

An all age community ... on a shared journey of faith ... making the edge the centre

Registered Charity 1132925

## Welcome to the 100<sup>th</sup> Edition of >imprint<

The first edition of >imprint< was published in November 2011. It replaced 'What's up Doc?' (WUD) which I edited from May 2009 to October 2011 (no.s 62-89), with a new name and using the new church logo, but with similar content. It was envisaged to fill the need for items to inform and stimulate discussion among our readers, using items with more depth than was possible with the weekly news-sheet, and also as a vehicle for the church to become aware of what happens at PCC meetings, and enable GMAG to share news from our mission partners more widely.

Many thanks to all the people who have contributed over the years, without whom this publication would not have been possible. Some are no longer with us, although a number of other church members have stepped in to become regular contributors. But there is always room for more, whether on a regular or occasional basis, so do let me know if you're interested, at [editor@ccstalbens.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbens.org.uk). *Peter Young (Ed.)*

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Items for >imprint< no. 101: **Mon. 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022**, please, by email at [editor@ccstalbens.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbens.org.uk). *Peter Young (Ed.)*

### PCC meeting 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022

#### **Building and Grounds Action Group (BAGAG).**

The PCC considered a number of reports emanating from BAGAG. The minutes of the BAGAG meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021 were reviewed and received. A new revision of the Health and Safety Policy, not updated since the 2017 version, was reviewed. It updated responsibilities that were out of date and no longer applicable, but content was largely unchanged from the previous version. However there were a number of statements/requirements for which current compliance requires checking. The PCC approved the revised policy unanimously. There was a proposal to replace the current photocopier for a more reliable and eco-friendly model and the PCC approved the quotation for a 5-year lease on an ex-showroom model from a different company, with costs very similar to those for the current machine. A proposed revision to the hire

rates for organisations using our church premises was also considered. The new rates include some price increases as a result of the need for additional cleaning, an energy supplement in anticipation of increased costs, and a 5 percent supplement covering inflation. The PCC approved these revised hire charges.

### ***New Bank Account***

We now have a new bank account with Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) because of difficulties experienced getting new authorised account signatories with Barclays, our existing bank. For the moment the CAF and Barclays accounts are running concurrently, Barclays for income and CAF for outgoings, although the longer term plan is hopefully for migration completely to CAF within the next 2 years. Currently this involves periodically transferring funds from the Barclays to the CAF accounts, but in time it is hoped that people donating to the church via the Barclays account at present will be able to switch, and Paul Collis, our Treasurer, will provide the new details and any advice/assistance required to accomplish this transfer.

### ***New Stewards***

The PCC were pleased to approve the appointment of 3 new Sidesmen and welcome 2 new Greeters to the list of Stewards, noting that 6 of the existing Stewards were standing down.

### ***Working Party for the Church Roof replacement***

The issue of the leaking church roof (on the original building) had been a problem almost since it was first built due to the design (flat roof with different levels and parapets) and a lot of money had been spent on repairs which were never a permanent solution. Some time ago we obtained designs and likely costs to completely replace the roof, but the costs were prohibitive and also showed the PCC that it wasn't clear what it was desirable to achieve. After a period of reflection, while the project has been on hold, Jeremy now proposed setting up a small Working Party (representative of the church, but including some with relevant expertise) to consider all the options, define what we want from the building (which might also be affected internally by any new roof design), produce the design, or get it designed and put the work out to tender. Some church members had already been approached and the PCC suggested some others for consideration. These others will be considered by Standing Committee as to who should be approached to join.

### ***One-off/spontaneous donations, mainly from outside the church***

There had been occasions, including recently, when non-church members had asked to donate either to our church or to a disaster relief charity via the church as an appreciation for events/services they had attended at Christ Church. This had posed difficulty for those receiving the enquiry, since we do not encourage donations for our own use from outside our membership and we do not have a designated charity to divert donations to. After considering this issue the PCC considered that we should divert any such donations to a relevant disaster relief fund which will be decided by Global Mission Action Group (GMAG), but were not in favour of having collection boxes left out on a long-term basis, for security reasons.

**Next PCC meeting:** Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022

## THE SAD END OF A GOOD KING – *Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi*

Many of us would not think much of Uzziah, one of the kings of Judah if not for Isaiah 6:1 where the commissioning of Isaiah was opened with the words: *“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne...”* When Isaiah wrote, that he was called in the year King Uzziah died, he said a lot. It is to say, “In the year a great and wise king died.” But it is also to say, “In the year a great and wise king, who had a tragic end, died.” Isaiah had great reason to be discouraged and disillusioned at the death of King Uzziah, because a great king had passed away, and because his life ended tragically. Yet despite it all, he saw the enthroned LORD God who was greater than any earthly king, whose kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting.

King Uzziah, meaning “my strength is God”, also referred to as Azariah in 2 Kings 15, was one of the good kings of Judah. In many ways he honoured God and he had a lot of success and power. Yet even good kings have their problems, and Uzziah didn’t end well. He died a leper – because he could not handle his success and power. 2 Kings 15:5 tells us that he fell from grace to grass. However, it is in 2 Chronicles 26 that we have the full gist of his life.

According to 2 Chronicles 26, He began his reign when he was only 16 years old (v.3), by the direct choice of the people. He reigned during the ministry of Zechariah the prophet (26:5), who instructed him in the fear and ways of God and as long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success. He defeated the Philistines and took many of their cities, and also kept the Ammonites in tribute (26:6-8). He was internationally famous as a strong king (26:8). He was an ambitious builder and skilled in agriculture (26:9-10)."

Everything seemed to go his way. But then, the strength and success went to his head. Arrogant and proud, he fell. One day, contemptuous of God, he walked into the Temple of God like he owned it and took over, burning incense on the Incense Altar.” (verses 15 and 16 The Message). The priests tried to stop him, but the King insisted on forcing his way into the temple to offer incense.

The priest Azariah, backed up by eighty brave priests of God confronted king Uzziah: *“You must not, you cannot do this—only the Aaronite priests, especially consecrated for the work, are permitted to burn incense. Get out of God's Temple; you are unfaithful and a disgrace!”* But Uzziah, censer in hand, was already in the middle of doing it and angrily rebuffed the priests. (vv. 17-18 The Message). Uzziah violated what had become a general principle in God’s dealing with Israel: that no king should at the same time be a priest. The offices of prophet, priest, and king should not be combined in one man – UNTIL the Messiah, Jesus the LORD, who fulfilled all three offices.

Uzziah’s problem was that he was not content with the authority God had given him and wanted to add priestly functions to his royal power. **Absolute power, however, has no place in God’s kingdom.**

“Despite the seriousness of what Uzziah had done, God still did not act until Uzziah became angry.” Angry. Mad. It was like he was thinking in his mind, “don’t you know who I am? You’re telling me to go out? How dare you reprove me! Don’t you know I am the king with powers? And you’re humiliating me before everyone and trying to prevent me from doing this. My fame has spread to Egypt. How dare you rebuke me! **Uzziah’s estimation of himself was this: “I’m above the law, rebuke or criticism.”**

Uzziah came into the temple as an arrogant king, and he left as a humiliated leper. Death was the actual penalty enjoined by the law for his crime (Numbers 18:7), and leprosy was really that—a living death, prolonged and intensified." "The leprosy broke out on his forehead so he could not hide his shame; though it is probable it was also in the rest of his body.

Many Christians, church leaders and churches start out humbly, relying upon the Lord, but they grow, their fame spreads, they acquire wealth and pride creeps in then they collapse. Uzziah is just one case of a warning in the Bible. His earlier life was one of a prayerful leader who was helped by God. And it ended with him being an excluded leper. That happens all the time. And if you say, "that will never happen to me", consider the experience of Peter. He proudly boasted that he would never deny the Lord Jesus. But he did, thrice. **Let anyone who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.**

Pride grows. It spreads like gangrene. It catches you off guard. It doesn't happen all of a sudden. There is usually a progression. A high view of yourself which increases and changes, so often, with the more victories and success you have.

This is a warning for us. We see a man who sought the Lord, and God made him prosper as king. And then we see his life end as an excluded leper. Fame, celebrity status, are fertile grounds for the seeds of pride to grow rapidly upon. The humble man looks for authority and wants to get under it, but the proud man has trouble with authority, especially biblical authority. Proverbs 29:23 says: "One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit, will obtain honour." Uzziah's pride brought him low. Due to his leprosy, he lived the rest of his life in quarantine; he was not permitted to set foot in The Temple of God again. How tragic?

## **Open Doors World Watch List Launch to Parliament (online) – 19 January 2022 – Paul Bailey**

For the past 20 years **North Korea** has been the worst place in the world to live in terms of religious persecution. If the authorities discover that someone is a Christian they may be sent to a labour camp (where they are often worked to death) or executed. There has been an increase in surveillance, anti-religion legislation, arrests, violence and closure of house churches. Yet, they are no longer in the ignominious position at the top of the **World Watch List**. Since the Taliban took over **Afghanistan**, persecution already at a high level, has only got worse. Christians are being hunted down systematically and if discovered, men are executed whilst women and girls face enslavement or imprisonment and a lifetime of abuse. Afghanistan is now the most dangerous and deadly place to be a Christian.

See a copy of the report including the list of 50 countries and a more detailed explanation of the current situation around the world at <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/>

Open Doors' extensive and thorough research shows that as many as **360 million** Christians across 76 countries face high or extreme levels of persecution and discrimination – up from 340 million last year. Much of this increase may be due to Islamist extremists being emboldened by the withdrawal of international protection of human rights leading to the take-over of Afghanistan. Certainly jihadist violence against Christians has increased in west **Africa**, the **Middle East** and countries such as **Indonesia**. Christians killed for their faith last year totalled **5,898**, 79% of whom were

in **Nigeria**, 11% in **Pakistan**.

Despite the horror for many Christians living under nationalistic or religious extremism or communist oppression, there are **reasons for hope**. A number of NGOs including Open Doors bring their professionalism and expertise to support the persecuted church around the world. Open Doors has branches in 23 countries and serves people in over 60 countries. The dedication and love of those who serve is immense, but perhaps the most **remarkable stories** come from those who show faith and resilience in the most traumatic and tragic circumstances.

In North Korea, **Bae** (not her real name) and her husband were sent to a remote village, sentenced to a lifetime of back-breaking hard labour just for owning a Bible. Always on the brink of starvation she forages in the forest to try to stem her hunger. She once **escaped** and crossed the border into China where Open Doors **fieldworkers** linked up with her, taking her to a safe house. She enjoyed the freedom of being able to talk and worship aloud, as well as being given food, medicine and a Bible. **Amazingly she chose not stay** but return to N Korea where she could share what she had been given with her 'underground' church.

In a letter she wrote to Open Doors she says, "Whenever I open my eyes in the morning, **I feel the presence of our Father**" and "From the perspective of other people, our suffering must seem like a cursed life; however, **this suffering is a blessing from our Father** who allowed it in our life because it is **a shortcut to the Father.**" An astounding example of faith and of the effectiveness and bravery of support workers who also risk a great deal doing God's work. For a fuller version of her story and other accounts of fellow Christian's thriving despite their circumstances see:

<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/resources/magazine/>

Many of us wrote Christmas cards in church in November sending seasons greetings to our local MPs and inviting them to attend the WWL launch. Whilst over 130 Parliamentarians had agreed to attend, in the end there were 93 who attended the online event. Sadly, neither Bim Afolami nor Daisy Cooper attended the event but lobbying them is a long term undertaking and I would ask for **continued prayers** for their participation in the future in FoRB issues, which I will inform them of through the coming year.

Also, please **give thanks to God** that:

- There has been significant progress in the main purpose of the WWL reports over the years, namely to **raise the profile of religious persecution** and to lobby the Government to use its diplomatic and trade powers to protect Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) around the world.
- Due to the work of Open Doors and some very committed MPs, the **largest APPG** (All-Party Parliamentary Group) in Westminster is the Freedom of Religion or Belief one.
- The UK Government are hosting 33 other countries at the **International Ministerial for FoRB** in July
- The persecution of Christians around the world is firmly **on the political and media agenda**

## *Plus, some statistics from a message received from Open Doors on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec:*

“Thank you!

“We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.”

1 Thessalonians 1:2

“You have been super supporters this year!

“We hope that you have had a wonderful Christmas celebrating the wonder of Jesus being born to us. In the spirit of gratitude, we want to say thank you to every one of you! The Open Doors Advocacy team just would not be as effective without your activism and engagement, and we are so grateful.

“This year we saw:

- ◆ 6801 people invited their MP to the 2021 World Watch List launch, and over 100 MPs attended
- ◆ 2266 people sent the World Watch List report to their MP following the launch
- ◆ 3660 people wrote to their MP about the specific vulnerabilities of our persecuted sisters and over 10,000 people watched the Facebook Live interviews with five MPs. This led to multiple meetings with MPs in Parliament!
- ◆ 9790 actions were taken in the summer to ask the UK Government to take action on the plight of persecuted Christians in India. This has opened up opportunities for Open Doors to speak into UK trade deals with India as well as UN engagement.

“Thank you for your persistent activism. It makes such a big difference to the impact we can have in ensuring our persecuted family is heard by those in power.

“We look forward to another year of partnering together with the persecuted church to make a difference!”

## **Sermons at Christ Church**

At the time of preparation of this edition of *>imprint<* there are still 2 sermons to come in the series on Giving. As ever, audio recordings of the sermons and bible readings are available on the Christ Church website to enable you to catch up or re-listen to any in the series: [ccstalbans.org.uk](http://ccstalbans.org.uk), select ‘**MEDIA**’ from the drop-down menu bar and click ‘**Sermons**’. Alternatively you can go back through previous YouTube recordings, where you will find them in complete church services, but you’d need to know the date of the sermon you want.

A new series on Elijah from passages in the first book of Kings will be starting in February and running through March. The list of sermons follows, but without dates as several require confirmation (hopefully further information to follow):

<i>Fed by ravens</i>	<i>1 Kings 17:1-6</i>
<i>The widow’s son</i>	<i>1 Kings 17:17-24</i>
<i>National Affairs</i>	<i>1 Kings 18:1-15</i>
<i>Elijah was afraid</i>	<i>1 Kings 19:1-9</i>
<i>Still, small voice</i>	<i>1 Kings 19:10-18</i>
<i>Prophets of Baal</i>	<i>1 Kings 18:16-46</i>

After Easter it is hoped to start a new series going through the first letter of John, about which more anon.

## Caring for Creation

### RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch

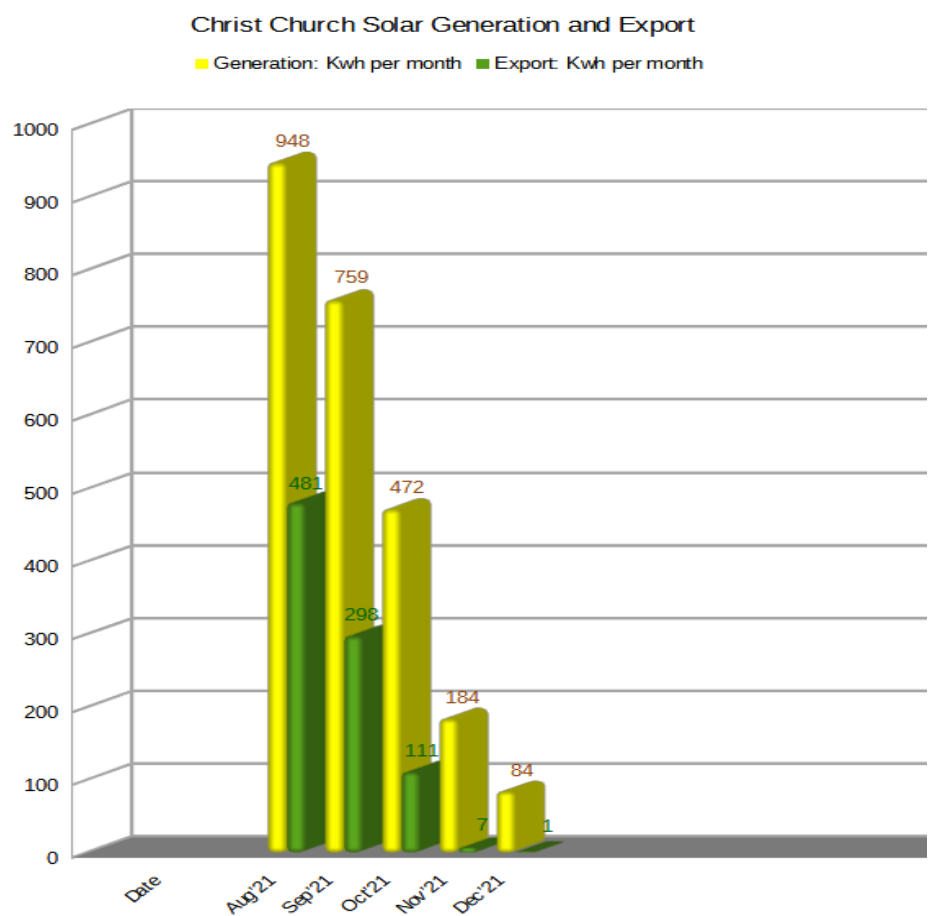
By the time *>imprint<* comes out the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch survey should be underway, running from **Friday 28<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January**, but it's still not too late to take part. Simply count the highest number of birds, of each species, you see at any one time, that land in your garden, or whichever location you choose, during a single hour. Christ Church Caring for Creation (C4) are intending to host a group session after church on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> which you are welcome to join, surveying the birds that land in our church grounds, but you can still do a separate one at home. Go to <https://rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/> to sign up and download the tally sheet and instructions. Doing this gives the RSPB useful information on species abundance or decline in different parts of the country, since sadly we have lost 38 million birds from UK in the last 50 years, and this information will help them update their statistics and look after places where birdlife and wildlife can thrive.

### Hope in Action (local events/information)

Go to <https://www.hopeinaction.uk/>, and to see the latest newsletter (currently December 2021) and find out what's going on in our local area, click [here](#) to go to their archive.

### Christ Church's Solar Panels

C4 thought it would be of interest to church members to revive occasional reports of how our solar panels are doing. Currently, not much, understandably, being winter with not much sun and reduced daylight hours, but the chart here gives the figures and visual representation of the monthly amount the panels have generated and how much has been exported to the grid since last summer. In looking at this information, it's important to bear in mind that just because we export some of our solar generated electricity (quite a lot in the summer), we can only export what we don't use at any given time. We still need to buy electricity from our renewable energy supplier at times when our demand exceeds what we can generate, including night-times or during poor weather (when we generate nothing, or very little).



## ***Climate Change – why we should care***

This blog, originally dated September 2020, by **Dr Ruth Valerio** (Tearfund's Global Advocacy and Influencing Director) argues why Christians should be concerned about climate change as a root cause of poverty and that fundamentally it's an issue of justice: [https://www.tearfund.org/stories/2020/09/why-christians-should-care-about-climate-change?utm\\_source=Church+Reps&utm\\_campaign=f58089e828](https://www.tearfund.org/stories/2020/09/why-christians-should-care-about-climate-change?utm_source=Church+Reps&utm_campaign=f58089e828)

## ***A Rocha Field Notes Podcasts and Blog***

Three more **Field Notes podcasts** have been posted since the last issue of *>imprint<*:

*Episode 15*, posted on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 has Peter Harris and guest host Dan Nolloth talking with **Darren Evans**, Professor of Ecology and Conservation at Newcastle University, on 'What motivates us to care for the planet?'

*Episode 16* was posted on 12<sup>th</sup> January and features **Mako Fujimura**, a contemporary artist and advocate of 'slow art' talking with Peter and Bryony Loveless on 'How art which honours nature's rhythms can heal trauma' about his calling to create 'generative' art and about the silence in which we can hear God's voice. It includes a discussion and a recommendation to read the historical novel by Shūsaku Endō entitled 'Silence', and to see Martin Scorsese's film adaptation of it.

*Episode 17*, posted 26<sup>th</sup> January, features **Cheryl Bear**, an indigenous person from a 'first-nation community' in British Columbia, talking to Peter and Bryony on the topic 'The significance of land to the Indigenous peoples of Canada'.

Go to <https://www.arocha.org/en/field-notes-podcast/>, or from wherever you get your podcasts to listen to the interviews.

*Is anyone following these links and listening to the podcasts? If so, are you finding them helpful/informative? Have you subscribed? It would be great if you could let me know at [editor@ccstalbens.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbens.org.uk). -Ed.*

In the latest **A Rocha International blog**, **Prarthini Selveindran** invites us to pause and consider the order of creation through Psalm 104, in a blog entitled 'Wild Wonder: Look it's a Pangolin!'

Go to <https://blog.arocha.org/en/wild-wonder-look-its-a-pangolin/> to read it.

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

Having discussed the proposed Christ Church climate declaration/recognition and also the Lifestyle section of the Eco Church survey at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December, C4 went on to look at another section of the survey, Community and Global Engagement, at its 17<sup>th</sup> January meeting, concluding there could be quite a bit of work to do in this area to meet the criteria for a bronze Eco Church award. Ideas for potential activities for Christ Church participation in the next Sustainable St Albans Sustainability Festival (SustFest22), from Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> to Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022, were also discussed. Any events planned require registration by 14<sup>th</sup> March.

The next C4 meeting is scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> February, when it's planned to discuss the Worship and Teaching section of the Eco Church survey amongst other topics. All church members are welcome to attend. The venue/format of the meeting (whether in person or online) will be notified shortly, via the e-news-sheet.

Meanwhile, do check out the Caring for Creation page on the Christ Church website (it's under the WHAT'S ON menu): <https://www.ccstalbens.org.uk/caring-for-creation>