



**ST ANDREW'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
WALTON-ON-THAMES**

NEWSLETTER

Volume 77 No 9

NOVEMBER 2020



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*I wear a little poppy,
As red as red can be,
To show that I remember
Those who fought for me*

From The Manse

November 2020



Dear friends

2020 moves into its penultimate month. The clocks alter. The dark nights are with us and the poet, Thomas Hood (1799-1845), cheers us up with a really positive slant on the month.

No sun — no moon!
No morn — no noon —
No dawn — no dusk — no proper time of day.
No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,
No comfortable feel in any member —
No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,
No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds! —
November!

Let's be honest, though, few of us relish the fast approach of winter, few of us will be upset that 2020 is now on the wane.

November is obviously a month inseparably linked with remembrance and an old hymn reminds us to remember in a very positive way. "Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done". Time and time again I've found that to be true.

The year 2020 is going to be remembered for Covid and the lockdown and the first thing I count as a blessing is that, throughout all of this, the weather has been exceptional. With bleak and depressing news surrounding us, the weather has not matched that. Actually, the weather has almost over-egged the pudding. I count as a blessing the many months of lovely weather we've enjoyed this year when so many other things have been so very difficult.

Last month I wrote about another blessing - the blessing of technology, which I feel has helped us in so many ways. As a church we've made much use of Zoom and have been able to keep together, worship together and chat together, even when we physically couldn't be together. Some of us have also used Zoom to have a natter with friends, perhaps even catching up on friends we've not seen for a bit. Not long ago, that simply wouldn't have been possible so - there's another blessing I'm giving thanks for.

On the family front, another blessing I give thanks for is that Mum, Janet and I have all stayed fit and well. During the full lockdown Mum's friends from her church stepped up and kept a close eye on her, realising that there was quite a long time when we simply couldn't visit. Mum has had many phone calls and chats. Shopping has not been a problem for her. A blessing indeed - and a weight off our minds for Janet and me. So, I'm thanking God for

the blessing that we've stayed fit and clear of Covid. I am thanking God for the blessing and that Mum has coped and for her friends.

In an earlier letter this year I wrote about the garden. Somehow I managed to get the bedding plants I needed which, together with plants I've put in over the last few years, have produced a super show all summer. It's been an oasis of calm and colour - somewhere really pleasant to spend time.

After the initial shortages in the shops, we've not struggled to get food, although I never knew I could be so happy to see a bag of flour on a supermarket shelf - and as for when I saw a delivery of baking powder on the shelves - WOW - talk about being richly blessed!

I have to say that, whilst preparing worship each week, I've also enjoyed discovering more about the development of the early church and thinking about what their experience may be saying to us. As I looked at the set lectionary readings for after Pentecost, they just didn't seem right. Then my colleague, Lucy, said that she was doing the growth of the church in Acts in her church and I realised that this was a brilliant idea. I hope that you've enjoyed the long series as much as I have. It certainly took us to passages we don't tend to explore all that often.

So, I could moan about all the restrictions, the cancelled holiday, the postponed sabbatical and all the extra work that this year has produced. All of that would be true but instead, I think I'd much rather thank God for the blessings he has showered upon us throughout a very difficult and demanding period. Looking back, I truly am surprised by "what the Lord has done". As another hymn puts it, "How good is the God we adore."

With all good wishes,



URC SUNDAY SERVICE - 22 NOVEMBER LED BY THE REVD MICHAEL HODGSON

As you know, since the lockdown began the URC has produced a Sunday Service as part of the Daily Devotions material. Going out at 10.00 am it is available to listen to (or download) from the URC Website or 3via an email sent directly to you. You may be interested that the preacher on 22nd November is me. (And yes, being asked to lead worship and to lay yourself bare before the denomination is both an honour and seriously scary.) Do feel free to log on and have a listen - but don't do it before you've been to our live service /zoom service that day- I admit that I'll be preaching the same sermon!

To easily access the link, you should sign up to the Daily Devotions from the URC website <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/>

The link to the Service will appear at 9.45 am on the Sunday morning, 22 November.

THE STATEMENT OF NATURE, FAITH AND ORDER OF THE URC: CONCLUSION

This month I conclude the series of letter which has run through the year looking at the different clauses of the Statement of Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church as we finally reach the clause about our commitment to ecumenism.

We affirm our intention

To go on praying and working,
With all our fellow Christians,
For the visible unity of the Church
In the way Christ chooses,
So that people and nations
May be led to love and serve God
And praise him more and more for ever.
Source, Guide and Goal
Of all that is:
To God be eternal glory.

There it is - enshrined in our very basis; our commitment to ecumenism. If I'm honest, I cannot read this section without a profound sense of sadness and frustration. We are a product of the post-war ecumenical movement in Great Britain. We are the union of four denominations - the Presbyterian Church of England, Congregational Church of England and Wales, the Reformed Churches of Christ and the Congregational Union of Scotland - but we could have been part of something much, much more. Christ's church is still fractured and divided.

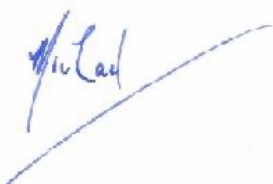
Back in 1972, we never thought that the URC would still be going in 2020 but a lot has changed since October 1972. Things have not worked out the way we thought and once hoped they would. That's a tragedy. As a denomination, however, ecumenism is still in our DNA. The Act of Union is a demonstration that Christians with different approaches and understandings can come together and that enrichment that can result.

What will happen next? Who knows! Personally, I don't see any more denominational unions on the cards at the moment - possibly not in my lifetime and that makes me so sad, but "on the ground" local churches are working together and coming together through local "Churches Together" groups. Local Ecumenical Projects (LEPs) are becoming ever more common and it could be argued that local churches are leading the way ecumenically and that, eventually, the denominational hierarchies will have to catch up with what's actually happened. This clause is an aspect of the URC of which I am still proud. though the stalling of the hopes of the '60s and '70s is something that makes me so very sad.

I hope that you have found this series of letters/articles on the Statement of Nature, Faith and Order of the URC interesting. I hope that you've either discovered or else been reminded of all sorts of things and I hope too that the next time we use it in church you'll feel that you have a better understanding of it as we say it.

I conclude with a question to you, though. If you've enjoyed this series, and if there are topics you'd like me to write about in the future, do tell me. The joke is always made that you can tell when the Minister is scraping the bottom of the barrel when the pastoral letter begins, "As I sit in my study I can see that there's a little robin sitting on the branch of the manse tree". Finding something to write about each month can be a massive challenge and having been doing it for the best part of 35 years now I can assure you it doesn't get any easier. So, if there's something you'd actually like me to write about then do ask. I'm not saying I will (I'm not making myself a hostage to fortune) but all ideas gratefully received.

With all good wishes



Christmas is coming - the goose is getting fat!



I've no idea what Covid regulations will be in place by the time we get to Christmas this year but were I a betting man I don't think I'd be putting money on us being able to together in large congregations for Carol Services in festively decorated church buildings. I've a feeling that the lusty singing of our favourite carols whilst the smell of mulled wine wafts tantalisingly round the transepts and trays of mince pies warm in the oven could be off this year! That's set me thinking. What do we do instead? Do you remember the old quiz show, "Bullseye"? Using a game of darts, the contestants tried to score enough points and answer enough correct questions to win big prizes. When they failed to score enough points to win them the prizes were brought on set and taken away with the quiz-master, Jim Bowen, telling the contestants, "Well this is what you could have won". Talk about rubbing noses in it! Mindful that it's likely that there's going to be a lot of things we can't do this year. I am very keen to avoid planning a sort of Bullseye Christmas - "This is what you could have sung!" sort of thing. I'm thinking that something totally different could be more appropriate - which is where you come in.

I know that some of you have lived in very different parts of the UK. I know that some of you have worked abroad and will have celebrated Christmas in all sorts of ways. Or again, you may have had an idea for a Christmas service but never done anything about it. So, I'm asking you if you have any ideas for our Christmas celebrations this rather strange year? Have you experienced something, possibly from another country (or culture), which might be much more appropriate than what we normally do? I've got a few ideas but I suspect that so, too, may you. I can't help thinking that it could be much more meaningful to celebrate this Christmas in a totally fresh way rather than try to do what we always do - but not be able to do it very satisfactorily.

I have this mental picture of a rather sad looking cold turkey being pulled out of the fridge, with little meat left on the carcass and no one really fancying it. I'm keen not to offer up that sort of thing as a Christmas service. There's no reason why Christmas 2020 can't still be a wonderful time as we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the truth of Emmanuel.



Let's see what we can come up with together. Any ideas?

Michael

"GOING TO CHURCH? IT'S JUST LIKE TAKING DRUGS"

In 1843, Karl Marx referred to religion as the "opium of the masses" - a story suggests that he was nearer the truth than he might have realised.

Researchers have found that the feelings of social connection brought about by taking part in a religious ritual can be lessened by a medicine that is usually used to stop opiate addicts getting high. They said that they had provided the first solid evidence that parts of the brain known as mu-opioid receptors - the biological triggers activated by heroin and opiate pain pills - were behind the surge of fellow-feeling often associated with communal religious rites.

"Our body naturally produced opioids", Sarah Charles, a PhD researcher at Coventry University, who led the study, said. "These molecules are behind the so-called runner's high experienced during exercise. "This is what a religious ritual seems to be able to do as well," Ms Charles said. "It creates this feeling of pleasantness, of euphoria and social bonding,"

The same researchers had looked at churchgoers in the UK and found that religious services raised pain thresholds and enhanced social bonding. "

Rhys Blakely. Science Correspondent - An extract from his article in The Times, 14 October 2020

ART SERIES (2)

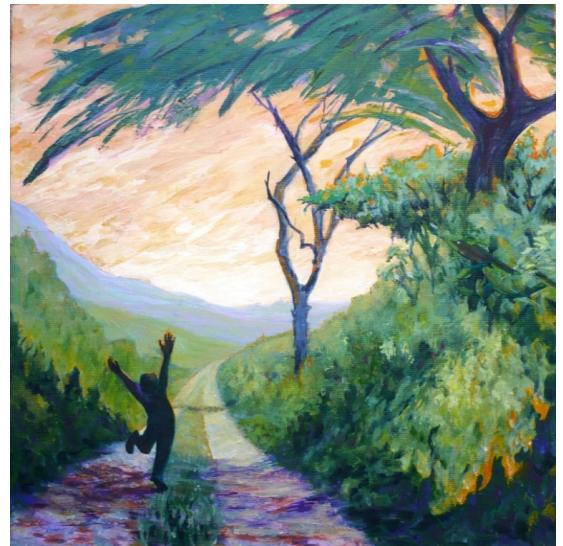
CHRISTINE ERICA BAINBRIDGE is a member of Wheatley URC and a great supporter of ArtPeace. She owns a sculpture carved by Shingirai Masedza and recently painted his bird piece which I forwarded to Shingi who was thrilled. Christine is also an accomplished artist always experimenting with new ideas and ways of expressing them. Some of her artwork follows chosen themes and includes written reflections on the images enabling people to connect to the spirituality within the art. She is interested in conveying atmosphere, feeling and emotion through her artwork and usually works from sketches done on location and memories of experiences. Subject matter focuses on nature, sea and landscapes as well as still life. Her favourite medium is acrylic, but she sometimes works in pastel or mixed media. Shown below is a small sample of her exquisite work. Enjoy! Other examples can be viewed on www.christineericabainbridge.co.uk

Johnston Simpson



Left - This watercolour is called pilgrimage. If you look carefully you can see small figures on the mountain path. The whole concept of pilgrimage has always fascinated me, and it is shared across many religions. Over the years I have visited many pilgrimage sites and have been enriched by them. Now on my life journey I do not seek out special places anymore. Instead each journey has the anticipation of being a journey of encounters and discovery. This has been important during lock down as my early morning walks through the fields and woods have brought it home to me that heaven is on the doorstep!

Right - The Joyful Traveller. A few years ago, my summer exhibition was centred on Sydney Carter, his hymns and poems and the book The Rock of Doubt. This rather humorous figure dancing along celebrates One More Step Along the Way I Go. It could also make you think of Lord of the Dance.



Left – When walking along the beach at low tide near Beaumaris in Anglesey we were suddenly faced by the striking structure emerging from the sand. There was a healing stillness about it and I recalled the famous painting by Millet called The Angelus. He depicts two peasants pausing for prayer as they hear the angelus bell ring

Right - Wast Water in the Lake District took my breath away with its feeling of remoteness. The experience of wild places, mountains and seas have always been necessary to my sense of wellbeing and increased my awareness of the divine. Getting the balance between solitude and sociability is very important.



Left - The beauty of coastal landscapes and the energy of the sea have been the inspiration for many paintings. Holding a pebble, standing by a crumbling cliff, watching the ebb and flow of the tides brings thoughts of eternity.



Below – These two Bird of Heaven paintings were part of my Sydney Carter exhibition.



Autumn



IN MEMORIAM - DOORKINS MAGNIFICAT RIP

"She has done so much more for this place than I will ever do."



So said The Very Revd Andrew Nunn, the Dean of Southwark, speaking on the 'Today' programme on the morning of 29 October, of Doorkins the Cathedral Cat, whose funeral was held in the cathedral the previous day. I watched it on live streaming, tissues at the ready (and they were needed!). In the last issue you may remember a piece entitled 'A little bit of Doorkins' about how much she meant to Southwark Cathedral and all those who visited and worshipped there. Doorkins died at home in the arms of the Verger, Paul Timms, on 30 September and is sadly missed by her many admirers not only in Southwark but around the world, where she had a "massive" following. *"This little cat turned up and had been taken in and made welcome so they thought maybe if they turned up they would be made welcome as well."*

When asked whether it could be thought inappropriate to hold such a service for a cat in these very difficult times, the Dean said it had been really powerful to receive so many comments from people who have needed

to grieve. *"There's a lot to grieve about right now and grief comes on not necessarily at the moment you want it,"* he said. *"I think people have found it really helpful that they have been able to cry and weep and that may sound odd, but as we know it's not always possible to cry when we need to cry."* The Dean believes that this opportunity afforded by the church to people to bring their grief to the surface - even if it meant celebrating the life of a little animal - was one not to be missed. In grieving for a cat - and a cat they may not even know - they might well be grieving for so much else in their lives, due to the particular problems at the moment.



"People just keep on going. One of the dreadful things at the moment is that funerals have been restricted and it has been very odd the way we have had to grieve and celebrate the people that we miss. I think it's right that the church should hold that service even if it means celebrating a little cat - she doesn't know what she has done for people but I think even in her death she has done a massive amount."

Ed

QUESTIONNAIRE

Many thanks to all those who took the time to give thought to the Questionnaire and to send in replies. Thank you, also, for the kind comments that have accompanied your feedback! However, the overall response has been disappointing with a total of only eight. I have drawn up a chart (anonymously) of your scores and added below the rather less disappointing assortment of suggestions you have put forward. I am sure that at least a few more of you have views (possibly negative as well as positive) but prefer that they should remain unsaid. All things considered, I have come to the conclusion that the vast majority of you are happy with the Newsletter in its present form. Your suggestions are very helpful and I will be taking them into account for future issues. I was brought up with these words ringing in my ears: "Good, better best, never let it rest, till your good is better and your better best." That is my aim! A summary of the outcome of the Questionnaire is on the next page. I am still open to suggestions. Ed

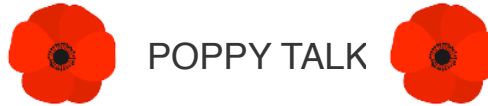
ANALYSIS OF NEWSLETTER QUESTIONNAIRE AT 28 OCTOBER 2020

TOTAL RESPONDENTS: 8

Q1 PL	Q2 Church- related Current Affairs	Q3 Friends News	Q4 Good news Church family	Q5 Humour	Q6 ArtPeace	Q7 Personal accounts	Q8 Uplifting Words	Q9 Father Harold- Barry	Q10 Artistic slant items
2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
1	1	3	3	1	3	1	1	4	3
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1	3	3	1	2	1	3	2	3	2
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	3	1

SUGGESTIONS

- Regular reports on Minister and Elders' efforts on OUTREACH (specifically to attract non-members)
- Occasional article on specific areas our Minister spends his week working on behalf of St Andrew's and what he hopes to achieve for our church before he retires
- Articles submitted by Hall users - not just Brownies
- Would Hall hirers like to be included in Newsletter distribution list?
- A letters page
- A 'Help' section (where people ask for or share (eg a recipe or 'how do I?') Or 'Can anyone suggest/ recommend or advertise something they have or want or have to give away, eg the type of notices you might see on a notice board or in a window - nothing too commercial
- An occasional Pets Corner (ie the Kirk dog - Brodie)
- Recipe page/recommendations of local restaurants - when up and running again
- Hobbies to share, like patchwork, flower arranging, painting, pottery/sculpture - also accompanied by photos. We could join with Weybridge for their hobbies.
- A few words on recent holidays or outings - local/ historical. interest
- Handy hints - ie a gardening tip. Request for photos of what is blooming on our balconies or in our garden



The poppy is a symbol of Remembrance and hope for a peaceful future

The best way to wear a poppy is simply with pride

The poppy is red because that's the natural colour of the poppy flower. During the First World War previously beautiful countryside was blasted, bombed and fought over, again and again. The landscape swiftly turned to fields of mud: bleak and barren where little or nothing could grow. But out of this devastation the delicate but resilient bright red Flanders poppies grew and flourished in their thousands.

Wearing a poppy is a show of support for the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces, veterans and their families. It represents all those who lost their lives on active service in all conflicts; from the beginning of the First World War right up to present day. It also honours the contribution of civilian services and the uniformed services which contribute to national peace and security and acknowledges innocent civilians who have lost their lives in conflict and acts of terrorism.

The first official Armistice Day celebrations were held by King George V at Buckingham Palace in 1919, when he hosted Raymond Poincaré, the President of France.

The tradition of wearing red poppies on Remembrance Day has its origins in Canadian poet John McCrae's 1915 piece, *In Flanders Fields*. Shortly after losing a friend in Ypres in 1915, a Canadian doctor, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae was inspired by the sight of poppies growing in battle-scarred fields to write his now famous poem 'In Flanders Fields'. The poem inspired American War Secretary, Moina Michael, who bought poppies to sell to her friends to raise money for Servicemen in need after the First World War. This was adopted by The (Royal) British Legion in 1921 who ordered 9 million of these poppies and sold them on 11 November that year in the first ever Poppy Appeal. The poppy has been adopted as a symbol of Remembrance ever since.

How do you wear your poppy? It's a matter of personal choice whether someone chooses to wear a poppy or how to wear it. The best way to wear a poppy is simply with pride.

Poppies weren't always sold with leaves. Like the natural flower, the original version of the poppy did not feature a leaf. A leaf was first introduced in the 1960s as it was the practice to make poppy sprays, (an alternative to a poppy wreath), which were made up of 5 silk poppies attached to 7 pieces of green fern. Leaves slowly became an optional extra and by 1984 demand for them had grown to 12 million a year, although they were still issued separately to the poppy. In 1995 poppies with leaves included were made available for the first time.

All of the parts of our poppies can be recycled. After Armistice Day you can recycle your poppy at any Sainsbury's supermarket. There are also a variety of enamel poppy pins that you can wear instead of a paper poppy and we have a range of alternatives available from our Poppy Shop at www.poppysshop.org.uk. You can then choose to make a donation to the appeal every year.



Where can you see this giant poppy?

In 2019 the Poppy Appeal raised over £50 million to help support serving and ex-serving members of the Armed Forces community and their families.

(With thanks to the Royal British Legion website)



A WALL OF THANKFULNESS

“For each new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food, for love and friends,
For everything Thy goodness sends.”

Ralph Emerson

For the socially-distanced singalongs we have had in our street to keep spirits up

For staying fit and clear of Covid

For new neighbours who help with shopping and spend time just chatting

For the nephew who is allowing my brother to live with and allow him to use WhatsApp

For my son and daughter in law

For lovely neighbours, the best road in London in which to live and my piano lessons that I've started during lock down

The NHS particularly Kingston Eye Hospital who are doing cataract operation next week

For neighbours, friend and family including the Church family. For unexpected birthday gifts

For our dog and the joy he gives us and others

For our gardens and the joy they give us

For the exceptional weather we have enjoyed in the midst of a bleak and depressing time

It's good to see Eva!

For full time work

For deliveries of fish suppers shared at social distance!

For the technology which allows us to have to zoom services and for your curiosity and participation which has allowed to have weekly services

For our beautiful area we live and the countryside we can walk in

That my family and friends are well

For seeing family who I haven't seen for six months, for a holiday at the seaside and help in getting there from a kind neighbour

For being made more aware of the warm feeling you get when you think more of others

For the people who have joined our weekly zoom services especially those who haven't been able to come to church



A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF MAY DOW MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER ON ZOOM AT 2 PM

There will be a Zoom service at 2 pm on Monday 9th November to celebrate May Dow's long and wonderful life. We hope this will be a joyful occasion when we can share our stories and remember the happiness that May brought to so many lives.

The Zoom link and telephone dial-in details will be circulated shortly and everyone is welcome.

A WEE REMINDER ... SHOE BOX TIME!

As mentioned in our October issue, please don't forget Operation Christmas Child. Normally, we have enjoyed filling a shoebox with gifts suitable for underprivileged children of all ages - up to a million of them - in various parts of the world.

There has always been an option for donations and this year, due to the situation and difficulties of preparing the shoeboxes, the Elders have agreed that a donation will be given to Samaritan's Purse.



Members of the congregation can pass a cheque to Alan Crawford for inclusion (before 16 November), or they can go on to the Samaritans Purse website and fill a box online <https://www.samaritanspurse.org>

Please be generous!

A Brief Pageant of English Verse

Poet Unknown - courtesy of Slightly Foxed literary Quarterly

I won't arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
I'll sanitise the doorknob and make a cup of tea.
I won't go down to the sea again; I won't go out at all,
I'll wander lonely as a cloud from the kitchen to the hall.
There's a green-eyed yellow monster to the north of Kathmandu
But I shan't be seeing him just yet and nor, I think, will you.
While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandalay
I'll make a bit of supper and eat it off a tray.
I shall not speed my bonnie boat across the sea to Skye,
Or take the rolling English road from Birmingham to Rye.
About the woodland, just right now, I am not free to go
To see the Keep Out posters or the cherry hung with snow,
And no, I won't be travelling much, within the realms of gold,
Or get me to Milford Haven. All that's been put on hold.
Give me your hands, I shan't request, albeit we are friends
Nor come within a mile of you, until this trial ends.

WHY I'M CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Did you know that for the last three decades the UK has celebrated Black History Month every October? No? Well you're not alone Until August I hadn't heard about this either.

Then one of my friends told me that, in the middle of pandemic when we were all being told to socially distance, she decided she had join in the Black Lives Matter demonstration and I knew I had to start listening as to why she felt so strongly. After all, George Floyd was murdered in the USA right? Black people are treated like everyone else in the UK right? Why would my clever, law-abiding friend take to the streets? So I listened and I started to hear from my black colleagues about what happens to them: my middle-aged, black female colleague told me she has been regularly stopped by the police when driving her Mercedes; my male black colleagues who notice that when they get on the tube some of the passengers hold their bags closer to them; or my British-born Nigerian colleague who finds that some hear his Nigerian accent and stop listening to him.

My next thought was "I'm a white woman black people won't want me to contribute to their quest for racial justice." And so I listened some more and I found out that, yes, some black people might question my motives but more wanted white people to get involved.

And by now I expect you're wondering what all this has to do with Black History Month. For me, Black History Month is a chance to learn about the history I wasn't taught in school. It's a chance to highlight the fact that black people have been on these islands for centuries and to acknowledge these people and their achievements.

People like Walter Tull, born in Folkestone in 1888, the first black footballer to play for Tottenham Hotspurs in 1909 and also Glasgow Rangers. During the First World War, Walter volunteered for the "Footballers Battalion" manned by professional footballers and went on to become the first Black Officer leading white men into battle. He was nominated for the Military Cross and died in an offensive in 1918.



Or Asquith Xavier (left), who came to the UK in 1950s and, as a result of his challenge to the colour bar, applied at the time and was accepted by British Railways at Euston to become the first black person to work as a guard at Euston Station.

Or Bernadine Evaristo a the British born woman with a white mother and Nigerian father, who last year became the first black woman to win the prestigious Booker prize.

I know that there are many of you in the Church more qualified than I am to speak to about racial justice and I'd like to suggest that we think about what we can do to influence our community and work together to make our Church a place where everyone can come and feel welcome. I would be interested in hearing your ideas.

Carol Lee

AUTUMN AT WISLEY GARDENS

"For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." Isaiah 61.11

Recently, I visited Wisley Gardens with two of my friends, having enjoyed the dry paths at Painshill the week before, with pre-booking essential at both venues. Country walks are less attractive in the wetter weather.



We were pleased to see the new parking arrangements at Wisley which are a great improvement. No longer a muddy trek to the car but rather newly tarred spaces. There was a dreadfully long queue at the entrance (due, we were told, to a fire alert) but it was not long before we were through the turnstiles and into Wisley's wonderful gardens. Our first view was of an attractive arrangement of autumnal coloured pumpkins, gourds and squashes. Just such a lovely splash of colour and collection of shapes and sizes. A short distance away was an elevated sculpture of the same vegetables in the form of a somewhat ghoulish face. Fun for the little ones and for us.

These amazing gardens were established by George Wilson, a Victorian businessman, and RHS member. He established an experimental garden in 60 acres with the aim of finding new ways of growing difficult plants. After Wilson's death, the property was purchased by another RHS member, Sir Thomas Hanbury. The gardens were extended to encompass 240 acres which Sir Thomas gifted to the National Trust outright in 1903. From there, the gardens and glass houses were developed and the laboratory opened and there are now 75 gardeners and 100 volunteers who care for this extensive area. Wisley welcomes more than one million visitors a year.

The principal and wonderful glass house contains desert, tropical and temperate climate plants. It was a real pleasure to walk around the wonderful display of these interesting and unusual plants, tree ferns and tall frangipanis in the vast glass enclosed space - I must say that many were familiar to me, being native to South Africa. The plants and ferns were all in perfect condition and the air so rich with oxygen that we left feeling really good.



We were surprised at the amount of colour in the gardens. There were swathes of Michaelmas daisies in a variety of colours from blue to magenta mixed with beautiful pink nardines and late-blooming roses. A huge assortment of cyclamen were planted in the front of the beds and these borders, framed by trees, were beginning to show off their autumn colours.

After a pleasant lunch in the cafeteria where the Covid rules were strictly adhered to, we wandered out to continue with our visit. You do understand that when three women friends have lunch it can be a lengthy process as there is so much to talk about...



We walked around the wild garden with its canal crossed by a charming bridge and admired the lovely water lilies. We carried on up paths and steps to get to the Alpine gardens where we saw the lovely edelweiss blooming in pots positioned among the other Alpine plants. There is even a charming Alpine Meadow. Next, we found ourselves in the walled gardens which were well worth a visit. We were impressed with the bonsai tree collection, some of which are more than 50 years old. From higher up we were able to take in stunning views over the countryside and all agreed that Surrey is an excellent place in which to live.

We carried on up the steps to the vegetable gardens. How I wish I had such perfectly planted and tended vegetables! There were many newly planted winter lettuce, cabbages, Brussels sprouts, various forms of attractive curly kale and others all looking as though the snails did not know they were there!

There were a number of smaller glass houses in various designs some of which were Victorian in appearance and pleasing to the eye. We saw one which contained various varieties of tempting-looking tomatoes; another had an amazing assortment of chillies in wonderful colours and shapes. There were also glass houses (all open but too small in which to walk around) containing collections of exotic cyclamen and one with Alpine plants.

Dotted around the gardens are The Four Seasons, a collection of three-dimensional interpretations standing proud at nearly 5 metres tall of Renaissance paintings created by the Italian Renaissance artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo and made by the contemporary American sculptor and film-maker Philip Haas. They imagine (L-R below) Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter in human form in exuberant arrangements of seasonal fruit, vegetables, flowers and crops.



We could not leave without visiting the plant shop. This in itself is a treat. There were wonderful plants if you were prepared to pay over the odds for them. Also, a huge collection of bulbs and seeds. We all bought seeds which can be planted now. Not the last of the big spenders!

I drove home infused with contentment after spending such a happy day at Wisley with my friends. Dorothy Francis Gurney certainly knew what she was talking about when she wrote:

*"You are nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth."*

MUSIC AS WORSHIP

“Music is moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind,
flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything.”
Plato

For almost two thousand years, Christians have used music as a way to worship. In the Bible, the Apostle Paul writes: “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”

The word “hymn” comes from the Greek word “humans” which means “a song of praise”. Originally these would have been written in honour of the Gods. Hymnody (the singing or composition of hymns) has evolved and changed over the centuries and been affected by new thinking and developing religious beliefs: throughout the history of the church, whenever there has been renewal, revival or restoration, new songs of worship have appeared.

During the Middle Ages Hymnody developed in the form of Gregorian chant or ‘plainsong’. It was sung in Latin and most often by monastic choirs. But in the 16th century, church goers were given much greater access to hymns as a result of the invention of the printing press and the influential German theologian, Martin Luther, who began encouraging people to sing together in congregations.

In England, the non-conformist minister Isaac Watts (1674-1748) began a transformation of congregational singing. Watts believed strongly that hymns should express the religious feelings of the people and he became a prolific writer, creating hundreds of new hymns. Watts has been described as “the liberator of English hymnody” as his hymns moved people to sing from the heart, with great faith and understanding.

In the same period, another significant movement affected the hymns of the church: the Methodist movement, led by John Wesley and especially his brother Charles, used simple rhythms and sing-able melodies to help congregational singing. They wrote many of our most well-known hymns that are still very popular today.

In the late 19th Century a new style of hymnody known as “gospel” emerged. These songs were usually characterised by a strong lead vocal and exciting harmonies and were a great influence on later contemporary worship worldwide.

Simon Lole, ‘Songs of Praise’ conductor, composer, arranger and organist (BBC website)

‘Songs of Praise’, the longest running religious television programme in the world, was first seen and heard on 1st October 1961. The first edition came from the Tabernacle Baptist Chapel in Cardiff, with guest soloist Heather Harper. The programme showcases the best of congregational hymn singing up and down the land.



If we are honest, one of the main joys of going to church is to be able to sing our hearts out, whether it be on or off-key; to lose ourselves in the words and music of our favourite hymns. So, not being able to sing as part of the church family has been a huge miss. We are working on an idea to include a link for church music in future Newsletters and will keep you in the loop.

Here are the Nation’s Favourite Hymns for 2020, as broadcast in Songs of Praise led by Aled Jones on 12 July, from St David’s Cathedral, South Wales. *Ed*

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Jerusalem | 6. I Vow to Thee my Country |
| 2. How Great Thou Art | 7. Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer |
| 3. In Christ Alone | 8. Amazing Grace |
| 4. Dear Lord and Father of Mankind | 9. Be still for the presence of the Lord |
| 5. Abide with Me | 10. Here I am, Lord (I’m the Lord of Sea and Sky) |

ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR when the first early rains of the season are starting to fall. Blue sky turning purple; crashing thunder, streaks of white lightning and then the heavens open, washing away months of suffocating dust. Almost overnight brown is flushed with green; the



ground is gentle underfoot and you can hear Zimbabwe breathe again. Early in the morning a slender mongoose runs across the garden, snatching up beetles flushed by the rain and late in the afternoon a hamerkop (below) flies in and sorts through a pile of mulch under a fruit tree, selecting the pieces that would make the perfect lining for its enormous platform nest high up in a tree. Our beautiful Zimbabwe is coming back to life. In many of



our towns and cities the streets are lined with Jacaranda trees whose purple flowers are a spectacle this October, providing colour in our impossibly difficult lives - the words of author Cathy Buckle whose farm in Marondera was lost to a former guerrilla member in March 2000.

INSTEAD OF CORONAVIRUS, THE HUNGER WILL KILL US is the sentiment shared by many poor Zimbabweans. The World Bank have stated that figures indicate extreme poverty in



Zimbabwe has increased from 33.4% to 40% of the population. The World Bank define extreme poverty as people living on US\$1.90 (£1.46) a day! The essentials of life are in short supply or priced beyond most pockets. Mike Masedza said that Dominic Benhura (4th from right in blue mask), a famous Zimbabwean sculptor and a colleague of Artpeace, recently distributed bags of maize to fellow artists.

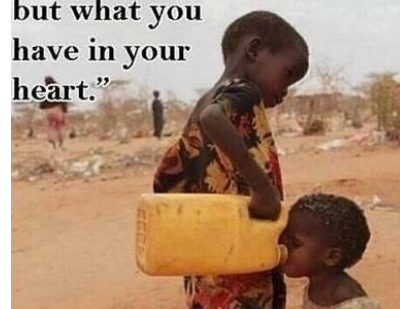


WATER SHORTAGE: Artist Lizeni (left) said: 'See photo of water we are using in my area. The situation is worsening daily. We wake up as early as 3am to queue for water which we now drink from unprotected wells. There has been no running tap water here for more than 25 years. Many are ill.'

THANK YOU to all those who have donated recently to help Artpeace. With inflation approx. 800%, life is unbearable. Some stalwarts give monthly which is of enormous help. Another donation arrived a few days ago via Toller URC from a bereaved family courtesy of

their minister. AP are so appreciative of this support and sent the photo (right) with a caption.

"To be rich, is not what you have in your bank account, but what you have in your heart."

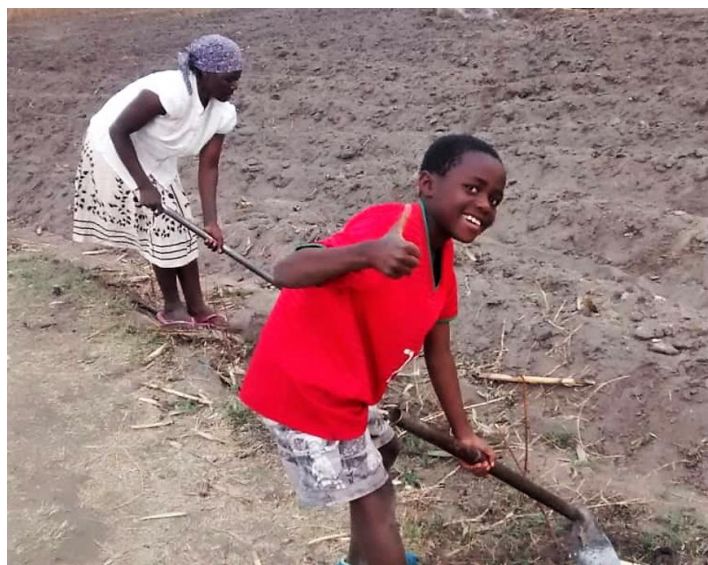


SAD NEWS: Artist Teddy Masedza's wife Falinisi (46), has died from Tuberculosis which she contracted in March, leaving Teddy to look after their 4 children. Teddy now has TB but funds sent over helped to buy medicine and his condition has improved. Zimbabwe has the highest



estimated TB incidence per capita in the world. Photos above, show two of Teddy's family at their mother's funeral and samples of his bird sculptures which some readers will have purchased.

STILL NO RAIN: Artpeace are patiently waiting for the rains to arrive and signs are promising.



They cannot wait to sow all the seed that Marlow URC funded as their crops of maize are a real-life changer. Let us hope we have better news by the next NL. Photo left shows Shingi's son Emmanuel and his wife Beauty hard at work in the heat in their field.

DOMINIC BENHURA mentioned earlier in this article is in a league of his own. Born in 1968, he began his career in sculpture at the age of ten when he studied under his cousin, Tapfuma Gusta a Master Sculptor. Dominic sold his first piece professionally to architects at the age of twelve. His work is bold and daring and he captures balance and movement both physically and emotionally. His prime motivation is to explore new ideas, concepts, techniques, and methods to communicate powerful simple ideas. Nature, family, and the relationship with his children are the main inspiration for his work. **Johnston Simpson**





CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

There will be a page (or more) devoted to your Christmas greetings messages in the next issue, should any of you wish to make use of it.

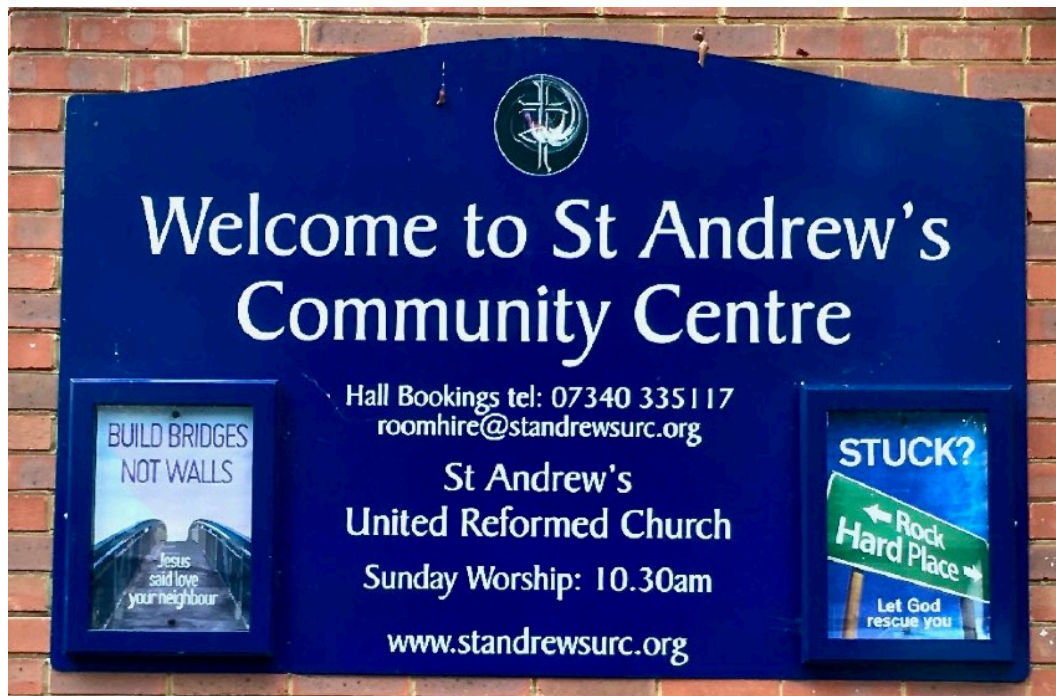
Please help to make it as festive as possible by sending in Christmas messages to your friends.



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We are at present holding holding services every Sunday with Zoom at 11.30 am.
A weekly "Thought for the Day" and a prayer are also available by post or email.
Please contact the Minister for inclusion.

Anyone who wishes to take part in the Zoom service should contact the minister, who will
be able to send them a link to enable easy participation.
You are all most welcome to join us!

**Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins.
Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold
grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.**

I Peter 4 vv 8-10