

## In this issue:

PCC meeting, 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2021.....	1
HELP ME LORD TO BELIEVE – <i>Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi</i> .....	2
Catherine Cole heads to pastures new .....	3
News from the Brownes in Argentina, July 2021 .....	4
Creation Care.....	6

Items for >imprint< no. 96: **Mon. 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021**, please, by email at [editor@ccstalbans.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbans.org.uk).

*Peter Young (Ed.)*

## PCC meeting, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021

As this was the first meeting the PCC had held in person for several months, the opportunity was taken to share in Holy Communion at the start of the meeting. After this, members were invited to talk about their hopes and fears and reflections for the future. Comments were mainly in the light of the ongoing situation with the Covid pandemic and uncertainties about future freedoms, whether enforced or self-imposed individually (acknowledging that there will be widely varying senses of vulnerability). Racial tensions in society were also raised as a potential issue and the hope that the church could be an agent of healing and embrace diversity. However there have certainly been challenges but also new ways of working which can be valuable for our future church life.

### Updates on actions

*Hall floor repair* – the process of obtaining and evaluating quotes was ongoing as of this meeting.

*Online donations* – this is now up and running via a Just Giving page, with links in the news-sheet ([www.justgiving.com/ccstalbans](http://www.justgiving.com/ccstalbans)) and also on live-stream credits. Other alternatives to cashless giving will also be explored, however regular giving, facilitating the recovery of Gift Aid wherever possible, is the ideal.

*New bank account* – at the time of the meeting there were still some final requirements for setting up the new CAF account and also arrangements for transitioning from the existing Barclays account.

*Quinquennial Inspection* – the inspection had been done and at the time of the meeting the report was still awaited

### Mission Action Plan (MAP)

The PCC looked at some Diocesan guidelines and templates for construction of an

updated MAP. Some questionnaires on the topics of 'Profound Worship' and Young People's Work were completed during the meeting by each PCC member with the intention that individual responses would be subsequently collated and analysed. Comments on the topics were also invited, e.g. under 'Profound Worship' – the need for active engagement with people we want to draw in, identifying and addressing their needs.

### ***Feedback from SustFest21, and Creation Care at Christ Church***

Jane Sellars announced the relaunch of Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4), which has been in abeyance for 3+ years. She had formed a group of 5 (at that time, since expanded to 8) Christ Church members including herself, keen to take this forward. There were several ideas under consideration, although since they also affect the use and care of our church grounds it was observed that there will be considerable overlap with the activities of BAGAG and that close co-operation will be required. C4 will be discussing the use of our facilities, but also other sustainability and ethical issues and aiming to reduce our carbon footprint. Since we were signed up to Eco Church some time ago, but had never fulfilled all the requirements for an award, this will be looked at afresh and C4 (and PCC) were encouraged to attend webinars on a number of relevant topics. It had been too short notice to contribute anything to SustFest21 (this year's St Albans Sustainability Festival), but a review of events indicated there might be a number of ways Christ Church could be actively involved next year to invite the community to, as well as from across St. Albans. C4 will look at possibilities, bring proposals back to PCC and hopefully submit to SustFest by their next deadline in April 2022.

~~~~~

The report of the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021 PCC meeting will be given in *>imprint<* 96.

### **HELP ME LORD TO BELIEVE – *Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi***

In Genesis 15:1 God spoke to Abram: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." "I am your shield," your divine protector. What a powerful statement of assurance. Instead of Abram responding in faith, he, like many of us, missed God's promised initiative and responded with doubt. "O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" Abram's preoccupation with his own desire to have an heir prevented him from resting on God's word although God had already shown Abram that he would keep his promises. I will not hasten to blame Abram because he had been waiting for the fulfilment of God's promise and the long, long wait (about 25 years from his call and God's promise) was taking its toll on his faith. His wife who was supposed to bear him a child had passed the age of menopause and Abram too was well advanced in age! It appeared as though God had forgotten them.

**There are times in our lives when we are confronted with a challenge so overwhelming that we struggle to believe that even God can bring about a positive outcome.** We recite scripture verses, think positive thoughts, ask our friends to pray for us, and look for the signs of God's positive intervention. We want to believe, but we still have lingering thoughts of failure. What is there about human nature that allows doubt to creep in and makes fear of failure ruin our faith? This state of unbelief has been referred to by some people as 'doubt-storm' or as Leonard Sweet calls them, "Faithquakes."

**It is so easy for us to gaze so long at our problems that we lose our spiritual perspective – the problems become bigger and our faith in God grows smaller.** Those whose method of coping with problems is to pretend they don't exist are taking the first step towards mental ill health. It was the late Selwyn Hughes who said "nothing is actually solved by evasion for whatever we try to evade comes back to pervade. It comes back in the form of hidden complexes within." So what do we do? We should bring all our questions, doubts and feelings to God and talk directly to Him about them. That is what Abram did. Habakkuk (1:1-4) did a similar thing. Habakkuk did what everyone should do when they fail to comprehend the ways of God. Problems always need to be talked over with someone – and who better to talk to than God?

Sometimes because God doesn't act when and how we think God should, we respond in doubt. I know a young couple whose lives were tragically interrupted when their young son drowned in the swimming pool of a friend. Grief turned to anger, anger to blame and eventually the couple separated.

With the prayers, counsel and encouragement of believing Christian friends they reconciled and began to rebuild their lives. Their reconciliation well under way, they were faced with another challenge, a troubled pregnancy. They questioned God, "What have we done to deserve this unending tragedy in our lives?"

Their search for meaning led them to study and fellowship with mature Christian believers who helped them discover God's promise and covenant relationship with them. As they grew in their belief and spiritual maturity they found the strength to accept the challenges that tragedy sometimes brings. They are now the parents of three beautiful children. As heirs of the covenants of God we grow to understand that difficult circumstances in our lives can either become obstacles or opportunities, depending on how we believe.

After God took Abram outside and assured him that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars, Genesis 15:6 says, **"And Abram believed" even when his physical condition had not changed.** He trusted in, relied on, remained steadfast to "the Lord; and God counted it to him as righteousness" (right standing with God).



### **Catherine Cole heads to pastures new ...**

Catherine joined the Stephanie Ledger School of Dance about the same time that we joined Christ Church. She has been a keen member of church attending on Sundays, joined Refine where she also later became an assistant leader and has been, and still is, a popular art and craft helper at Little Acorns, now CC Tots.

At school she played lots of sport, particularly football at primary school, but it was the love of dance and in particular ballet that never waned. As she progressed through the Stephanie Ledger ballet school, it became clear that Catherine would make an ideal young assistant, something Catherine as a very young teen thoroughly enjoyed, relishing helping the younger classes, and being paid!

However, as she grew taller the sporadic pain she felt in her left knee began to interfere with her ability to enjoy her dancing. After referrals, ultrasounds, and MRI scans we had a disastrous consultation one Christmas Eve, when an unfeeling doctor told the then 16 year old Catherine that she would never dance again and would walk

with a stick for the rest of her life. She then spent a couple of years having operations and she was on crutches for most of the time whilst studying for her A levels. Dancing was put on hold. Prayers and some success with the early operations made it possible for Catherine to return to dancing whilst also transferring her treatment to the very excellent Mr Miles, a knee specialist and consultant at The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore. A completely different approach, mentally and orthopaedically, meant Catherine went from strength to strength and was able to take the advanced exams she needed to be able to apply to the Royal Academy of Dance in London to do a teaching qualification and where Darcey Bussell graces the halls and has her own parking space! Two years of distance study alongside her full-time teaching, with intensive summer schools enabled Catherine to graduate in 2019. Sadly the graduation ceremony has been cancelled twice due to the ongoing pandemic. Becoming a qualified RAD ballet teacher gave her access to the international job website.

Over the years Catherine has enjoyed being the inspirational teacher for the same ballet school that she started with all those years ago (now the Brewer Dance Academy) whilst also teaching for Harpenden Dance School and Move Parkinson's. With lots of experience, a knee she can rely on, (for the time being) and a full qualification she felt it was time to look for adventure further afield. Not many posts have been advertised during the pandemic but after applying for several international jobs she was contacted by a dance school in Canada. Catherine met the head of the school via zoom after she had looked at Catherine's teaching and dancing video auditions and it became clear that the school which has a strong Christian ethos was a great fit. So here she is, on the verge of leaving the UK (she hopes to leave mid-August) for a 2 year adventure teaching ballet in a small town called Three Hills just north of Calgary in Alberta, Canada. Catherine's strong faith in God and herself, has got her through some tough times and put her in the position to be able to make the most of this fabulous opportunity. Our love and prayers go with her for a thoroughly enjoyable and safe experience.



Teaching pointe class for The Brewer Dance Academy

## **News from the Brownes in Argentina, July 2021**

### **(Western Toba Bible Translation Project)**

#### ***Covid-19 update:***

Cases remain high across Argentina, but seem to have levelled off now. Vaccination is speeding up (Michael has had 2 doses of Sinopharm, Silvia 1 dose of Sputnik V and Kevin 1 of Astra-Zeneca - which gave him a nasty reaction).

The race is on to get as many people as possible fully vaccinated before the delta variant takes over here - it's already been detected. However, the main crisis in Argentina is the economic situation: it feels like we're on the Titanic, and sooner or later it's all going to sink into the depths.

#### ***Family news:***

Our main family prayer request has to do with planning for the future. Michael is due to

reach retirement age in October 2023, which would be an ideal time to return to the UK. But Kevin and Chris are both keen to establish themselves there too, and want to go before then – now would be the ideal time for them. So we have this tension – when do we go, and where? We have nowhere to live in the UK, and are thinking we would sell our house here to buy something there. But moving funds from Argentina into the UK won't be straightforward, without appearing to be money laundering. We long to see you all again, and we're praying we'll be able to visit again at the end of the year. Maybe then we can make more permanent plans. Please pray!

None of us have been ill with covid-19, and give thanks to God for his protection and provision during this time. Silvia's pains in her feet and hands have gone now, and she uses eye drops for the glaucoma in her right eye, which are working well and her doctor says she doesn't now need to consider laser treatment. Michael's diabetes is well under control using insulin 3 times a day.

### ***Translation progress:***

Estela continues with Psalms, and Hilario has nearly finished Isaiah. Ana and José particularly find it very difficult to work with the computers, but are still making progress with Numbers and Ezekiel. Michael continues with the exegetical and spell checking processes. Travel in and out of Formosa province, where the translators live, is still not permitted, so we still can't meet up, but next week we're planning a zoom meeting, internet permitting. We're now into chapter 5 of our group review of Micah, using WhatsApp messages.

Our plan is to be able to publish more of the Minor Prophets by the end of the year.

### ***Points for prayer:***

- ◆ Praise God for the progress that continues to be made on the translation of God's word into Toba, despite the incredible difficulties faced by the translators! These include extremely hot, dry and dusty climate, precarious living conditions, hyper-inflation and ongoing travel restrictions, severely limiting our times of fellowship.
- ◆ Give thanks we and the Toba translators have been kept safe from covid; please pray this will continue. Pray for more vaccines to be made available in Argentina, and for society as a whole to be responsible and keep to the sanitary measures – facemasks in public, social distancing and regular use of hand sanitizers and soap and water.
- ◆ Pray for safety at all times and good health for all of us, and for the Lord's protection in the spiritual battle we face as we seek to translate the Word of God.
- ◆ Pray for the Lord's ongoing provision for all of us, and give thanks that we can always depend on Him, even in the midst of the coronavirus crisis.
- ◆ And please pray we can visit the UK again at the end of the year, and for our future relocation plans.

**Many thanks for all your support in prayer! God bless you! With love in Jesus!**

*Michael, Silvia, Kevin and Christopher Browne*

Your gifts are keeping us afloat! You can share in our ministry to the Tobas by sending gifts via **CMS**, Watlington Road, Oxford, OX4 6BZ (UK), making sure they are clearly marked as "For Michael and Silvia Browne in northern Argentina."

Or online donations can be made directly to us at: [www.paypal.me/michaelbrowne](http://www.paypal.me/michaelbrowne)

## Creation Care

### *A Rocha News*

In the A Rocha worldwide virtual get-together in early June, leading climate scientist and communicator, **Prof. Katherine Hayhoe** spoke at three sessions on the topics of: Talking Climate Change with Christians; Finding Hope; and Dealing with Disagreement. Do watch recordings of these challenging talks at <https://www.arocha.org/en/news/talking-climate-change-with-katharine-hayhoe/>

And please do subscribe to the **A Rocha Field Notes podcasts**, available at <https://www.arocha.org/en/field-notes-podcast/> or from wherever you get your podcasts. New episodes are available every two weeks, the latest (episode 7) has Bob Sluka, A Rocha's lead marine scientist, talking to Bryony Loveless (A Rocha International Policy Researcher) and Peter Harris (Co-founder of A Rocha) on 'Marine Conservation and Mission' (all previous episodes are still available).

A new **Gifts with a Difference** item has been launched: **the Coral Care Package**. The gift will help monitor reefs in Watamu Marine National Park in Kenya. By better understanding the bleaching response of corals, local park managers can be assisted to make appropriate decisions to protect the reefs for the future – vital in this time of climate uncertainty. In order to find out more and to buy the gift go to <https://shop.arocha.org/product/coral-care-package/>

### *Hope in Action*

In the latest (July) newsletter (subscribe at <https://www.hopeinaction.uk/>), read about the UK Churches Relay to COP26 and the St Albans Climate Action Network, among other topics.

### *Christ Church Caring for Creation*

If you read the summary of the June PCC meeting above you will be aware that Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4) has now relaunched under the convenorship of Jane Sellars. Eight of us had our first meeting to discuss ideas on 21<sup>st</sup> June (see the PCC summary) and we plan to have our second meeting on [20<sup>th</sup> July at 8.00pm via Zoom\\* on this occasion](#). We'd like to make these open meetings, going forward, they'll normally be in person, enabling any Christ Church member to attend and chip in with any ideas or opinions of their own for the group to consider, or just to hear the group discuss latest plans and issues.



\* see the [Christ Church e-news-sheet for 16<sup>th</sup> July for the Zoom meeting details](#)

[...or, if you don't receive the news-sheet, contact Jane Sellars direct – her details are in the ChurchSuite Members' Directory.](#)

~~~~~

You may also be interested in a talk about climate change, '**Why should we care?**' given by Prof. Hugh Rollinson, an earth scientist, in January 2019 at the Faraday Institute. He also covers theological arguments about why Christians should care in his talk. The entire video is 58 mins long, the talk lasts just over half an hour (but there are some interesting questions and comments dealt with afterwards): <https://sms.cam.ac.uk/media/2981012>. With thanks to Jeremy, for making this link available.