and healing and the administration of communion (at the rail).

There was also a request for better provision for music worship during August, fully accepting the need for the Music Group to have a good break, but might there be others with gifts that could be called upon? Volunteers from the community (not necessarily church members or Christian) were suggested, but others felt that while involving not-yet-believers in the life of the church is great, this would *not* be appropriate for contributing to the music worship.

### 'Non-statutory' reports for the APCM

A number of reports from church groups had been included in the papers for the APCM, although there were some missing. A request was made that in future groups be asked to restrict the length of their reports to a single side of A4, to facilitate reading through an otherwise large volume of paperwork.

### Monday Suppers

Thanks for the initiative was reiterated, and together with the Food Bank hub at Christ Church, these provided outreach opportunities to a significant number of contacts.

### Right to Grow Scheme

The raised beds outside the High Oaks Shops are being put forward for the local authority scheme, with a number of local sponsors for the beds to be used for community use for growing produce. It was suggested that Christ Church might also get involved in sponsoring this.

## Church Lunches and Forums

The need for further opportunities to have church shared lunches and discussion of topics of interest was stressed.

### Thanks

Jeremy was thanked for all his work as our Vicar, and this was endorsed by all at the meeting.

### 2025 APCM

This will be on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

## **WHERE IS GOD WHEN IT HURTS?** - *Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi*

**Where is God when life seems filled with loss, grief, and pain?** The answer is both deceptively simple and endlessly complicated. Why? Because grief, pain, loss, and trauma all cloud our ability to see clearly at times. Over the centuries, greater minds than mine have wrestled with the answer to this question from various platforms: church, hospital bedsides, theological seminars, literary books and many more. In fact, if you are looking for a great book, consider, *Where is God When it Hurts?* by Philip Yancey.

My contribution to this debate is informed by personal experience and countless hours with people in pain and watching them live out the answer to this question with courage and grace.

### **Let us consider Jesus' promise to be with us.**

When? Always (Matthew 28:20). We see Jesus in the boat with his disciples during the storm; with the ostracised woman at the well; with Mary and Martha at the grave of Lazarus etc. In other words, He's with the hurting. It is very easy not to see him in our own situations, but He is there. We should remember always that Jesus never promised us a life without pain, but we are promised His presence with us in it. I love the visual of this as seen in Psalm 23:5, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." Imagine that! Right there in the presence of your "enemy" (pain, suffering, sadness, etc.), the Lord Himself sets a table for two and invites you to dine with Him. It is an invitation to intimacy, not after the pain, but in its presence.

Andraé Crouch in his song "*Through it all*" speaks to the universal human experience of facing challenges, setbacks, and disappointments. The song reminds listeners that they are not alone in their struggles and encourages them to find strength in their faith. The first verse is reproduced below:

*Verse 1: I've had many tears and sorrows, I've had questions for tomorrow, there's been times I didn't know right from wrong. But in every situation, God gave me blessed consolation, that my trials come to only make me strong.*

*Chorus: Through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus,  
I've learned to trust in God. Through it all, through it all,  
I've learned to depend upon His Word.*

Do you still wonder where God is when life deals you a bad turn? There are many examples throughout Scripture of God's presence moving on the earth, interacting with His creation, in a variety of circumstances. Jeremiah 23:24 exclaims, "Can anyone

hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?’ declares the Lord. ‘Do not I fill heaven and earth?’ declares the Lord.”

**Where is God when it hurts and really hurts badly?** You are not alone in your dilemma. Even Jesus, during His crucifixion, asked, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). To the onlookers at that time, as well as to those who first read the story, it seems that God did forsake Jesus, so we obviously conclude that He will forsake us as well in our darkest moments. Yet, upon continued observation of the events that unfolded after the crucifixion, the truth is revealed that nothing can separate us from the love of God, not even death (Romans 8:37-39). After Jesus was crucified, He was glorified (1 Peter 1:21; Mark 16:6, 19; Romans 4:24-25). From this example alone we are assured that even when we do not feel God’s presence in the midst of our pain, we can still believe His promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). **“God sometimes permits what He hates to accomplish what He loves”** (Joni Eareckson Tada, who became quadriplegic following a diving accident in 1967). **If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, God is with you, beside you, above you, and inside you.** God’s presence and watchful care never leaves you. **If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, God is right in front of you, inviting you, drawing you, offering you the love, mercy, and grace that He longs to give you.**

Our lives are like a quilt. If you look at the back side of a quilt, all you see is a mess of knots and loose ends hanging out all over. It is very unattractive; yet when you turn the quilt over, you will see how the maker has craftily woven together each strand to form a beautiful creation, much like the life of a believer (Isaiah 64:8). We live with a limited understanding of the things of God, yet a day is coming when we will know and understand all things (Job 37:5; Isaiah 40:28; Ecclesiastes 11:5; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2).

**Where is God when it hurts?** The message to take with you in hard times is that when you cannot see His hand, trust His heart, and know for certain that He has not forsaken you. When you seem to have no strength of your own, that is when you can most fully rest in His presence and know that His strength is made perfect in your weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

### **Finding intimacy with Christ in our suffering.**

Whatever you are dealing with, you can find your suffering in Christ’s. He knows what it’s like to hunger and thirst, to endure sleepless nights and exhausting days, to experience agonizing pain, and to pour himself out for others who are hostile in return. His cousin was murdered, his family misunderstood him, his hometown rejected him, and he watched as a sword pierced his mother’s soul. People used Jesus, flattered him, criticized him, lied about him, betrayed him, abandoned him, mocked him, humiliated him, whipped him, and watched him die an excruciating death.

So where can you identify with Jesus in your suffering? If you have ever been betrayed by a friend, someone you loved and trusted, you can know a little of Christ’s fellowship in suffering. Or if you have ever begged God to remove your anguish, and God denied your desperate request, you can know a little of Christ’s fellowship in suffering. Or if you have experienced tormenting, all-consuming physical pain without relief, you know a little of Christ’s fellowship in suffering.

There is no suffering we experience that our Lord cannot relate to. And as we experience a portion of what he did and yield to him in it, we find a precious intimacy with him. In your pain, in the dark night of your soul, in your storm, in your confusion,

in your sadness, wherever you are, He is. The I AM will be what he has to be in your situation. "The LORD is near to the broken-hearted and saves the crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18 (ESV)

God shares the pain of every single believer—including you. When you're hurting, he isn't distant, aloof, or unfeeling. He is aware of your pain, and he cares. And he even shares the pain with you.

## The Connect Group that still meets online

For this month's feature on Connect Groups, we asked the *Ridgeway Group* to tell us about themselves. Here is their response put together by *Chris Patrick*, including visuals.

"Hello from our Ridgeway Connect Group!"



"This was our assembled group in a recent home group session in April.

"During Covid and Lockdown the Ridgeway Group met online, and we have carried on meeting this way. Many of us are used to being in virtual meetings from our work and feel quite comfortable with it, although there are times when it is hard to face another virtual meeting after a workday full of them.

"Saying the Grace together feels odd as the technology doesn't cope well with us all speaking at once! Certainly it means that both parents can be present and not have 'baby-sitting' issues, and also we don't have to go out on dark, wet, cold nights or tidy the house for visitors!

"We considered meeting in person again after the restrictions eased but there was no appetite for it as our existing way of meeting was working well for us.

"Each time we meet, we catch up on each other's news, praying about our challenges and giving thanks for good news. We find this really valuable in being able to hear updates on stories as they unfold and be able to support one other through the week.

"We usually read and discuss a Bible passage often based on the current sermon series helping us to apply the teaching to our daily lives.

"We have seen significant answers to prayer over recent months and years and our members have found the support of the group immensely valuable, particularly when health-related circumstances have made general in-person interactions difficult.



“The Ridgeway Group has a WhatsApp group to help co-ordinate meetings and also allows us to make urgent or quick prayer requests, which has been a real blessing for the group.

“We would love to welcome new joiners to our group. We meet fortnightly on a Tuesday. If you would like further details please do contact Hilary or talk to any of the friendly faces in the picture above!”

*Thanks, Chris. And if you are not already a member of a Connect Group and this piece makes you keen to join one but Tuesday evenings don't work for you, talk to **John Truscott**, the Connect Groups Co-ordinator, and he will help you find a group that would suit you. We have five and hope to set up more.*

## Sermons at Christ Church

Following the recent Eastertide sermons, on 5<sup>th</sup> May, a new sermon series on the book of Daniel will commence. The following table shows dates and the topics from then until the end of July, with special services not following the series highlighted in colour. However there may be some changes to dates/topics as time goes on. Please see previous editions of *>imprint<* for listings of sermons to date and if you want to hear any again, go to the Christ Church website, <https://www.ccstalbens.org.uk/> select MEDIA from the drop-down menu, then Sermons. Or go to the Christ Church YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyw1PLEnH1df2GzW3pZujyw> to watch/hear complete church services.

May 5 Easter 6	Daniel 1:1-21	Daniel & the favour of God
Thurs May 9 Ascension Day	Acts 1:1-11	
May 12 Easter 7	Daniel 2:1-23	How God reveals things
May 19 Pentecost	Acts 2:1-21	The Spirit comes
May 26 Trinity	Daniel 2:24-49	What God reveals
June 2 Trinity 1	GMAG Mission Fayre	
June 9 Trinity 2	Daniel 3:1-30	Pure worship and idol worship
June 16 Father's Day Trinity 3	Mark 4:26-34	Jesus & parables
June 23 Trinity 4	Daniel 4:1-27	The human heart needs to worship
June 30 Trinity 5	Daniel 4:28-37	How God acts
June 30, 2.00pm	<b>Sara ordination</b>	
July 7 Trinity 6	Daniel 5:1-31	Judgement
July 14 Trinity 7	Ephesians 1:3-14	Jesus in the epistles
July 21 Trinity 8	Daniel 6:1-28	God protects
July 28 Trinity 9	John 6:1-14	Jesus does miracles



## Caring for Creation

### *Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4) meeting 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024*

C4 last met on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April. We watched the ninth [Lausanne Classroom Creation Care video: 'The role of the Church in Creation Care'](#) in our regular agenda item around theology of the topic. It features Dave Bookless, Ruth Padilla De Borst, Rev Rachel Mash, Steven Mbogo, Tiwonge Mzumara Gawa, Victor Mughongho, Lowell Blish and Peter Harris. Among several challenges raised in the video, there was emphasis on the need for churches to set examples on creation care, to inspire its membership through deep biblical teaching, and so that the world takes notice through the Church's actions, drawing people to Jesus.

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

With regard to the continuing review of the Eco Church questionnaire, it was noted that there were still a number of checks needed in order to complete the Buildings section, which had been started the previous month, so that was set aside for the moment and the questions on [Lifestyle](#) (of our church membership as a result of our church's teachings/activities). These include (which we perhaps could be doing better!) such things like encouraging church members to walk or cycle to church where possible, or car-share (for those unable to walk far, or cycle, or those living outside the parish); encouraging repairing, reusing, recycling, and reducing waste; buying ethically sourced products, etc.

We also continued to plan our creation-tide activities, including aspects of the service on 8<sup>th</sup> Sept, and also the more immediate plans for activities around the 'Love our Grounds' day on 27<sup>th</sup> April.

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 will be in our weekly e-newsletter).

### *A Rocha Blog*

There have been two further blogs posted since the last [>imprint<](#), no.122. The first was posted on 4<sup>th</sup> April and is about [Tony Rinaudo](#), an agriculturalist who re-grew and raised trees in arid Niger. He is noted for his work on regeneration and his book, *The Forest Underground: Hope for a Planet in Crisis* is his autobiography, published in 2022. The blog is entitled: '[Reforestation the World](#)' and describes his technique of Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR).

The second blog was posted on 2<sup>nd</sup> May by [Ramona Tang](#), an associate professor of applied linguistics, who posts reflections on faith and nature on [everythingforhisglory.wordpress.com](#). In this blog, entitled 'Bird Song', she notes her appreciation of the birds singing that she hears outside her window and how it inspires her in her praise of God.

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

### *Field Notes Podcasts*

There have also been two further podcasts since the last [>imprint<](#). The most recent are:

Episode 40, posted 4th April, featuring [Rui Lino-Ramalho](#) who in 2023 moved with his family to the original A Rocha field study centre run by A Rocha Portugal at Cruzinha on the Algarve. In this podcast, entitled '[Why conservation is best \(and most joyfully\) done in community](#)', he talks with Rick Faw and Jo Swinney about how it feels to live in a home with a constantly changing group of people, but who are united by a love and concern for the natural world.

Episode 41, posted on 1<sup>st</sup> May, is from [Abby Simonin](#) and [Carly Richardson](#), who are farmers at A Rocha Canada's Brooksdale, British Columbia site. This podcast is entitled '[The fellowship of farm and food](#)' in which they tell us why a conservation organization grows, eats and gives away so much food, why they love to welcome inexperienced helpers who often slow them down, and what the rhythms of the seasons have taught them about living well.

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

### ***Earth Day, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024***

Well, yes, this year's Earth Day has just passed, but as they point out on their website: [earthday.org](http://earthday.org), "it's not a day, it's a movement", which started the first Earth Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1970. Since then it has been mobilising over a billion people each year on Earth Day, and every other day, to protect the planet. A particular feature this year is the issue of plastic pollution and its effects on our health in the [Planet vs Plastics](#) campaign (although strangely they don't mention the wider environmental impacts in their [2024 theme video](#), e.g. on wildlife and particularly in the oceans). Their goal is a 60% reduction in plastic production by 2040 and ask us to support the UN Global Plastics Treaty, to reject fast fashion and to join in the great global clean-up. #PlanetvsPlastics and [earthday.org/social-2024/](http://earthday.org/social-2024/).

However, you might prefer to support

### ***Tearfund's Rubbish Campaign***

which is also advocating action on significantly reducing rubbish in general and plastics in particular. It's estimated that "2 billion people have no safe way to dispose of rubbish, and it's people in poverty who are suffering the worst impacts of this rubbish problem. They are forced to live and work among piles of waste, which is making them sick, releasing toxic fumes, flooding communities and causing up to a million deaths each year.

**"But Jesus told his followers that even the smallest amount of faith can move mountains."**

Go to <https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/rubbish-campaign> and you can sign a petition and make an optional pledge at [tearfund.org/forms/rubbish-campaign-petition](http://tearfund.org/forms/rubbish-campaign-petition).