

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. 126: **Mon. 29th July 2024**, please, by email at
editor@ccstalbans.org.uk. *Peter Young (Ed.)*

20th May 2024 PCC meeting

This was the first meeting of the PCC, including some new members, following the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in April. As such the purpose and responsibilities of the PCC were outlined for the benefit of the new members and as reminders for those continuing. The PCC members are Trustees of Christ Church and are required to complete eligibility criteria for registration with the Charities Commission and also appropriate Safeguarding training as specified on the Church of England safeguarding portal.

The following appointments of church officers within the PCC were made:

Lay vice-chair – **Jonathan Carter**

Secretary to the PCC – **Debbie Dorman**

Minutes secretary – role to be undertaken by PCC members on a rota basis

Treasurer – **Sarah Patrick**

Accountant – **Dawn Walker**

Electoral Roll Officer – **David Boyce**

The following additional responsibilities/memberships were also confirmed:

Standing Committee – **Vicar, Church Wardens** (Malcolm Blaxland and David Boyce),
PCC lay vice-chair (Jonathan Carter, ratified post-meeting) and **Hilary Boyce**.

Banking Officers – **Doreen Collins** and **Mary Townsend**

Global Mission Action Group (GMAG) representative – **Jackie Kenealy**

Staffing committee – **Vicar, Sarah Patrick, Jonathan Carter, John Sear**

Building and Grounds Action Group (BAGAG) – Gillian Donald, Jonathan Carter, Malcolm Blaxland, Meriel Dixon, Chris Patrick

Parish Safeguarding Officer – Dawn Kennedy

Assistant Safeguarding Recruiter – Kate Kent

It was agreed to ratify the Assistant Church Wardens and Stewards appointments at the June meeting.

As a response to correspondence received regarding what the plans were to mark Sara Head's move to curacy in a new parish following her ordination, it was agreed to hold a leaving lunch on 16th June and to provide a gift from the PCC to supplement the gifts collected from the church membership.

The PCC reviewed the topics raised by church members at the APCM. This included clarification of the financing of **Monday Suppers** and recognition of work done by Debbie Dorman and Dawn Walker for a recent successful grant application to Verulam House Fund Trust. Other major areas identified for future church forum discussion would include the roof, staffing, worship leadership and evangelism.

The active engagement with aspects of the church's **Mission Action Plan (MAP)** was highlighted for the recently newly appointed PCC members and all members were asked to commit (or recommit) to at least one of the three areas of involvement identified in the MAP working document.

The PCC learnt that at that point there had been 2 applicants for the long-vacant post of **Communications Officer**. [Post-meeting it has since been confirmed that Damian Gaskin has been appointed to this role and will start in September.]

As of the May meeting, two church meetings had been held to update the church membership on the latest thinking on the **Roof replacement project**. About forty church members in total had attended these. The possibility of holding a third meeting on a Sunday was mooted and also the making of display materials available for feedback via the dedicated email address. There was also some discussion on the need for fundraising and how best to go about this, using resources and fundraising advice/meetings that are available to assist churches.

A number of items were raised as Any Other Business, including a request to include a summary of safeguarding activities in future APCM documentation and the need to hire a commercial shredder to reduce the pile of thick cut down branches, near the compost area, to make them suitable for composting [post-meeting: now done].

HOW CAN GOD DO THAT!? -- *Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi*

Recently I read again the account of Manasseh, one of the longest reigning kings in Judah. If you were to compare Hitler's sins with Manasseh's, Hitler would be described as a saint. It makes me ask the question, "are there people in today's world that are beyond the grasp of Almighty God"? Before we come to any conclusion, it's instructive to x-ray the life and times of King Manasseh of Judah, from 2 Chronicles 33 and 2 Kings 23.

Manasseh was a king who was remarkable in many respects. For one thing, he was the king who reigned the longest of all the kings of Judah. The Bible says that he began to reign as king from the age of twelve; and reigned for a total of fifty-five years. However, he was also the king who stood out among all the other kings of Judah as the most wicked of them all.

Judging by his upbringing, no one would have ever expected him to become the wicked and godless man he grew up to be. You see; Manasseh was the son of no one less than the great king Hezekiah—one of the godliest of the kings of Judah!

Do you remember how there was a time when his father King Hezekiah was told by the prophet Isaiah, “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live” (Isaiah 38:1)? King Hezekiah wept at this news and prayed; one reason was because he had no son to be his heir to the throne. God heard him and sent Isaiah back to him to say, “I have heard your prayer...I will add to your days fifteen years” (Isaiah 38: 5). It was during these 15 years that he gave birth to Manasseh.

Historians tell us that Manasseh reigned with his godly father for at least ten years, as co-regent, before Hezekiah died. He would have told Manasseh how he restored the people to a faithful worship of God, the great deliverance from his formidable adversary and how God sent an angel in the middle of the night to slay 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in the defence of God’s people...

But what did Manasseh do when he ascended the throne? He built up what his father had torn down and set up idols right in the temple of God. He was so brazen to dare the living God and insult Him to his face. The *Talmud* (central text of Rabbinic Judaism) says that Isaiah suffered martyrdom by being sawn in two under the orders of Manasseh. He practised divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord arousing His anger. He did not only sin, he led others to sin (2Kings 21:1-11). There are those today, who are active in their fight against God. Not content to go to hell alone, they would drag others with them - like teachers who seek to deliberately destroy a child's faith.

Manasseh was very proud and behaved as though God was beneath him. **One would wish that such a person would face the wrath of God without any mercy. But how wrong can we be in our estimate of the depth, width and length of God’s grace and mercy!**

Through the prophets, God warned Manasseh that He would allow their enemies to overrun their land as he did to the Northern kingdom. But Manasseh and the people wouldn’t listen to the prophets that God was sending to them. Finally, the time came; and in 2 Chronicles 33:11, we read; **“Therefore the LORD brought upon them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. He was really humiliated and humbled!**

Ancient artwork has shown that, that was how the king of Assyria would often humiliate the kings he captured. He would put a hook through their lips or noses; and pull them around on a leash like a dog.

One would wish this was a good lesson to all of us and that Manasseh would pine away in prison a dejected man. But the story did not end that way. The Bible goes on to tell us; **In his distress Manasseh sought the favour of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God. (v.13).**

HOW CAN GOD DO THAT? In my finite mind, I would have allowed Manasseh to wallow in his dirty cell and throw away the key! But, I am not God. His ways are past finding out and his compassion knows no limits.

How long it was that he suffered in captivity is something we’re not told. But however long it took, his rebellious heart was finally broken. He had sinned greatly against God; but

now, we're told that he humbled himself greatly before the God of mercy. And, as the Bible goes on to tell us, God heard his cry (v.13). Wow!

He had been a remarkable sinner. But he underwent a remarkable humbling before God. And as a result, he experienced a remarkable deliverance. He was once again brought back to his land and back on the throne. **Awesome God and His amazing grace.** It may be that he always bore an ugly piercing on the outside where a hook had once been; but he was a changed man on the inside from that day forward. The Bible goes on to tell us; *After this he built a wall outside the City of David... He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem; and he cast them out of the city. He also repaired the altar of the LORD, sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel... (vv. 14-17).*

GOD HEARS THE REPENTANT CRY OF EVEN THE WORST REBELS (vv. 12-17). No one need ever fear that their sins are so grievous that, God would not forgive them if they repent. If God could have mercy on someone like Manasseh, He'd have mercy on anyone! Grace is the unmerited favour and blessing of God. It is God giving to us things that we, as sinners, could never earn. **Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense that results in forgiveness, acceptance, peace and eternal life. Have you come to Jesus as you are in penitence so He can transform your life to what you ought to be?**

Why I love Barnabas! -- *Jonathan Carter*

For our Connect Group feature this month, Jonathan Carter explains why Barnabas, the disciple of encouragement, means so much to him.

Barnabas is our Connect Group. We have been meeting for quite a few years in one guise or another and have become firm friends. We meet on alternate Wednesday evenings in the homes of those willing or able to host and provide the necessary cups of tea, coffee and cake or biscuits. We don't have a leader as such although John and Eleanor take on the role of administrators (excellently I might add).

Various members of the group take it in turns to lead a session and we usually start with a bit of chit chat, an ice-breaker to set the scene (can get a bit boisterous!) followed by a Bible study usually based on a recent Sunday sermon and then a time of sharing and praying for each other's needs.

What I really value about the group is that we have come to know each other really well and feel at home sharing and praying together about all sorts of things concerning our lives in a way that isn't possible on a Sunday morning. We also pray for Christ Church and the wider Anglican church and for current affairs too.

We have recently had a couple of new members join us which has added to the dynamic of the group in a positive way after a short period of 'settling in'.

We don't always agree on everything and our discussions can be quite deep on occasion and sometimes go off script although we usually end up roughly where we ought to be. They are however challenging and stretch us to apply God's word to our daily lives. We are not judgmental with each other and this allows a free exchange of views, ideas and opinions. There is always a good measure of humour and laughter.

We try to meet together on a couple of occasions each year where we enjoy a bring-and-share dinner which adds to our fellowship and never disappoints either in quantity or quality.

Finally, I know that if a need is identified within the group then it will be covered in prayer both in the meeting and during the week which is very encouraging and as many of us are the wrong side of 60 health issues crop up regularly. We also help each other in practical ways too when the need arises.

So if you are contemplating joining a Connect Group then please don't hesitate. You won't regret it.

Jonathan

Jonathan Carter

If you are not already a member of a Christ Church Connect Group and would like to join one, have a word with John Truscott, the Connect Groups Co-ordinator. We are hoping to start a new group this autumn.

Saturday Pickers first birthday celebrations

On 15th June, Saturday Pickers celebrated its first birthday. Inspired by the concerns of his 7 year-old daughter, Christ Church member Damian Gaskin and Grace initially started doing a weekly litter picking walk. This has since grown into the Saturday Pickers' New Greens chapter and every Saturday, at 8 am, up to 27 volunteers go out and scour and clean up our neighbourhood. This in turn, due to visibility and its social media presence has influenced the local Council, and Veolia its waste contractor, to remedy some of the failing local infrastructure, like replacing dilapidated litter bins and filling a deep hole in the pavement outside the shops. It has also almost certainly had a positive impact of awareness on the local community, hopefully inspiring a more caring attitude.

So, after the pick on 15th June, the team celebrated their first birthday with breakfast at the church, followed by fun and games and refreshments outside the High Oaks shops across the road.

A new chapter (in both senses) has started for Saturday Pickers with the set-up of a Ladies Grove and Oyster Fields group at the end of June.

If you would like to join Saturday Pickers, Damian would love to hear from you. Please contact him at damiangaskin@me.com



Caring for Creation

Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4) June meeting

C4's latest meeting was on Monday 17th June. C4 watched the eleventh [Lausanne Classroom Creation Care video: 'Creation Care Wherever You Are'](#) in the regular agenda item around theology of the topic. This, the penultimate video in the series, features Ed Brown firstly challenging church leaders to recognise and engage with creation care as an integral element of our faith and witness; Dave Bookless encouraging us not to get overwhelmed by the scale of the issues, but even if we can just do one thing, it should primarily be to pray; Ruth Valerio recognising that the issues are immense, but saying we should all be acting together, following Jesus as our Lord every day of the week in whatever we do; and Peter Harris expanding that idea that we don't all have to become

wildlife biologists in order to strive not to leave our world depleted.

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

At the June meeting participants then had further discussions on the Creationtide events, including the 8th September special focus service and a community event on Sunday 22nd September, as part of which it is planned to host a picnic after the service and run various activities such as tree identification, bug hotel building and a scavenger hunt. The possibility of conducting a summer bird watch was also covered. There was also discussion on the agenda for a suggested meeting between C4 representatives and BAGAG and what might be covered, namely our Net Zero carbon route map, C4 feedback on roof and renovation proposals and an update on creating a five year plan for our grounds.

Remember, any church member would 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 has been one further blog posted since the last [>imprint<](#), no.124. On 4th June a blog was posted, entitled '[Praying for Bees](#)' by [Annemarthe Westerbeek](#), Director of A Rocha Netherlands, on her response to the discovery of a nest of bees in the wall of her church in Utrecht on a warm summer day's time of fellowship. She says she prayed with thanks for this non-human life sharing their space and a week later there was a massive swarm outside following a new queen.

Click the link above or go to <https://blog.arocha.org/> to read the A Rocha blogs.

Field Notes Podcasts

There has also been one further podcast to date since the last [>imprint<](#).

Episode 42, posted on 4th June, features [Cristina Jakob](#) co-founder of *Fundación Retoño* (roughly translated as 'sprout/shoot foundation') in Chile, encouraging people to reconnect with nature and its Creator. The foundation has three main threads: hospitality, environmental education and conservation. In this podcast she is in conversation with Rick Faw and Jo Swinney on the topic '[When loving nature becomes a life](#)' in which she describes what the foundation does, its members/supporters, its ethos and the impact it is having in Chile and also their future aims.

To listen to Field Notes Podcasts go to <https://arocha.org/en/field-notes-podcast/> or from wherever you get your podcasts.

News from Green Christian St Albans (GCSA) -- (formerly Hope in Action)

The latest (June) GCSA newsletter is now in their archive. It primarily follows up the array of events that occurred in June, promoted in the May newsletter and publicised in [>imprint<](#) no.124. To read it go to

<https://us4.campaign-archive.com/?u=38128d83eaf82d7f9b5ef6e87&id=d5358013a9>

To access all the back-issues go to <https://us4.campaign-archive.com/home/?id=04f756a054&u=38128d83eaf82d7f9b5ef6e87>