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Items for >imprint< no. 115: **Mon. 3rd July 2023**, please, by email at editor@ccstalbens.org.uk.

[Peter Young \(Ed.\)](#)

PCC meeting on 15th May 2023

This was the first meeting of the 2023-24 PCC following the APCM, at which four new members were appointed, some others had stood down and others continued to serve. Therefore much of the meeting comprised (re-)orientation regarding PCC responsibilities and (re-)appointments of church officers.

The orientation aspects covered Christ Church's Vision Statement and Core Values in the Welcome Pack distributed to all PCC members and also responsibilities around Safeguarding and the need for relevant training and also Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance for PCC members. In addition, as charity Trustees, all members were required to sign a Trustee Declaration.

The following officers were appointed for the 2023-24 year:

Lay-vice Chair - *Oliver Donald*

PCC Secretary - *Debbie Dorman* (Administrator - non-PCC member)

Minutes Secretary - *Peter Young* (non-PCC member)

Treasurer - *Paul Collis*

Accountant - *Dawn Walker* (for a trial period, non-PCC member)

Standing Committee - *Vicar, Church Wardens, and Beverley Taylor-Doe*

Electoral Roll Officer - *David Boyce* (in addition to his Church Warden role).

The following other appointments, not requiring PCC approval, were also confirmed:

Banking Officers - *Doreen Collins* and *Mary Cottrell*

Global Mission Action Group (GMAG) - *Paul Bailey* as PCC's GMAG rep.

Buildings and Grounds Action Group (BAGAG) - *Jonathan Carter, Chris Patrick, Meriel Dixon* and *Gillian Donald*

Staffing Subcommittee – Vicar, *Jonathan Carter, Sarah Patrick and John Sear*
Assistant Church Wardens (ACWs) – *Paul Bailey, Hilary Boyce, Mary Cottrell, Jim*
and Jackie Kenealy (jointly), *Chris Patrick, Eleanor Truscott*

Stewards – A complete list was sent to PCC members following the meeting for subsequent ratification

Safeguarding Officer – *Kate Kent* has agreed to continue until the end of June, until a replacement(s) can be found

Assistant Safeguarding Recruiter – *Dawn Kennedy*

The PCC reviewed the status of various actions carried over from the previous (2022-23) PCC, some having since been completed, although several are still ongoing.

The current arrangements for the administration of Holy Communion and the sharing of the Peace at our services were reviewed, noting that the option of the combined wafer with wine is currently still available for church members who wish to minimise the risk of infection and is still preferred by a significant proportion of members. However there seems to be much greater intermixing and physical contact among many in the sharing of the Peace lately, which some might not feel too comfortable with. The PCC discussed various options, but the consensus was that the 'safe' communion station should continue for now and that church members need to be alert to the sensibilities of one another, when sharing the Peace.

The finance report for the first quarter of this year was brought to the PCC's notice. Because the potential income from lettings had initially been underestimated, and with the continued assumption that the recruitment of a replacement member of staff will remain on hold, it is possible that the budget may break even this year rather than end up with the predicted deficit.

The topics raised at the APCM during the open forum were reviewed, in order that issues that need to be discussed at forthcoming PCC meetings can be added to appropriate agendas. Subjects suggested included our Mission Statement, work with families and ongoing initiatives such as Monday Suppers, Warm Space and the Hardship Fund.

There was also a request that PCC ratify the Church of England commitment to aim for net zero carbon emissions for our own church by 2030.

It was also noted and agreed that a tree on the church boundary needed removal and another required pollarding as a matter of some urgency in order for one of the neighbours in Green Lane to be able to replace some fencing.

THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION (a brief look into Acts 2 and Ezekiel 37) – *Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi*

A few days ago while meditating on Acts 2:14-41, Simon Peter's long sermon on the day of Pentecost, I was thoroughly amazed. I wouldn't have imagined Peter could pack such a punch of a sermon, so full of theological insights and an informed understanding of Old Testament prophecies. Wasn't Peter an ordinary fisherman who did not have the luxury of studying under an erudite scholar like Gamaliel as Paul did? Remember, this is the same Peter who had denied that he even knew Jesus when accosted some hours before Christ's crucifixion! But now, filled with the Spirit of God, he sees the cross in a completely new light and can understand and explain to the crowd how Christ's horrific death has opened the gate of heaven to all believers! To imagine that this same Peter would stand before thousands of people to declare that

Jesus was the expected Messiah and that the religious leaders had got it all wrong by being complicit in his crucifixion, is beyond my wildest dreams. It's nothing short of God's amazing work. It makes me stand in awe of Him.

In the closing chapters of John's Gospel, Jesus repeatedly promised that when he departed from this world, the Spirit would 'take from what is mine and make it known to you'. That precisely, is what we witness happening here: The Spirit had come with what looked like tongues of fire and enabled Peter to testify to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, whom God has made 'both Lord and Messiah' (Acts 2:36).

Peter, the fisherman, along with his compatriots who were like dead bones in a valley without life, had come alive, reminiscent of Ezekiel's encounter with God at the valley of dry bones - valley of despair, valley of hopelessness, valley of death, you name any dark alley in life, it's included here!

Make no mistake about the people of Israel, at the time of prophet Ezekiel, they were still alive physically, though exiles in Babylon. But when God looked at them, he saw a nation that was spiritually dead - like dry bones without any life in them. Hence, this vision in Ezekiel 37 intimates a promise of restoration, a new life both physically and spiritually to a people in captivity. During this period of turmoil, God took the prophet Ezekiel in a vision to a valley full of dry bones of dead people. "Can these bones live?" God asked. Ezekiel responded, "Lord, you alone know" (Ezekiel 37:3). God then told him to prophesy over the bones so they might live again. "As I was prophesying," Ezekiel recounted, "there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together" (v. 7). Through this vision, God revealed to Ezekiel that Israel's restoration would come and only through Him.

The valley of dry bones is a story of hope. It's a story of promise. It's a story about a people who have a future. It could also be your story

"Son of man, can these bones live?" the Lord asks Ezekiel. I suspect it's a question most of us grapple with. Has our lot become like a valley of dry bones? God's question is not a general question. God does not ask can bones live, but: "Can **these Bones** live?" It is a question directed to a specific situation and person. Can "bones" destroyed by spiritual and moral decay, fear, drugs and disease live again? Can bones being warehoused and wasting away in prisons of the past and unforgiveness, live again? God's question concerns itself with revival and restoration. Can I/we recover from this? And, if so, when and how will that happen? What will the future look like?

Ezekiel responds to God's question, but not with a "yes" or "no".. He just says, "O Lord God, you know." I so appreciate the honesty in Ezekiel's answer. I hear his uncertainty. I sense his feeling of powerlessness. I picture him looking around and shaking his head at the overwhelming enormity of it all. God only knows if these bones can live again. God promises to do something about the **Bones**. 'He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ⁵ This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath^a enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶ I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

God promises life and wholeness, return from exile and homecoming. Throughout those promises God says, "and you will come to life." That is the river of reassurance that flows through the valley of dry bones.

Those promises and reassurances are the path we must walk in this valley. That

rattling sound of bone to bone is like faith, hope, and love. It sounds like courage and a refusal to be ruled by fear. It sounds like patience, gentleness, and compassion for others and ourselves. It sounds like an openness to the future. It sounds like life, and life abundant (John 10:10).

You see, no matter how bad Israel's condition was in this valley, they were still God's people. And God is the God of hope. God called Ezekiel to prophesy to the Bones and God did the rest. The Word of God expresses God's will for humanity. Our God is the God of hope! The Lord cannot bring us up out of any valley, if we are not willing to let go of those things that put us in the valley in the first place. But when the Lord breathes on us, a **great transformation** takes place in our heart. He takes out that stony heart, and gives us a new heart that is receptive to His will, and the "dry bones" are able to get up and live. When we feel as if things in life have been broken and are beyond repair, God assures us He can rebuild the shattered pieces. He'll give us new breath and new life.

Coming back to Simon Peter's delivery at his first open-air sermon in Acts. 2, I am sure he felt good about himself and the **GREAT TRANSFORMATION** that had taken place in him. Peter the Reed now displaying the qualities of a Rock.

Acts 2 describes an "experience of the Spirit who descends upon men and women, permeates them through and through, soul and body", so that they "discover that they are filled with new energies they had never imagined to exist" (Jurgen Moltmann). Will you speak God's will and Word to your situation? Will you let go of those things that put you in the valley the first place and cooperate fully with God? Will you like Peter, become so transformed that a crowd of thousands would not intimidate or prevent him from speaking and identifying with the Lord Jesus? Peter and the other disciples in the early church were like dried bones in a valley but when God spoke to these bones through His Holy Spirit, there was a GREAT TRANSFORMATION as seen in Peter's great speech and the conversion of 3000 people. Remember, the first human was a lump of clay until God's Spirit entered into it and it became a living soul.

Will you in humility allow the Spirit of God to fill your heart and take over your life and bring newness and life in every area? Can "these bones live?" "Yes, Lord, if you say so".

The Story of the Crown of Life School, Zambia and Christ Church, St Albans - *Susie Ryan*

A story to remind us of God's faithfulness and goodness.

Ask a Zambian child what they want and they will tell you 'I want to go to school'. Education is the single most powerful tool to bring hope to the next generation. Over half a million children in Zambia are not in school. Many church schools have been established for those who would otherwise be unable to obtain an education.

When Dorothy Nsuumu started Crown of Life School in 2001 in a local community hall with just 15 pupils, she couldn't have imagined how the school would grow to over 600 pupils from nursery class up to Grade 12 on a new site.



The community hall where the school first started to meet with 15 pupils.



The plot of land purchased as a gift by Christ Church for the Crown of Life School

When Mission Direct first met Dorothy in 2009, there were 300 children at the school, meeting in a cramped church hall. With substantial funding from Christ Church in St Albans, as well as the help of a large number of Christ Church volunteers a new primary school was built between 2010 and 2012 on a green field site on the edge of Lusaka. Since then, the school has added more classrooms funded by Mission Direct volunteers, allowing the school to expand to include secondary grades from 8 to 12.



In 2022, the school opened a Science Laboratory funded by Christ Church.

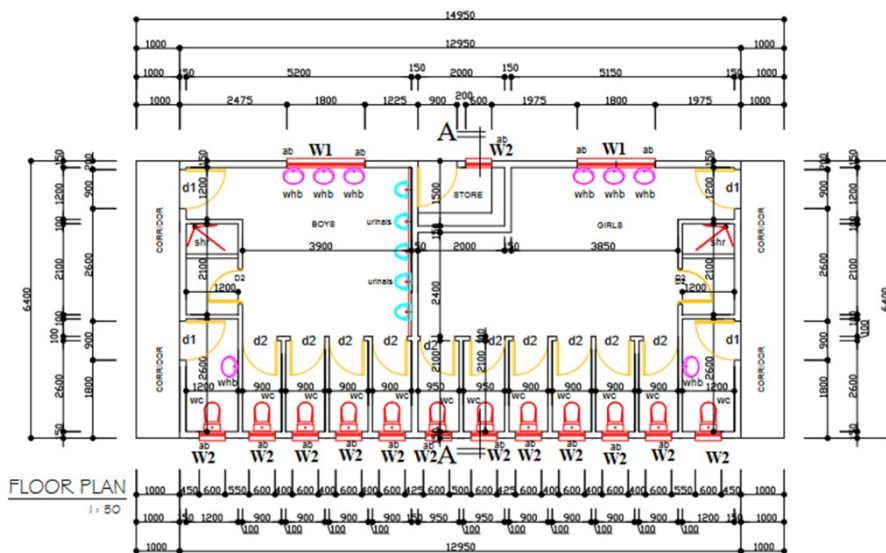


Crown of Life School serves the nearby shanty compound of Ngombe and the surrounding rural communities, which are being overtaken by the outward growth of Lusaka. The school has an excellent academic record, with most pupils passing their grade 7 examinations (end of primary school) in recent years. School fees are about £7 a month for primary grades and £10 for secondary, but many parents cannot afford to pay. In fact, about a third of the pupils

attending the school do not pay fees and many pupils are supported through sponsorship schemes.

In 2023, Mission Direct plans to build a second toilet block at the school, to provide better facilities for the increased number of pupils. The estimated cost is £15,000 of which just over half has been raised.

Susie and Shannon are going from Christ Church as part of a small group of volunteers for 2 weeks in July to 'help' with the toilet block building project. We will also be spending time with local partners who work amongst local disadvantaged and marginalised children and young people to share our love and concern and to listen and learn.



The hard part – Fundraising

An essential part of each volunteer’s journey is fundraising towards the cost of the building materials needed for their build. We have been told that we need to raise money for the following:

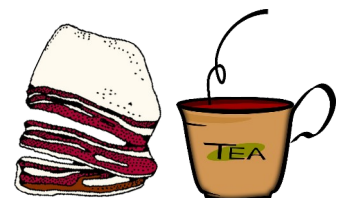
- 80 roofing sheets that cost £10 each.
- 100 bags of cement that cost £8 each.
- and 4000 bricks that cost 30p each.

Some money has been raised but as of today the total of £15,000 has only been half reached so we are on a final push to raise some more before we go in 3 weeks’ time – gulp.

We would love it if you felt able to support the project with any amount. We have three Fundraisers as well as the Mission Direct Just Giving page.



On Saturday 17th June, the day after Shan finishes her GCSE’s, we will be in the Christ Church car park from 8am until 11am, ready and



willing to wash your cars and serve hot bacon butties with a cup of tea.

We will welcome any financial contribution towards the cost of building the Crown of Life toilet block.



And on a more personal challenge, Shan is available after her exams to clean people’s toilets for £10 a toilet. Each toilet cleaned will fund a roofing sheet for our project. If she can clean 10 toilets, she will raise £100. If you would

like your toilet (s) cleaned, please call or text Susie on 07970 834227.

While Susie has set herself the challenge of walking and running (ha ha - she does not run) including climbing to the highest point in Hertfordshire, 15 miles in one day, because that is further than what she would normally consider doable. The bigger challenge being what 'free' time she has between now and flying to Zambia on 1st July.



Ultimately any donation, for any amount, for any reason, will make a difference and secure the building of this much needed toilet block. Thank you in advance for your support.

Susie and Shan x

The JustGiving page is at:

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

Sermons at Christ Church in June and July

(as known at present):

	Galatians	CC Families topics
04 June	Faith and the Law (Galatians 3:15-25)	Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:40-42, 49-56)
11 June	We are all true sons of the promise (Galatians 3:26-4:7)	Woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)
18 June	Fathers' Day - Intergenerational service	
25 June	Getting the Gospel right (Galatians 4:8-20)	Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42)
02 July	Freedom, not slavery (Galatians 4:21-31; 5:1-15)	Rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-30)
09 July	Life in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-24)	Woman with issue of blood (Luke 8:42b-48)
16 July	Intergenerational service: Nameless bystanders? Luke 7:1-10 (centurion); Luke 23:44-49 (centurion at the cross); John 19:38-42 (Nicodemus & Joseph)	
23 July	Doing good (Galatians 6:1-18)	

Caring for Creation

Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4) activities

Christ Church Caring for Creation At the C4 meeting at 8.00pm on Monday 22nd May, Felicity's sister, Dr Avice Hall gave a talk on how to set up a 5-year church grounds plan. This was a face-to-face meeting, held in the Church Hall and, as an open meeting, was attended by members of C4, BAGAG and others.



The next meeting is scheduled to be held on 19th June. More information will be available shortly.

A Rocha Blog

There has been one further blog posted since the last *>imprint<*, no.113, in the form of a video with accompanying poem by A Rocha USA intern Michaela Stenerson, with written and spoken poetry by Allison Cutting. It is entitled 'Wind Watchers: A Reflection

on Horseshoe Crabs in the Indian River Lagoon'. As the title indicates, it is about the Atlantic Horseshoe Crab, a unique species populating the entire east coast of the USA, which since 2016 has been designated as a vulnerable species by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). A Rocha USA is working towards the protection of these crabs and is studying their spawning behaviours in Florida's Indian River Lagoon, one of the largest estuaries in the United States. Go to <https://blog.arocha.org/en/wind-watchers/> to read watch/read this blog.

Field Notes Podcasts

There has also been one further podcast since the last *>imprint<*:

Episode 31: featuring Brazilian-born **Gustavo H. R. Santos** who serves as a Co-Chair of the A Rocha Worldwide Family Strategic Direction Working Group and as Content Developer for the shortly to be launched [Conservation Certificate](#). In this interview, entitled 'Redefining success and introducing the A Rocha Conservation Certificate', Gustavo shares insights on what living out his Christian faith looks like and how that helps him redefine success. He describes a different way— the *A Rocha* way, which involves working with vulnerable places and communities, committing to deeper relationships, and learning that contentment is one of the fruits of wisdom.

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

Plastic free swaps – Susie Ryan

The #C4 Life Hack in the newsheet for the last two weeks has highlighted the need for us to change habits and reduce waste. It set everyone the challenge to commit to make 3 permanent plastic free swaps this month.



Someone recently asked me what a plastic free swap was, so I thought it might be helpful to write about it here in case there were others wondering, and give a bit of background as to why it is essential we change our habits and reduce our waste.

SO what is a single use plastic? Typically, plastics used for packaging such as bottles, straws, cutlery and bags.

Why are they bad? They are an example of the throwaway culture. The world produces 300 million tons of plastic each year, half of which is for single use items. 2 billion people in the world have no safe way to dispose of rubbish and it is people in poverty who are suffering the worst impact of the rubbish problem. Left alone plastics don't really break down, they break up, into smaller and smaller pieces known as microplastics. They end up in water and eaten by wildlife and into our bodies.

Reducing plastic use is the most effective means of avoiding this waste.

What swaps can we make? Reusable bags are a great way to avoid single use plastics; use a reusable straw, a reusable water bottle and coffee cup, change to a refillable washing up liquid, use a soap bar not a shower gel or a shampoo bar and not shampoo from a bottle...

Today The Ryans took delivery of our first box of free from bleach, harsh chemicals and plastic toilet paper – I will post a review on the C4 notice board. Please add your plastic free swaps to the notice board too to encourage others. Thank you.