

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



Registered Charity 1132925



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Items for *>imprint<* no. 110: **Mon. 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023**, please, by email at [editor@ccstalbans.org.uk](mailto:editor@ccstalbans.org.uk). *Peter Young (Ed.)*

## PCC meeting, 14<sup>th</sup> November

In a review of actions from earlier meetings, the PCC discussed a draft layout and wording for a proposed new, simplified and updated panel for the notice board outside the church. This was approved with minor adjustments and work can now start to produce it and replace the existing central panel. It was also noted that new rates for lettings of areas of our church premises were now being introduced. Additionally the new arrangements for communion, with two stations, were reviewed. The location of the station offering combined wafer and wine was discussed and the need for feedback from those using this option.

### Christmas at Christ Church

The arrangements for publicity for our Christmas activities were discussed. Unlike previous years, this year as an experiment there will be no pre-Christmas leaflet drop, since it had not been found to be particularly effective in the past. Instead publicity will be via social media, word-of-mouth (including invitations), a few printed posters e.g. in local shops, and a banner outside the church during the week before. It is planned to have carols around the tree outside before Christmas as previously, but the Sunday before Christmas happens to be the date of the World Cup Final, which might impact attendance. Arrangements, including actual date and time of our carols will therefore need to allow some flexibility and publicity as above. There was also discussion on a proposal for Christmas lights on our conifer outside, but although it was felt to be a good idea to undertake at some stage, in light of subsequent discussions on the 2023 budget, it was decided not to go ahead this year. *[However since the meeting and independently of the PCC, the idea of crowdfunding for the*

*expense of purchase and installation of lights for the tree as a local community project has been proposed and is in progress.]*

### The Coronation Weekend

The proposal that we mark the coronation of King Charles III in some way over the designated Bank Holiday with some kind of event, either as a church initiative (e.g. on the Sunday afternoon), or in collaboration with the local community, was also discussed. Whichever option we proceed with may dictate the exact day on which it is held. It was agreed to get more information on any community plans and revisit the topic at the January PCC meeting.

### Finance and 2023 Budget

Predictions for likely expenditure and income in 2023 were reviewed. The initially drafted figures would require a budget with a substantial deficit of income over expenditure and the PCC had a long period of discussion over what reductions of expenditure might realistically be feasible in order to try to reduce the deficit and strive towards a break-even budget which is the ideal. In the end the PCC agreed some reductions in budgeted expenditure, which would reduce the deficit overall, but allow a more realistic estimate of income (from regular giving, one-off gifts and lettings).

As this was a long PCC meeting, because of time constraints, some items on the agenda had to be deferred to a future meeting. The next scheduled PCC meeting is due to be held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

## **CLARION CALL OF CHRISTMAS** – *Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi*

Christmas is a time of giving gifts, not just in the ordinary sense of packages under the tree and shopping lists but in the extraordinary sense that Christmas is the time that God gave the best of heaven. **Christmas is the celebration of God making good on a promise He had made hundreds of years earlier that a child would be born who would be both God and man.** God delivered on that promise when Jesus was born.

God gave us His very best. He took on our form and became man. He gave us Himself!

Jesus is not to us as Christmas is to the world, here today and gone tomorrow. He is God with us. To remain with us. To share our humanness and pain. And to lead us back to God through the ultimate sacrifice of himself.

When the Christ child was born, the whole course of human history was changed. That is a truth as unassailable as any truth. It is impossible to conceive how differently things would have turned out if that birth had not happened whenever, wherever, however it did. His birth drew a line on world history, just as it does in the history of many people who have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. They can say with confidence “before Jesus came into my life, I was like that... but after He came in, I became like this ....” That is the testimony of many millions today who know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

All we could ever imagine, could ever hope for, He is.... He is the Prince of Peace whose first coming has already transformed society but whose second coming will forever establish justice and righteousness. All this, and infinitely more, are alive in an impoverished baby in a barn. That is what Christmas means—to find in a place where you would least expect to find anything you want, everything you could ever want.

Let us not fall prey to the devices of Satan who would want the world to think of

Christmas as a time of eating, drinking, spending, making money and ensuring that the name and person of Jesus is tucked far away where it would not come into contact with the “festivities”.

Luis Palau tells the story of a wealthy European family who decided to have their newborn baby dedicated in their enormous mansion. Dozens of guests were invited to the event, and they all arrived in the latest of fashions.

After depositing their elegant coats on a bed in an upstairs room, the guests were entertained like royalty. Soon the time came for the main purpose of the evening, the infant's dedication. When they asked for the child, no one seemed to know of his whereabouts. Panic ensued as they desperately searched for the baby. In a few minutes the child was found—buried underneath all of the coats, jackets, and furs. **The very object of the day's celebration had been forgotten, neglected, and nearly smothered. May the overcoats of materialism, tradition, and schedules not smother the very reason for the Christmas season.**

However, while we are busy planning, shopping, wrapping, and sending gifts – God is too. No matter what is or is not under your Christmas tree this year, you can take comfort in knowing that God offers you lifelong gifts that are more fulfilling than anything we could have ever bought ourselves. Each gift comes specially wrapped in love—all you have to do is ask! Revelation 22:17 says “The Holy Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And the person who hears should say, ‘Come!’ Anyone who is thirsty should come. Anyone who wants to take the free gift of the water of life should do so.” Here are some special gifts that God has for you to open this Christmas season.

### **The Gift of Eternal Life**

John 3:16 says “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son so that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have eternal life.” Christ sacrificed himself so that we could be redeemed and have eternal life with God.

### **The Gift of Hope**

If you watch the news a lot, you might feel scared or frustrated with the secular world. Fighting and wars, global poverty, devastating floods, persecution of Christians, and pointless deaths are all heart-breaking to see. This is only compounded when we experience loss or struggles in our own lives. God, though, never wants us to lose hope during these times. Jesus tells us that no matter how dire the situation may be; we serve a God who specializes in bringing beauty out of the ashes. Jeremiah 17:7 continues this theme by saying “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord.” **When all else seems lost, God can swoop down and lift us up again. He wants us to hope for a better future knowing He is by our side.** His Name is Emmanuel-God with us.

### **The Gift of Peace**

John 14:27 shares with us the promise of God's gift of peace. The scripture reads “Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.” When we cast our worldly anxieties and stresses onto Jesus, we are filled with a feeling of peace, calm, and gratitude.

## The Gift of Direction

God wants us to live a life where our talents are used to serve His greater good. Following His plan blindly might feel scary. Obedience often requires faith and risk, but God will delight in our dependence on Him and always be there to support us.

## The Clarion call of Christmas

One of the goals in our Christian life is to affirm God's generous dealings with people like us. It begins by understanding the Bible as a story of how God has given gifts to his people: When God's children were slaves in Egypt, God brought them out of slavery with an outstretched arm and a mighty hand. God said, "You're free! It's a gift."

When God's children stumbled in their freedom and did not know how to live their lives, God gave them the Law as a lamp for their feet and a light for their path. It was a gift.

When God's children tired of wandering in the wilderness, they needed a place to put down roots. So God said, "When you cross the river Jordan, you're going to come to a land of milk and honey. It's all yours. It's a gift." When the people forgot everything God had done for them, God gave them prophets.

Then, one day, God gave them Jesus Christ, who in turn gave His very life as a gift. This is the greatest gift of all and it is meant to be received personally to qualify us as God's friend and children. God has given His Own Son, and anyone who receives Him has eternal life. Have you received this Gift? **This is the clarion call of Christmas.**

## Some of Rachael's recent revelations – *Rachael Howson*

'to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.' Eph. 3:19.

Revelation from God is so precious and I would like to take a few moments of your time to share some of the Lord increasing awe in me. I recently heard of a study that exposing people to awe (showing them various aspects of beauty in creation) made them healthier, boosted their immune system and made them happier in general. I know when I stand in the mountains in Scotland, look closely at a rich coloured flower or simply breath in the fresh crisp air, I can't help but smile and somehow my inner posture changes. What makes you feel awe? Have you ever noticed what happens in you when you do?

The verse above was our key verse for School of the Word and Spirit in Amsterdam. I am continually wide-eyed and boggled by that last phrase - 'filled with the fullness of God'. That He would give of Himself so much, limiting Himself in us that we would not die at the weight at His glory, fills me with gratitude and awe. I don't know about you, but I know there is too much of me (self focus) in me to be truly filled with the fullness of God. Yet the powerful truth is that when we become more filled and God-aware, we become more truly our God-made selves, overflowing with all the fruits of Holy Spirit, living out who He desires and made us to be. Whatever this means, it's a powerful statement of how God desires to dwell in us. The beauty of this verse is that being filled is rooted in knowing the love of God—read the few verse before. His love is immeasurable and abounding. That 'know' is felt, experiential and impacts on everything. There is an increase of hope, joy and peace as well as love.

My prayer for you as you read this, and for myself, in the midst of Christmas, family

and friends, busyness or perhaps the loneliness of the season, is that we are so filled with the love of God, that we are struck with awe and wonder and become more filled with the fullness of God. I hope this inspires you, as it has me, to invite God to cultivate awe in us, and to allow His love to sink in deeply in those moments.

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.' Rom. 15:13.

## Update on Homes of Promise, Uganda



Musa with his father

Another busy month for Jane and Homes of Promise, travelling to outlying villages to find the new boys' families. They had success with Musa pictured with his father, although Musa was, at first, reluctant to see him, worried perhaps that he may be left with him. The boys like being at HoP as they get fed and educated. They found Denis' family (pictured below). But there is a whole system they must go through first with Probation Officers and it's not always easy to find where these boys lived originally. These journeys often take more than 5 / 9 hours, so it can be very tiring for all concerned. There are often many family issues leading to the boys running away to the streets and the Probation Officers

are happy that HoP are taking care of them and, as with Denis, who they said, cannot go back to the family until he is much older. Whilst they were in the area, they took time to visit some older boys who are now living back in their communities. These older boys still often call into Georges Place (the home) when they come to Kampala.



Denis with uncle, father, grandfather step grandmother and neighbours

Staff appraisals have been held this month and Jane was relieved to find out that Benard (the Warden) is staying. He originally said he would work for HoP for a year, as he had been a

headteacher and wanted to continue his career. Thankfully he now feels that HoP Warden is his vocation for the next few years.

Kasita and Musumba are back at George's Place as they have finished their P7 exams and are not due back at school until February! They both think they have done well and want to go into S1 boarding school next year. Dennis is also home as his last exam, at secondary school, was on Monday.

All the new boys are well settled and HoP are planning to take Saidi for home tracing at the end of November. Please continue to pray for the work of Homes of Promise, the boys and also for staff safety as they travel.



When Jane went to pick Asaph up from Don Bosco Vocational college, Father Cat showed Jane the examination piece **Asaph** had made for his final carpentry certificate.

He also took her to the tailoring workshop: **Ivan** in shirt and shorts he has made with Saidi.





The schools and vocational colleges have been closed early due to the spread of Ebola. All the boys are now back at George's Place, 22 boys. Some will not be able to go back home for Christmas as there are travel restrictions in affected areas. But give thanks that Uganda is experienced and well-equipped for Ebola outbreaks, however it's certainly the worst outbreak in the last 20 years.

## Sermons at Christ Church

The sermon series on God's Creation based on readings in Genesis has now completed. If you missed any or want to re-listen, you can still access them, either via the Church's YouTube channel

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyw1PLEnH1df2GzW3pZujyw> – pros: you get both sound and vision; cons: you need to know which date/title you're looking for)

or the Christ Church website (<https://www.ccstalbans.org.uk/sermons> – pros: all the sermon titles in the series are displayed and you can download sermon notes where available; cons: you only get sound).

There will now be a short series for Advent at 10:00am services, up to the Sunday before Christmas:

Nov 27      John the Baptist

Dec 4        Mary is called

Dec 11      The birth of Jesus

Dec 18      Jesus presented at the Temple

## The Caring for Creation (C4) library has relocated!

During the God's Creation sermon series the C4 Creation Care library was displayed on a table in the link corridor between the foyer and the worship area. Now that the series has finished, the books have been returned to 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.

## Caring for Creation

### *Eco Church: Christ Church progress*

We have now published our draft responses to 4 out of 5 sections of the Eco Church questionnaire in *>imprint<*. This month it had been hoped to publish responses to the final section on our **Buildings**, but, on looking them over it became clear that several updates would be necessary, after further research, in order to give a more accurate picture of where stand on this section. It's likely this might improve our score, so we have decided to postpone publishing the Buildings responses until we can review them and also get input from BAGAG and other relevant sources. Watch this space!



## ***A Rocha Blog***

There has been one further blog posted since the last *>imprint<*: 'Homecoming', by **Rachel Mander** (A Rocha's Strategic Development Officer), posted 2<sup>nd</sup> November.

Go to <https://blog.arocha.org/en/homecoming-by-rachel-mander/>

## ***Field Notes Podcasts***

There have been no further podcasts since episode 25 with Jo Swinney, which was highlighted in *>imprint<* [no.107](#)

## ***Support Environmental Education through A Rocha's Gifts with a Difference***

A Rocha Uganda is training Kampala pastors in environmentally-sensitive development such as [briquette-making](#) from waste materials to replace traditional charcoal and [insulated basket construction](#) so that hot food continues to cook, both reducing fuel needs and thus reducing deforestation. One pastor was so encouraged by the local impact that he visited 12 other churches and persuaded them to undertake the same training. He says, 'Our church is growing and the future looks bright.'



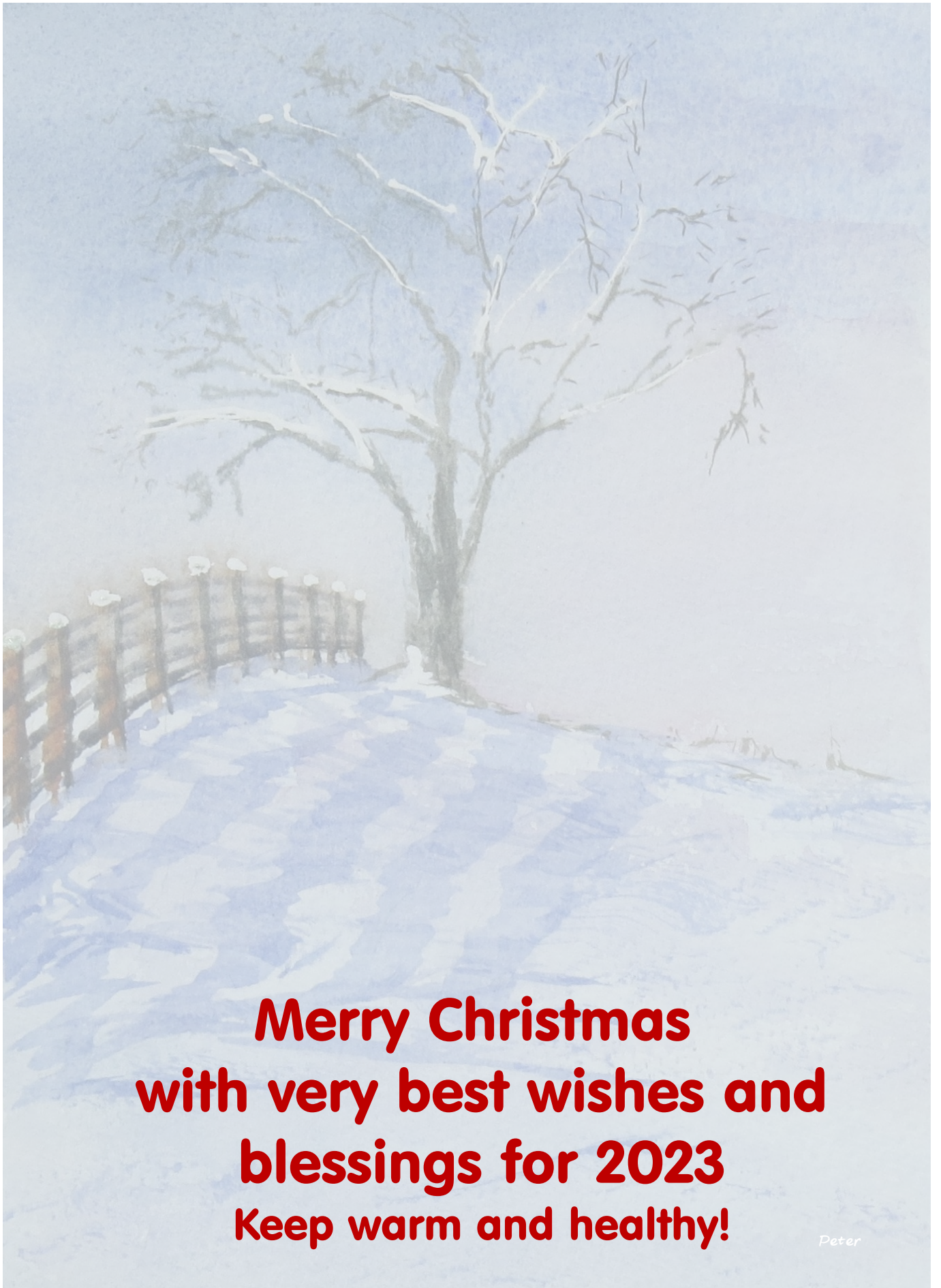
PLEASE HELP US! Through 'Gifts With a Difference' at <https://shop.arocha.org/> you could provide a Ugandan family with a [fireless cooker](#) or [train ten people to make briquettes](#): both gifts reduce fuel use, save trees and save money for cash-poor families.

A Rocha Uganda is also training community members around Kampala to create their own tree nurseries as a source of family income and to mitigate against climate change. Your gift could provide [a day of training](#) for ten people.

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

C4 has been meeting monthly, normally on the third Monday of the month, the most recent being 21<sup>st</sup> November. However there *won't* be a full meeting in December, so the next one will be on **16<sup>th</sup> January**. These are open meetings which we have been having on Zoom, so anyone is welcome to attend – just follow the zoom link which is given in the weekly e-news on the Friday prior to the meeting. We have recently been using the Tearfund '**Christianity and climate change**' film series resource, which some small groups have also been following (see <https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/christianity-and-climate-change-film-series>), and at the November meeting discussed Study 5, entitled '[Speaking to other Christians about climate change](#)'. Katharine Hayhoe, the climate scientist and presenter of the series, emphasised that we should **not** be motivated about the issue out of a sense of guilt, since as Christians we are freed from guilt (e.g. Rom. 8:1) by the sacrifice of Christ. Nor should we be trying to impose guilt on others, but communicating out of love. Also we should be embracing the hope that does not disappoint us (Rom. 5:5), that God is ultimately in control.

Although C4 currently has a fairly small membership (9), we have now *very loosely* divided our practical activities into two main subgroups, one focussing on church grounds initiatives and maintenance, in collaboration with BAGAG, and the other on communications efforts.



**Merry Christmas  
with very best wishes and  
blessings for 2023  
Keep warm and healthy!**

*Peter*