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Items for *>imprint<* no. 113: **Tues. 9th May 2023**, please, by email at editor@ccstalbens.org.uk.

Peter Young (Ed.)

13th March 2023 PCC meeting

This was the final meeting of the current PCC membership before the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) on **23rd April 2023**.

The discussions at the two church forums (or *fora*, if you prefer!) held on 26th February and 5th March were reviewed. Both were felt to have been helpful meetings. The one on the use of reserves will help to inform the PCC in their decisions and the other on same sex blessings will form the basis for further discussions on the issues.

The reports on PCC and Deanery Synod activities and the Church Wardens' report covering the 2022 period for inclusion in the papers which will be distributed for the APCM were reviewed and accepted. The 2022 Financial Report was also discussed and the PCC unanimously approved that it be sent for independent examination, to enable availability of a fully examined report for approval at the APCM.

The arrangements for the collaborative effort between our church and the New Greens Social Club to hold an event during the Bank Holiday weekend, marking the Coronation of King Charles III, were also discussed. The event will be on **Sunday 7th May, starting at 1:00pm** after our church service. Volunteer help from our own membership for various aspects will be required and will be requested soon, which will include serving refreshments. It was also felt important that our church provide some spiritual input to the occasion.

The proposal for Christ Church to hold a Holiday Club during one of two possible weeks in the summer (in July or August) were further considered at this meeting. While there was no clear preference which week to go for, with similar numbers of people volunteering (at this stage) for each week, the availability of potential *team leaders* marginally favoured the **week beginning 21st August** and so this was agreed. Even so there are currently insufficient potential team leaders to cover an attendance of 50 children (5-11 years), so after discussion it was decided to limit attendance to 40

children this year. The needs for further volunteers to make up the teams and to fulfil specific roles will be brought back to the congregation as soon as possible.

The PCC were thanked for their service and good discussions/decisions over the past year. Some members may wish to, or will need to stand down, having completed their terms, so there will need to be elections for the vacancies for the new PCC at this year's APCM.

WHY ARE YOU WEeping? – *Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi*

Easter begins with grief, all things dark, emptiness, and uncertainty everywhere. That is where Easter has to begin, as it transitions from the grim reality of Good Friday. Easter does not seek to satisfy our curiosity as to how a dead body could begin to stir and move and stand up and push the rock away and walk out into Joseph's garden. It tells of the mystery and the grandeur of that deed by which the Father glorifies his Son, declaring him victor over death and all that brought him to the Cross and grave. Easter has to do with God's will to present his risen Son as the answer to our sin and our death-prone ways, as people who live in a fallen world. Easter begins with God's action and grace through his Son – for the forgiveness of our sin. It presents us with a Lord on the way of his ascension to his Father. You cannot but hear the reality in the words of Mary Magdalene: "I have seen the Lord." (John 20: 18). The Easter story is our story, too if we have "seen" Him! What is it that God is saying to us through this beautiful Easter event?

First of all, I believe God is saying this is real. It's not "made up." The last thing Mary expected when she went to the tomb that first Easter morning was to find the tomb empty. Surprise! I know you know the end of the story. But just for a moment, put yourself in Mary's place. Her first thought was not "Resurrection," it was "Desecration." Her first reaction was not "God at work," but "Grave robbers at work." Her first response was not "He Is Risen," it was "He is stolen." So she runs back across town, through the still silent streets to Peter and John (still in hiding, mind you, or still in bed perhaps!) and shouts, "They have taken away the Lord and I don't know where to find him." Even Peter and the other disciple who had been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry were not prepared for what they found that morning.

Mary could not help but weep. The angels could have said, "Don't cry. Jesus is risen!" Jesus could have said, "Don't cry. I'm here." But neither the angels nor Jesus told Mary to hold her tears. They simply asked her why. They have good news to share, but they did not overrun Mary's grief in order to share it. I hear the angels and Jesus asking me – asking us – this same question during Easter. Why are we weeping? What is the source, or more likely, the sources of our sadness, our pain, our grief this day? And more to the point, have we actually confronted why we are sorrowing right now, or are we just pushing away the pain through distractions or mounting to-do lists or frenetic news consumption?

Mary wept because Jesus had given her hope, and a place to belong, and a future, and now that seems shut off as surely as the tomb is. And she remembers other things, too: the fear that had gripped her as she heard of his arrest. The taunts of the crowd as he made his way through the city. The cross which bore down on him as he stumbled. The scant mercy they tried to offer by their presence and their love as they'd stood by the cross, Christ's anguish and pain as he struggled with more than any human body can bear.

Alone at the tomb in her grief, on that first Easter morning, Jesus spoke directly into her grief. 'Why are you weeping?' On Easter morning, the risen Lord asks us the same question. Why are *you* weeping? You might protest that you're not. But Jesus' question reaches into the griefs we carry, the losses, the fears, the confusion. I may not be weeping right now, but I've cried a lot of late. I have shed tears as I see the Church of Christ gradually losing its saltiness, its light and prophetic punch. I have wept as I observe God's ministers compete for prominence on the podium of the unbelieving world.

Mary wept because the tomb is empty. What should have been good news broke her heart! We would say today that the empty tomb is one of the greatest proofs of the Resurrection. Yet Mary weeps. This shows us that evidence alone will never persuade anyone. Unless the evidence is accompanied by proper understanding of the authentic word of God, and an open heart, no one will be changed. Mary had all the right facts but she still jumped to the wrong conclusion. We often do the same thing.

A story is told of a Muslim in Africa who became a Christian. When his friends asked him why he made that decision, he told them, "Suppose you were going down a road, and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn't know which way to go. Then you saw two men at the fork, one dead and one alive. Which one would you follow? I decided to follow the man who is alive." This is why the Christian faith cannot be compared with other world religions because it is the only one whose leader conquered the grave and is alive for evermore. Follow him and he will lead you to heaven.

I close with the question Jesus asked Mary, only I would like to ask each person who reads my words: Why are you weeping? The time for tears is over. The time to experience and share the Good News has come. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Mary did not recognize her Rabbi there in the garden because her heart was full of grief. This beautiful man whose very life and nature was love had been crucified on a cross. He who had saved others could not save himself. How could life be so cruel? Where was God in all of this? If you have not asked such questions in your own time of pain, you have been very fortunate. It's very simple. **If there was no Jesus' death on the cross, there would be no resurrection. The resurrection validates everything Jesus said and everything Jesus did, including his standing in my place and taking the punishment due to my sin and yours. The resurrection is real. But we cannot separate it from the cross on which Christ died.**

I don't know why you are weeping, what burden you carry, what grief might be weighing you down, what fear or despair might be hidden under your Easter bonnet. But I do know that the Living Christ stands ready to call you by name. The eternal God stands by to give you hope and courage and faith once again. The redeeming Saviour who has been, literally, to hell and back for your sake offers his loving word and healing embrace. Dele, Jim, Mary, Iyabo, Tom, He calls us by name. He heals us by his grace. He offers us new life. Will you heed his call?

Spring 2023 sermon series

By the time you receive this issue of >imprint<, there will be two final sermons in the 'Telling the Passion' series, until Easter Day, after which a new series on Galatians will start. Christ Church Families will have a different range of topics while the Galatians series runs in the main church service, so the tables below show the complete schedule of 'Telling the Passion' sermons (which you can still access either on our YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyw1PLEnH1df2GzW3pZujyw>), *or* (in audio format, with sermon notes where available) on the Christ Church website (<https://www.ccstalbans.org.uk/sermons>). Then the post-Easter schedule for the Galatians titles and CC Families topics, up to the end of May, although both then continue until early July.

Telling the Passion

Feb 26	Cleansing the temple
Mar 5	The Last Supper
Mar 12	Gethsemane
Mar 19	The woman anointing Jesus' feet (Mothering Sunday)
Mar 26	The Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus
Apr 2	Entering Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)
Apr 9	Resurrection (Easter Day)

	Galatians: the New Thing God is doing		Christ Church Families' topics
Apr 16	1:10	Seeking the approval of God not humans	Zacchaeus
Apr 23	APCM		
Apr 30	1:11-24	Paul, Peter and the Gospel: 1	The man born blind
May 7	2:1-10	Paul, Peter and the Gospel: 2	The woman at the well
May 14	2:11-21	Paul, Peter and the Gospel: 3	The pool of Bethesda
May 21	3:1-14	Abraham: 1	Lazarus
May 28	3:15-25	Abraham: 2	Jairus's daughter

Caring for Creation



We've got an Eco Church Bronze Award!

Christ Church has now received our Bronze Eco Church award, having fulfilled at least bronze level in each of the five Eco Church categories: Worship and Teaching, Buildings, Land, Community/Global engagement and Lifestyle.

This is great news! However our work is by no means complete and we can do even better as we continue to embed Creation Care into the life of our church and see if we can achieve Silver status in time.

Click the button on the right to learn more about Eco Church and also check out the Christ Church website <https://www.ccstalbens.org.uk/caring-for-creation> where you can see our certificate.



Here's a nature podcast recommendation:

'The Stubborn Light of Things' - reviewed by Jacquie Follett

Which birds can sleep while they're flying? Where do barn owls like to hide? Did people in the past really believe that birds hibernate in mud at the bottom of ponds?

If you'd like to learn more about nature and enjoy listening to podcasts then I'd like to recommend this one by nature writer **Melissa Harrison**. They started in April 2020, so listen along for a gentle introduction to what's happening in nature around you this spring, and learn more about God's wonderful creation.

It's called 'The stubborn light of things'.

<https://melissaharrison.co.uk/podcast/>

Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4)



Check out the notice board!

Have you spotted the new C4 notice board in Church, yet? It's on the wall in the link corridor between the foyer and the worship area. It's still at an early stage, including pictures of the C4 group, a copy of our Climate Change Declaration, etc., but will have lots more information and pictures coming soon!

C4 Library

Just another reminder that the C4 library is now on a shelf (lower left) in the library/former crèche area, just off the St. Andrew's Lounge. (If you're not sure where that is, just follow the beating of drums after the service!!).

The booklet for recording book loans is with the books and anyone in church is still more than welcome to borrow, and if you have C4 library books to return or exchange, that's the place to go now! Ask C4 members for recommendations. And the new notice board also has a complete list of the books available

C4 activities

C4 works morning 18th March

Several of C4 with BAGAG support braved the rather damp conditions on Saturday morning, 18th March, to do some improvements on the church grounds, including digging holes, planting and staking three new fruit trees (pear, cherry and plum), filling the slope at the far end of the car park with earth which had been disturbed by the siting and subsequent removal of the cabin, general tidying of the boundary areas and flower beds and installation of information signs at various points, e.g. indicating the areas of grass left to grow long, the wildflower area, the hedgehog habitat and bug hotel, the raised beds, Platinum Jubilee tree and compost areas. However, the wet weather meant that shredding of sticks and branches from pruned shrubs, etc., had to be postponed for now. Do have a look round and enjoy the grounds when you can.

These activities were intended to complement, but *weren't instead of* the **Love our Grounds (LOG) day** which is scheduled to go ahead on **Saturday 22nd April**, when there will be much left-over work still to do. It was proposed to make the C4 works activities a regular occurrence (suggested quarterly) as there will be ongoing maintenance needed (e.g. regular watering of trees if there is a dry summer).

At its main monthly meeting on 20th March, C4 discussed the eighth film in the Tearfund Christianity and Climate Change series, as part of the regular 'beliefs' agenda item, in which the prominent environmentalist, **Katharine Hayhoe** answers questions on issues raised on the topic from a Christian perspective. Film 8 is entitled 'There can be a better future', arising from a question posed to her: '*What are some key changes you hope to happen after lockdown procedures ease up in terms of climate change-related behaviour?*'.

Other topics discussed included a proposed visit to A Rocha's Wolf Fields Urban Nature Reserve in Southall, West London in early May; whether we could invite an outside speaker to an event to which we could invite other churches/community, possibly during the St Albans Sustainability week (10th-18th June)?; promotion/more prominence of the Caring for Creation webpage on the Christ Church website (currently a bit tucked away under the What's On menu); possibility of a quiz based on the information boards in the grounds.

Watch Jeremy in conversation with Felicity Hall on our YouTube channel...

..on the topic of Creation Care and Christian Discipleship. This is the second video in the series where Jeremy speaks with members of our congregation on topics on which they have some specialist knowledge (the first having been a discussion on Science and Faith with Geoff Young, which is still available). Do watch Felicity's interview if you can – there's a lot of food for thought as they discuss appreciation and care of God's creation as an integral part of our Christian discipleship:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wct2QhplvyE>

A Rocha Blog

The latest blog, posted since the last *>imprint<*, no.111: 'Taking hopeful steps towards less waste', by **Annemarte Westerbeek**, Director of A Rocha Netherlands, was posted 7th March. In it she (re)introduces us to the Five Rs (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rot) and what they mean in practice in her lifestyle choices

Go to <https://blog.arocha.org/en/five-rs/>

Field Notes Podcasts

The latest episode, no.28, posted since the last *>imprint<*: is entitled 'How digitising nature can save the world', features **Judith Ochieng** (a Kenyan scientist working for A Rocha Kenya, who has spent the last three years digitising data from four forested regions in Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda, in a partnership of eleven organisations). Here she is interviewed by Rick Faw and Rachel Mander and talks about the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), a free-to-access global network and data infrastructure. And she also talks about the importance of information-based decision making and how her own faith keeps her grounded and hopeful when the data which is uncovered can often seem discouraging.

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



Zambia News

February 2023



Welcome to our Newsletter with latest news of our Partners in Lusaka. We are looking forward to welcoming Volunteers to our 2023 Zambia campaign! If you are thinking of joining us again, do give Jackie a call in the Mission Direct office.

Geoff Spiller

Kiine School continues to grow ...



The recent rapid growth of Kiine School at Chamba Valley continues, under the guidance of head teacher Gloria. The school now has over 850 pupils – including 240 Grade 10s in 3 of the available classrooms. Many rooms are so crowded, some pupils are sitting on the floor! We are hoping to help the school complete another classroom this year. We will also be painting the toilet block which volunteers helped to build last year.

Prayer Requests & Answers:

Give thanks:

- For Dorothy's health, which has steadily improved over recent months. Please continue to pray for complete healing and restoration;
- For donations which have enabled Mission Direct to carry out our building projects last year, as we pray for successful fundraising for this year's planned work.

Please pray:

- For guidance and wisdom for all considering coming to Zambia this year;
- For our Partner schools, at the start of this school year, as they seek to cope with demand for places, while raising sufficient funds to pay their teachers.

Mission Direct has a Facebook page, where we're posting photos from our activities in Zambia. Please take a look and 'like' our page!

<https://www.facebook.com/Zambia.MissionDirect>

A new toilet block for Crown of Life School



This year, our main building project will be to construct a second **toilet block for Crown of Life School**, at an estimated cost of £15,000. With pupil numbers approaching **700**, the toilets built in 2010 are no longer sufficient. Meanwhile, the science lab completed last year is now in regular use by the secondary grades. Dorothy, whose health has been causing concern over the past year, is steadily improving, but please continue to pray for her. We have set up a **fund-raising page** for the toilet block:

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/ZambiaCrownofLifeSchool2023>

Lunch at Kumbaya School



Places at Kumbaya School continue to be much in demand, with over 940 pupils enrolled at the school this year, including nearly 800 in primary grades. The school continues to provide lunch as donations allow – although it costs just 10p to feed a child, that is nearly £100 each time to provide lunch for all. Ketty would welcome any support well-wishers can give. Thank you.