

*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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*Peter Young (Ed.)*

## WILL YOU CROSS THIS JORDAN ALONE? - *Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi*

When I was a little boy, I lived with my parents in the city of Lagos, very close to a park (Campos Square) which years before, used to be a burial ground. By the time I was in primary school, the burial ground had been turned to a park where school children and adults played football at various times. At night, it was sparsely lit. A few times when I had to cross the Park to our house in the evening, I was often afraid that ghosts would appear to me and harm me. So, I would wait until I saw an elderly person, and I would walk behind him as a cover. I could not walk that stretch of land alone at night, because I did not know what lay ahead.

If you are reading this reflection, you must have crossed over from 2023 to 2024. Congratulations. But what lies ahead in 2024 is still a mystery and to many, that is intimidating because of either the failures of the past or the lack of faith to tap into available resources to make the year fruitful. This was the experience of the children of Israel as they converged at the wilderness side of River Jordan. You will need to read Joshua 3:1-18 to have the real flavour of this article

The Israelites did not know what lay ahead. Their only reconnaissance had come from the exaggerated reports of a few spies. Not only did they face the Jordan River at flood stage; but on the other side they would have to confront the walled cities of fierce Canaanite fighters. Does this reflect your apprehensions for the future? You are not alone. I have some unfinished business in my life too just like the Israelites in our passage. So, what can we learn from God's dealings with them which will equip us to navigate through the coming year (our River Jordan) triumphantly.

**First and foremost, we must realise that God's ways are not always our ways.** We can't get to the other side in our own strength. Sometimes God places us in circumstances where we have to throw our hands up and say: "I can't cope with this. I can't cope with a state of joblessness, or loneliness or ill health. I can't cope with the situation in my family or my marriage"... And God's answer is often: "I know you can't - not on your own. But my power is made perfect in your weakness."

And so when you're on the edge of a flooded jungle swamp and God says, "OK, it is

time to cross over, it is time to trust and obey,” do you focus on the prevailing circumstances and say: “Utter madness; God, you must be joking.”? For the ancient Hebrews and for us, faith then becomes critical (Heb. 11:1). **Faith is being willing to venture into the unknown with God, blindfolded.** But it requires courage - the initial step in the journey that connects the dots between God’s promises and their fulfilment.

God gave clear instructions for crossing the Jordan River as the Israelites were faced with the large body of water. (Joshua 3:1-2). **The Lord prepared his people by getting them to focus on His presence among them.** "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests...you are to move out from your positions and follow it. In times of great stress and anxiety about the future, God’s people need constant reminders of the Lord’s presence among them.

The priests carrying the ark were told to go up to the river carrying the ark and wade into it. And as soon as their feet touched the water, the river would be cut off upstream. It seems like madness. The ark was heavy. They could be washed away by the current. Would they trust God and do what seemed like a crazy thing?

So what God is basically saying in vv.9-13 is this: I’ll get you through the Jordan just as I’ve promised, whatever the odds on your way. And that will give you the confidence to trust Me and my promises for the future.

The impossible problems in their way were not seen as an oppressive trial, but as a glorious opportunity to see God at work. But, just like the Israelites, we need to act on the basis of those promises. We need to step out in obedience and take hold of what has been promised in His word. The Lord always keeps His promises to His people. So let me ask you: Are you one of His people through faith in Christ Jesus?

If you are, thank God. What else is the Lord challenging you about in your Christian life? What issue of obedience is He putting His finger on today? Are there areas in your life where you’re not fully trusting Him?

Who knows for how long the priests stood there in the river? It might have been a moment; but it may have been a long time – however, in a situation like that, a moment often seems like a long time! We usually want the river to be dry before we even take a step; but God was truly calling Israel to step out in faith. And as they did so, Jordan’s waters flowing downstream was cut off and stood in a heap (Joshua 3:13); the water from upstream stopped flowing... (vv.16-17) and the people cross over on dry ground. This miracle obviously connects with the miracle the nation knew some 40 years earlier - the crossing of the Red Sea. God brought them out of Egypt’s bondage with a miracle, and He brought them in to the Promised Land with a miracle.

What was the key to this amazing miracle? Notice the centrality of the ark of the covenant of the LORD. This was all about the trust Joshua, the priests, and Israel had in the God they knew was present with them. As long as we keep our eyes on Him, and follow behind our victorious Jesus, the river of impossibility will dry up. Let’s remember that no obstacle is too big for the Lord to overcome.

The story is told of a ship that was being tossed by a storm and people were rushing to grab their life-jackets. When the ship’s crew started helping people, they found a boy sitting in a corner in the deck enjoying an ice-cream. A crew-member asked the boy, “Are you not afraid we are in trouble?” Quick came the reply, “Why should I be afraid when my dad is the captain of the ship? He will surely steer us to safety”. If you make God the captain of your life, He will steer you through the darkest nights.

## Winter/Spring 2024 Sermons at Christ Church

We conclude our current series of sermons on Peter's first letter on 11<sup>th</sup> February. This is followed by a Lent series and an Easter-tide series starting on Easter Sunday. Here are the texts and topics until 21<sup>st</sup> April:

**1 Peter series**, including (in green) those so far preached (go to the website at <https://www.ccstalbans.org.uk/sermons> to listen to sermons again, or watch/listen to the entire services on our YouTube channel by using the links on the website postings or by going to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyw1PLEnH1df2GzW3pZujyw>)

Jan 7	I. Past, present and future	1 Peter 1:1-25
Jan 14	II. Holiness in Hostility	1 Peter:1:13 – 2:10
Jan 21	II. Living Godly lives in a pagan society	1 Peter 2:11 – 3:7
Jan 28	IV. Suffering for doing the right things for Jesus	1 Peter 3:8-22
Feb 4	V.	1 Peter 4:1-11
Feb 11	VI.	1 Peter 4:12 – 5:11

### *Lent series*

Feb 18	I. Jesus in the wilderness	Mark 1:9-15
Feb 25	II. Jesus predicts his suffering	Mark 8:31-end
Mar 3	III. Jesus clears the temple	John 2:12-25
Mar 10	IV. Simeon and Anna worship the Christ (intergenerational)	Luke 2:33-38
Mar 17	V. The voice from above	John 12:20-33
Mar 24	VI. Entry to Jerusalem	Mark 11:1-11

### *Easter series*

Mar 31	I. Resurrection, part 1	John 20:1-18
Apr 7	II. Resurrection, part 2	John 20:19-end
Apr 14	III. Emmaus Road	Luke 24:36-48
Apr 21	IV. The Good Shepherd	John 10:11-18

## Caring for Creation

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

Christ Church

Caring for Creation



The most recent C4 meeting was on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> January when we watched the sixth of the [Lausanne Global Classroom Creation Care video series: Climate Change and the Problem of Human Greed](#). This highlighted the fact that the poor are the most impacted by climate change, exacerbating the problems already facing them, and the church needs to wake up to the cry of the poor and of the earth. The time has come to act and work with God for the renewal of the planet. Climate change is likened to a hole in a bucket of resources trying to alleviate poverty, hunger and injustice, and the hole is getting larger all the time. The issues aren't purely technical, but related to human greed, which science alone is unable to fix. What is needed is the ability to change people. Contributors to this video are Ed Brown, Katharine Hayhoe, Rachel Mash, Seth Appiah-Kubi and Peter Harris. See [>imprint<115](#), p.7 for the full programme.

The meeting shared items of general environmental interest that have surfaced in the news since the last meeting in November. The revisitation of the Eco Church questionnaires continued, looking at the Global and Community Engagement section questions left over from last meeting, noting the improvements that have been made since our application for the Bronze award. As well as involvement in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch (see below), there will be a grounds walk-around on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February after church for everyone who is interested.

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 will also be the case in February, when it will be on 26<sup>th</sup> February instead. The venue or Zoom link, as appropriate, will be publicised in the weekly e-news.

### *RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch (BGBW)*

Every year at the end of January, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), carry out a national survey of birds spotted by anyone in their own garden/locality during any single hour of the volunteers' choosing over that weekend, and submit the results to the RSPB. This is so RSPB can monitor possible declines in species nationwide year on year (or increases). C4, on Christ Church's behalf has taken part in this project for the last three years for birds sighted in our church grounds and the latest took place on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024 between 8:30 - 9:30 am. (Anyone would be warmly welcomed to join us in future surveys).

The idea is to log sightings of birds landing (not just flying overhead) in the area chosen and record the maximum number of each species seen *at any one time* during the hour (to avoid multiple counts of individual birds). So here, hot off the press, are the results of the 28<sup>th</sup> January Christ Church spottings in alphabetical order:

Blackbird (2); Blue Tit (5); Collared Dove (2); Crow (3); Great Tit (1); House Sparrow (2); Magpie (6); Pigeon, woodpigeon/feral (6); Robin (2); Starling (4).

### *[Green Christian St. Albans \(GCSA\) email: \[stalbans@greenchristian.org.uk\]\(mailto:stalbans@greenchristian.org.uk\)](#)*

Read the latest, January 2024, newsletter <https://us4.campaign-archive.com/?u=38128d83eaf82d7f9b5ef6e87&id=2f70bfcc0c> where you will find out about the Lent vigil for climate justice (22<sup>nd</sup> Feb); the new Lent course ("Calling a Wounded Planet Home!") covering topics of Love, Truth, Wisdom, Justice and Hope; the Big Plastic Count week (11-

17 March) and much more. Their newsletter archive can be accessed from <https://us4.campaign-archive.com/home/?id=04f756a054&u=38128d83eaf82d7f9b5ef6e87>.

## ***A Rocha Blog***

There has been one further blog so far posted since the last *>imprint<*, no.119. It was posted on 4<sup>th</sup> December by Joy-Elizabeth Lawrence, an associate pastor at an Evangelical Covenant Church in the suburbs of Chicago and entitled: “[Advent Consolation](#)”, where she writes in this blog about sowing in tears and reaping in joy (Ps.126) and reflecting on Charles Wesley’s hymn “Come thou long-expected Jesus”.

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 37: also posted 4th December, featuring Sara Kaweesa, founder of A Rocha Uganda and its national director. In this podcast, entitled ‘A heart for creation care in a context of suffering’, she opens up about being accepted as a young female leader in a conservative culture, alongside the immense challenges of educating communities about conservation care, while providing for heartrending needs.

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

## ***Tearfund Campaigns***

### **Rubbish Campaign**

In a recent update from Tearfund they give thanks for the encouraging engagement with their Rubbish Campaign, calling on world leaders to end plastic pollution and its harmful impact on people living in poverty and also giving thanks that the UN draft plastics treaty contains all the vital elements Tearfund had been hoping for. Tearfund will continue to pursue an agreement for ambitious targets for reducing plastic production at this year’s talks.

### **Climate Change**

Tearfund attended the UN climate summit (COP28) at the end of 2023, lobbying governments and speaking to the media to call for climate justice. Notably nations agreed, for the first time, to “transition away” from fossil fuels, although there were a number of distractions and weakening of previous commitments, thus failing to deliver a landmark agreement to phase out all fossil fuels in order to avert the worst of climate catastrophe and deliver justice for the most vulnerable people worldwide. Read Tearfund’s assessment of the outcomes of COP28 in their article on their website, entitled “Good COP or Bad COP”, which can be found by clicking [this link](#).

### **Restorative Revolution – a vision for the future**

Tearfund has now launched **Restorative Revolution**, inviting churches around the world to use our collective power to build a fairer world and engage with God’s restoration story. There are resources, including Bible Studies, to help churches and individual Christians get inspired by this. Find out more and join in, at this stage via Tearfund’s recent blog, by following [this link](#).