



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

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

Volume 78 No 1



"I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, "Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again."

Lewis Carroll

February 2021



Dear friends

Isabel Cameron was a Scottish author, writing in the 1920 -1940s. A number of the books she wrote are collections of simple, rather sentimental stories about everyday life in the Scottish Highlands. To be honest, there's little to challenge anyone in them, but if you want a gentle, "feel-good" read then they make a perfect antidote to Lockdown depression. Winter nights are with us and I admit that this is not a time of year I particularly enjoy. Re-reading one of the Isabel Cameron books though, I read something that really chimed in with my experience as well. Apparently, there was an old superstition in the north of Scotland that when the fire went out in a home, or else when it just wouldn't catch or give out any heat, the evil fairies and the kelpies had stolen the fire. Mrs Cameron wrote that there was a saying which, translated from the Gaelic, runs along the lines of "He who steals the fire, steals the blessing". As soon as I read that saying I knew exactly what it meant.

I love an open fire and have enjoyed them for most of my life. Growing up there was always a fire in the back room at home during the winter- and it was in the back room only as well. I'm talking about the days when most people only heated one room, when the front room only had a fire at Christmas and fire in the bedroom grate meant that someone was seriously ill and basically dying! I've always loved to watch the flames dancing, hear the crackles and sometimes see the little bits of soot on the back of the grate glow orange, like stars against the black. If it's raining heavily and it's coming down the chimney there's that hiss as the water hits the fire and evaporates with a comforting hiss of steam - the fire repelling the storm. Having lived for 12 years in the Welsh mountains, I can also think of many times when there's been a "rare hooley" going on outside. The rain's been battering the windows and the slates have been rattling on the roof as the weather tries to do its worst - but what a wonderful thing a fire in the grate is then, with its bright comfort and cheer and feeling of security, particularly if the electricity had gone out (which it did frequently). "He who steals the fire, steals the blessing" caught my imagination. I immediately understood that saying and identified with it.

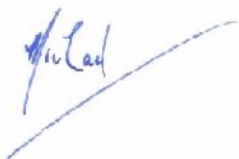
Many's the occasion that I've had to wrestle back the fire from those evil fairies and pesky kelpies too. I'm no stranger to sitting on my haunches, holding a couple of sheets of newspaper across the opening in order to get the fire to draw through properly. Drawing pictures in the ice on the inside of your bedroom window may well have been great fun at the time but I don't hanker after it now. I certainly hold no nostalgia for the smell of paraffin; but when "the north wind both blow and we shall have snow" there's certainly something very cosy about making up a good fire - and a real sense of blessing fills the room.

One of the churches in my first pastorate was Appledore URC. We only had a couple of Church Meetings a year and they were held in the schoolroom there. It had a couple of grates at one end. We always made up good fires for the evening - and put the kettles on too. People used to bring bread and butter and jam and toasting forks with them. When the meeting was over, we used to make a cup of tea, do toast on the fire and have a bit of a sing-song. Looking back, I don't remember the meetings being long or difficult. I suspect that everyone just wanted to get on to tea and toast and have a good warm by the fire. It was such a social time.

"He who steals the fire steals the blessing." I know exactly what that means and I expect that many of you do too. A gas boiler may be more effective but a warm radiator does feel a rather meagre blessing when compared to a nice, blazing fire on the hearth with the prospect of toast for supper.

God blesses us in so many ways and I've certainly been thankful for the blessing of a good fire in the grate on many occasions. I'll tell you one thing... I'm not letting any pesky fairies or kelpies steal it from me.

With all good wishes,



CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY 2021

Sundays: 11.30 am Zoom Worship followed by Zoom Chat

Tuesday 2nd 7.30 pm St Andrew's Elders

Tuesday 9th 7.30 pm Weybridge Elders

Friday 12th 12.30 pm People who Lunch

At the time of writing all events are being held online. In line with URC guidance, the church premises are closed for both public worship and private prayer. Since the Covid vaccine is now being rolled out and an increasing number of our two congregations are receiving it, the hope is that the situation will soon change. Once the infection and death rate falls, Government regulations begin to lift and the URC's advice changes, we are hoping to be able to start resuming normal service. Watch this space!

LENT 2021

Ash Wednesday this year is on 17th February and I am currently writing a Lent Course again for 2021. In 2020 we picked up on some of the Holy Habits identified in Acts 2. With the difficulty of getting totally fresh material I intend to pick up the habits we didn't look at, namely Making more Disciples - Sharing Resources - Serving - Breaking Bread and Worship.

Last year, as well as the booklet we began with two Lent Groups which both came to a swift end as the first lockdown came into effect. This year I don't think that the face-to-face groups will be possible but the booklet and questions are. Reading the official booklets, it also becomes immediately obvious just how much has changed since March 2020 and that some of the topics need considerable rethinking. This could be both interesting and stimulating.

So, there will be a pastorate Lent Course this year. It will pick look at the Holy Habits which we didn't look at last year and will be with you just as soon as I've completed it. I hope that you will find it helpful.

Michael Hodgson

ELDERS' DEVOTIONS - DECEMBER 2020

Constitution

Reading Isaiah Ch 61 v11 - Ch 62 v2

In thinking about this, was I struck by an article in 'Reform', a magazine well worth reading full of interest, thought-provoking, news and fun.

'Silence is golden.' A proverbial saying, often used in circumstances where it is thought that saying nothing is preferable to speaking. Probably at times a good thing. But Silence is also very much a bad thing. Silence can be frightening, lonely and a killer of hope.

Marcus Rashford spoke out about meals for school children; to start with, the Government listened but when he asked for them to be continued the answer was no. Those families in such desperate need must have lost hope in the silence of response to the pleas he was making. But he did not stay silent and now they continue.

Our reading in Isaiah has Isaiah saying he will not stay silent but will sing out the praises of the Lord. Our churches may have been silent at the start of the pandemic, but now we are raising our voices, albeit in a different way, to good effect. Rather than looking inwards we have looked beyond the walls of our buildings using technology to spread the word.

As we come now to discuss our Christmas praise and worship, we need to bring the good news of hope in very different ways to previous years. We will not be Silent.

Let Us Pray

Getting the room ready, the meeting room, the guest bedroom, making sure that all is clean and covid secure. Pouring the coffee, preparing the agenda and circulating the minutes.

God, help us at those times when we are called to do the preparing jobs, the jobs that nobody wants to hear about and nobody sees done.

Thank you for those times when someone recognises the validity of our contribution. But when they don't, may we be motivated to do what is right, encouraged by the rightness of what we do and not the need for applause.

Dismantling the current way of doing things, challenging how it has always been done, pointing out how things are failing, turning the world upside down.

God, enable us, empower us, strengthen us, when what we have to say and do, is not easy to hear or understand.

We will not stay silent. We will go in the way of Jesus.

AMEN

Anna Crawford

Cover photograph: Thanks to Carol Lee's brother, Raymond Gosland, who took our cover photograph of the White Cart River in Glasgow's Pollock Park.

PARADE OF THE COLOURS



We were delighted to be joined for our Zoom service on 13 December by members of our local Uniformed organisations whose participation is always a joy. The Call to Worship was 'A Rainbow' and those who paraded the Colours represented the Union, the Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, with the Brownie Flag online and the Rainbows. A Brownie read the first prayer and readings followed by Beavers. A Cub made our mouths water reading a lovely poem about the making of mincemeat that our minister had learnt as a child:

'Oh hurry! All you sailors,
And bring your cargoes in.
For all the mincemeat makers
Are anxious to begin...'

The theme of the address 'Give a little love - together we can make a difference' came from the John Lewis Christmas advertisement - the story follows. "A lad's football is stuck in a tree. A pigeon lands on the branch beside it and the lad hopes that he'll dislodge it but the pigeon is indifferent to the lad's plight, as only pigeons can be, and flies off, leaving the boy no further forward. A girl, however, sees the problem and comes over. She throws her umbrella up into the tree and her aim is spot on. The boy gets his ball back, happy because of a simple act of kindness. As the advert continues the boy then does an act of kindness to the snowman, who then does an act of kindness to the snow family whose snow car has broken down. This then enables them to do a kindness to an elderly, housebound couple, who can then do a kindness to their neighbour - and so it continues- and in each scenario, each person is able to do a kindness because of the kindness that they've received. So it goes on until a little girl gets her broken glasses mended as an act of kindness by a stranger and, of course, that little girl with the broken glasses is the same little girl who started off this chain in the first place. The advertisement ends with their slogan for this year- "Give a little love - together we can make a big difference".

There followed prayers led by a Scout and finally, in our individual homes, we all lit a candle before singing the last hymn "This little light of mine".

Ed



Our last Messy Church in St Andrew's was on 15 March last year. We have tried to keep in touch with our regular families by sending regularly emails entitled Messy Church at Home, containing suggestions for activities relating to a different biblical topic. This link is also useful: <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-church-home-new-beginnings>



Goody bags full of surprises

Just before Christmas, Keith and I delivered bags containing a book obtained from Scripture Union or the Bible Society telling the Christmas Story, a puzzle or colouring book, crayons and pencils, chocolate or sweets, as well as Christmas craft activities. We tried to vary what was in the bags according to the age of the child and different from their sibling.

We had some very appreciative messages afterwards. We were also pleased that one of our families joined us for the Zoom Nativity Service.

Anne Fitzgerald



All ready for the off!

CHRISTMAS 2020



*Entering into the spirit of
Christmas present*

I think that there are going to be write-ups about the Christmas services elsewhere in this magazine but I should like to say a big thank you to all who attended and took part in the Christmas services. The decision not to hold services in buildings but to hold them in other ways was a very one difficult to make. As events turned out, it proved to have been a very wise one. We were able to run all our planned services in the way in which we intended and we had some lovely, memorable services as well. Christmas certainly wasn't cancelled

The Parade Service on 13 December is one which I know touched many of you and certainly kicked things off really positively. We also uploaded two pre-recorded services to our websites. A number of people put a lot of hard work into them all and I certainly look back content that we truly celebrated the birth of Jesus, albeit differently from normal.

On a personal note, may I also thank you for your message of support in your Christmas cards. I did appreciate them very much and was touched. 2020 was jolly hard work. Knowing what to do for the best hasn't been easy but I do think that we are coming through this crisis by all pulling together. Zoom has been invaluable and let's hope that it won't be long before both buildings are open again on a Sunday. I think that there is now light at the end of the tunnel.

Michael Hodgson



A NEW ADVENT WREATH STAND

Those on Zoom will have seen behind Michael the St Andrew's backdrop with the Christmas tree and the Advent wreath. Some of you will have thought that it looked different to the usual one. Well spotted!!!

Christchurch URC in Leatherhead sadly closed in October and I had the opportunity to have their Advent wreath stand from amongst the items they were trying to re-home. I have taken services at Christchurch on a number of occasions and always been made very welcome. So, to have the wreath stand was special as it was through a flower arranging friend, an Elder there, that I was invited.

It is made of oak so fits with our wood work at St Andrew's, although rather newer. There are proper holders for the candles and it is much easier to decorate. With the added height, it can be seen from the back of the church. You can see it standing in its full glory and this year we have all been able to enjoy it, albeit on Zoom. Next year we look forward to being able to see it in the church, in person!



Anna Crawford



! CHURCH DIRECTORY AMENDMENT !

Please note that Anne Lewis lives at 8 Elm **Gardens**, not Elm Grove.

NEWS FROM URC WESSEX SYNOD

ZOOM EVENT

In the light of our desire to encourage varying types of ministry and vocation in our local churches and across the wider URC, please pass this on – we do not always know who God is preparing to receive this. Please note that this is a broad event covering different forms of vocation. Thanking you in advance for disseminating the information and encouraging people to sign up.

What is God asking of You?

Saturday 27 February 2021 - 10 am - 3 pm Online

Register with ministries@urc.org.uk to receive the Zoom details

Ministry Enquirers' Event to help you think about God's call to

- Worship Leading
- Lay Preaching
- Ministry with children and young people
- The Ministry of Word and Sacraments
- Church Related Community Work

SHARING THE VISION

The January edition of Sharing the Vision is now available to download from our website www.urcwessex.org.uk (if you experience problems with the link please copy and paste it into your browser).

It is called "[Sharing the Vision –January edition](#)" and is available in both Word and pdf formats. Links to both versions can be found in the scrolling news section or by clicking on the Newsletter icon.

(Direct link address: <https://wessexsynodurc.org.uk/sharing-the-vision-january-edition/>)

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ALL ITEMS TO THE EDITOR, NORMA REID, 3 GWALIOR ROAD, LONDON SW15 1NP
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FRIENDS REMEMBERED

John Roddan



We were all saddened by the loss of John Roddan last October at 90 years of age. A member of our church and fellowship for many years. John and Valerie were married for 66 years and he joined the church around 1958.

He was a very active member of St Andrew's for over 40 years. In these earlier years, it was normal to serve on the Deacon's Court which was responsible for the fabric and general maintenance of the church, and then, for those who so wished and subject to members' approval, a move to the Eldership followed.

John followed this route serving on the Deacon's Court and subsequently being ordained as an Elder. He was very visible on both of these bodies and took his duties seriously. In debate and discussion, his voice was usually heard. He was also, as Valerie says, a great support to her in running the Cub Scout Group.

In fact, the Roddan family played a significant role in St Andrew's for almost 40 years and we are appreciative of that.

John could be called a borderer (although he was born in Lenzie, north of Glasgow). The Roddan family came from the border area near Torthorwald which was the name they gave to their Weybridge home.

My overriding memory is the Christmas gathering each year at the Roddan home. This took place on Christmas Eve and really became part of the Christmas scene. We began assembling early, because the intention was to end the evening shortly after 11pm and then head for St Andrew's and the Midnight service, where the birth of Jesus would be celebrated in a meaningful way. This Midnight service attracted a large congregation, with a full choir to support wonderful carols. On these evenings, Valerie provided food delights and John topped up glasses with his secret, magical Punch. The lively Roddan springer spaniel provided entertainment to complete a happy scene.

So, now John has gone to a better place in the safe hands of Our Lord. We should be grateful for people like John. Best described as "Pillars of the Kirk".

He is sorely missed but is well remembered.

Holms Carlile

John was a good friend and always had the interests of youngsters in our church and was a great supporter of our then Scout troop, the 8th Walton.

Johnston Simpson

Our thoughts and prayers and love go to John's wife, Valerie and to his family and friends.

The Reverend Norman Edsall

We were very sorry to learn that that Norman Edsall died on 15 January. For many years Norman was Minister at Hersham URC and no doubt there are those in the church who will remember him. We send our sympathy to his wife, Maureen, and all the family.

ZOOM WORSHIP AND OUR TECH TEAM



Since the beginning of April, we have relied on a small “Tech team” to run and manage our services. They’ve been brilliant and have also given many of us a lot of help and support with our own IT skills so that most of us now can access and engage with Zoom worship and with our chat-time with confidence. Hilary Netherwood and Paula Walsh have been the real techies and Carol Lee has enabled our chats. We owe all three a lot and through their work we’ve been able to keep our two fellowships together in such difficult times. The pressure on them is considerable but I am delighted to tell you that the team is being expanded. Hilary Bennett, Anna Crawford, Fiona Little and Norma Reid are joining the Tech team and Margaret

Faultless will be joining Carol as part of the hosting team. Their help and involvement will, I know, make a massive difference and we wish them well in these new roles.

With the resumption of Sunday services at both church buildings hopefully now only just around the corner, you may well be wondering if we need such a team in the future? Well, I think that the answer is a very definite “yes”. St Andrew’s has already decided that its services will be live-streamed on a Sunday so that those who can’t get to church can still join us for worship if they wish. Weybridge probably wants to as well although, if we go ahead with alterations to the church building, it may be best to get the main equipment needed installed as part of that. Installing WiFi in the church now, however, would allow us to make a basic start.

So, it’s with great joy that we welcome new members to our Tech team and our Host team. This has already proved to be an outreach opportunity and the intention is to build on it post-lockdown. More members will be very welcome and may I particularly put out a plea to Weybridge members please? If we want to live-stream services from Weybridge URC in the future then we’re going to need more on our Tech team than we currently have. This is the ideal time to join a knowledgeable, caring but also fun group and acquire the necessary skills. Any volunteers?

Michael Hodgson

PRAYER AND SHARE

Now that more of us are becoming accustomed to using Zoom to contact each other, it has been suggested that there might be an opportunity to set up a “Prayer and Share” group.

This would be a monthly get-together online, where people could share their needs and pray together with others about them. The aim would be for it to take place once a month for 15 – 20 minutes. I could only run one during the daytime, due to other commitments in the evening. One could be set up in the evening, if someone else were prepared to run it.

This would be set up initially as a short-term measure, over the next few months, given that both churches are closed due to lock-down and we cannot meet face-to-face or use the Prayer Tree.

I am aware that Elders of both churches are contacting the members allocated to their care on a regular basis, so, before any preparations are made, it would be useful to know the level of demand for such a meeting.

Please can you let me know if you would find it useful.

Claire Ward

Email: jem.ward2010@hotmail.co.uk

T: (01932) 560 679



HAPPY NEWS!

We were delighted to hear from Roy Bones that he became a Great Grandpa on 4 January at 4.17 am when Florence Ellen was born to Matt and Emma Woods. Many congratulations!

A GIFT FOR GREAT AUNTY ELSIE



My sister Elsie, who lives on her own in Pyrford, was due to go to her daughter's for Christmas. On Christmas Eve morning she had the news that one of her grandchildren had tested positive for Covid 19. On Christmas Eve morning my grandchildren Sara aged 14 and her brother Adam 13 dropped parcels at our house. On hearing the news that great Aunty Elsie could not go to her daughter's for Christmas and that she had no Christmas food, they sprang into action. They went home and raided their Christmas treats insisting that Aunty Elsie must have some treats for Christmas. I cooked extra dinner and made up a bag of fruit, cheese and bread. As soon as we finished our dinner, Eric and I went over to my

sister with Christmas dinner and goodies. We shared Face Time together in the evening. I felt overwhelmed and proud that my grandchildren where so thoughtful with no prompting from any adults. They each wrote her a letter telling her how much they loved her.

Jean Rigden

LETTER FROM AMERICA (HOUSTON CALLING)

Having learned something of the customs and origins of Thanksgiving from Sophia Swanson on one of our weekly Zoom catch-up chats with Hilary and Ghislaine, I asked Sophia if she would make a contribution to the Newsletter. Sophia has also been putting her sewing skills to good use by making masks for family and friends. Ed

"We celebrate Thanksgiving in the US every year on the fourth Thursday in November to say thank you to the English pilgrims and puritans that arrived in New England in the 1620s, to celebrate the harvest and give thanks God along with Native Americans. Here in Texas, the feast usually consists of a smoked turkey and smoked ham with all the trimmings. Cornbread stuffing in the south and bread stuffing in the north of the US (cornbread is better!). Since we usually have a large family gathering for Thanksgiving, we 'trim' the Christmas tree soon after eating and decorate it having many hands available to help. Pumpkin pie is enjoyed after a job well done by all.



Now it's on to Christmas and making Elf on the Shelf merchandise for neighbours, needing tiny mask (new for this year), tiny shirts or sleeping bags. Elf on the Shelf is a phenomenon that begins December 1 and ends on Christmas Eve, where Elf gets into mischief each day as a welcome distraction for children at home. In other words, mums are in need of Elf merchandise to get them through the 24 days leading up to Christmas! "

LOCKDOWN - WHERE CAN I EXERCISE?

Before Christmas, there was discussion after the Zoom service about the importance of taking exercise in the fresh air. Now that we are in full-scale lockdown again, this is even more important. Some of you can walk easily across any terrain, but there are others who cannot. If your knees are “not as young as they were” (whose are?) you may wish to consider a walk in Holmwood Park, near St. Peter’s Hospital.

This is open parkland and is relatively flat, with a tarmac path leading from one end to the other, a distance of about half a mile. There are several open wooden benches beside the path, if you don’t want to walk the whole length in one go – or at all!

On a hill in the park is Botleys Mansion, a Palladian mansion house now used as a wedding venue, and there are details of its history near to the park entrance from the car park. There are also unmade tracks through the woods at the top end of the car park, accessed by crossing the road leading to Botleys Mansion, which are very pleasant to walk along in Spring and Summer.

The site has its own car park, which is free of charge for up to three hours by pressing a button on the ticket machine. The car park is accessed from Stonehill Road. If you head from St Peter’s towards Chertsey, turn left at the first mini roundabout (by The White Lodge) onto Holloway Hill, at the top of which is the Chertsey branch of Squire’s Garden Centre. After another 200 metres, fork left onto Stonehill Road, and the car park entrance is signposted about 100 metres further on the left.

We visit the place regularly, as it is close to our home – the grandchildren enjoy climbing on the fallen logs!

Jem Ward

*If anyone else has direct experience of a walk, please send in the details,
as it is always good to have a personal recommendation! Ed*

Elmbridge Borough Council also do self-guided walks that can be found on the Council’s website elmbridge.gov.uk/sports-and-health/healthy-walks-and-cycle-rides Log on for details.

One such is Broadwater Lake and Desborough Island, a short circular route of 4 km (approx 55 minutes) or a longer, circular route of 5.3 km (approx one hour and 10 minutes). It is described as a “relaxing and scenic route along the wooded banks of a lake and the Thames towpath, with an optional loop around the tranquil meadows of Desborough Island.” Both routes are said to be suitable for most reasonably fit, occasional walkers. The shorter route is all flat on well-maintained countryside footpaths and suitable for normal walking footwear and all terrain buggies. There is one small ‘kissing gate’ to get through. The longer route includes steep steps up to and back down from the river crossing bridges, and a road with a gradual uphill incline as you exit the island. The island meadow footpaths have grass under foot so can be muddy, so strong waterproof footwear is advised in wetter months.



SIMPLE ARITHMETIC?

Ten little churchgoers said "We're doing fine!"
Till a Golf Club claimed one - then there were nine.

Nine little churchgoers, not all considerate,
Caused one to feel unwelcome - then there were eight.

Eight little churchgoers aspiring towards Heaven,
But one became an atheist, reducing them to seven.

Seven little churchgoers in dogmatic fix
Scared one off with rules and regs, leaving only six.

Six little churchgoers striving still to thrive
One lay longer in his bed - then there were five.

Five little churchgoers found praying such a chore,
One gave up completely - then there were four.

Four little churchgoers sang choruses with glee
But one of them was out of tune with the other three.

Three little churchgoers all caught a dose of 'flu,
No-one called on one of them - then there were two.

Two little churchgoers unsure what could be done
Had a difference of opinion, leaving only one.

One little Christian, knowing what to do
By praying, praising, witnessing soon became two.

Two little Christians, as a faithful core
Converted soon another two, adding up to four.

Four little Christians their faith did demonstrate
By doubling their number - resulting now in eight,

Eight little Christians witnessed more and more
Until their church was full of - Christians galore!

Source Unknown

HAPPINESS IS ... A SHOT IN THE ARM



A VIEW FROM THE PUTNEY HUB

At last we can see that there is an end in sight. Many of us in the older age groups have had the first jab (or 'jag' if you are a Scot) with the second either already administered to a few or not more than 12 weeks away for the rest of us. I am one of the lucky ones whose experience was a good one. A text message from my surgery gave me the date, time and place for the first jab and there was a follow-up date in 11 weeks.

The Scout Hut in Putney, sadly long unoccupied, was suddenly full of bustle and good cheer. The venue brought back happy memories of bygone days in Glasgow and weekly Brownie meetings, in my mini-length Brownie uniform (lovingly made by my Mum), arms awash with badges and droopy hand-knitted hat with the bobble on the end (respectively lovingly sewn on and knitted by my Mum). I rolled up at the Scout Hut, suitably masked, ten minutes before my 10.40 am appointment and waited all of half a minute before being ushered in by a similarly masked, smiling-eyed marshal. I checked in to the desk and was immediately shown to one of the booths and made to feel at ease. I was asked if I had any allergies and when I admitted to one (last experienced about 10 years ago), a Dr came over to question me about it. It was thought to be insignificant in the context of the vaccination and at 10.39 am precisely the jab was put into my arm and I was off to sit down in the far end of the hall for 15 minutes before being released. 'Are you feeling ok?' "Fine thanks". 'Would you like a sticker?' "Oh, yes please!" There was tea and biscuits available but it seemed not on offer unless you admitted to feeling wobbly. Although I missed it, I understand that the Putney Scouts Hut featured in the local London Six-o'clock News slot recently, presumably as an example of a smooth-running operation. I was lucky. For those of you still waiting, I hope you will be called up very soon. Suddenly the world opens up again. The feeling of relief together with gratitude to all those involved in the development and production and now distribution and administration of the vaccine is quite overwhelming. Thank you!

Norma Reid (aka Ed)

A TEST OF FAITH

Two of my nieces have contracted Covid 19. One not too badly but the other, Caroline, who is only 27 and has two daughters 5 and 2, was in hospital for 10 days and over a week on oxygen. Thankfully, she is now home with her family. She is still not back to normal and gets very tired.

I must confess, my faith has taken a big hit at times this year and I questioned my belief. A friend of mine, Carol, who attends St Johns Church in Walton sent me an email telling me that her sister is very unwell. I spoke of my dwindling faith and she sent me this.

'As we meet with adversity we praise God that He gives us the strength and peace of mind to move forward with courage. We give thanks that no situation is too difficult for Him to see us through. He will see us through and He is with your nieces, especially the young mum in hospital.'

A few simple words that made such a huge difference, I also passed them on to my sister and she said they gave her great comfort.

Jean Rigden

"I ask not for a lighter burden, but for broader shoulders." – Jewish Proverb

REMEMBERING THE BARD



With so many Scots in our two congregations, particularly at St Andrew's with its Scottish origins, we could not forget to mark Burns Night in our after-service chat on 24 January. Volunteers who read their favourite poems by The Bard delighted us all. It set the scene for those of us who would be celebrating the following day with traditional fare of haggis, tatties and neeps, perhaps with a typical Scottish dessert such as Cranachan (typically oatmeal, raspberries, double cream, heather honey and whisky) washed down by a wee dram.

Holms Carlile started us off with a great rendering of 'A Man's a Man for a' that', said to promote both Burns' political and moral sensibilities. It was chosen to be sung at the opening of the devolved Scottish Parliament in 1999. Michael's choice of Jon Anderson my Jo' (once described as 'the most touching of Burns' songs) was followed by an extract from 'Tam o'Shanter', a farmer who often gets drunk with his friends in a public house in Ayr, with his thoughtless ways. His wife, furious at his late arrival home after rather too much of the 'bevvy' is described as sitting "Gathering her brows like gathering storm, Nursing her wrath to keep it warm". What a great description! Margaret Faultless read 'Ae fond Kiss', one of Burns' most famous love songs that had always meant a lot to her and Gordon. Jean Ridgen selected 'Tae a Moose' as it brought back happy memories of her Scottish father reciting it every year to her daughter, Sue, who was born on Burns Night. 'Tae a Moose' was written by Burns, a farmer, after he had turned over the nest of a tiny field mouse with his plough. Janet Sommerville lifted our spirits when the snow was around with 'Bonie Bell'. "The smiling spring comes in rejoicing, And surly winter grimly flies..." reminded us that Spring is on the way.

Thanks to all those who so aptly and royally entertained us!



WHAT IS LOVE?

With Valentine's Day fast approaching, as ever, the children can be relied upon to get it right!

'Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and just listen.'
Bobby - age 7

'If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate.'
Nikka - age 6

'I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones.'
Lauren - age 4

'When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you.'
Karen - age 7

'You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.'
Jessica - age 8

A four-year old child's elderly neighbour had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his mother asked what he had said to the neighbour, the little boy said, 'Nothing, I just helped him cry.'

ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

KIND READERS who sent donations certainly lifted AP spirits over the Christmas period which would otherwise have been bleak to say the least. The money helped all our friends buy food



such as chicken and rice to enjoy with their families and share with neighbours. Artist Herbert's son Elias foraged in the bush for these lovely mushrooms to supplement their meal – a feast fit for a king! Charmaine (13) bought her sisters Chipu (5) and Rudo (3) all orphans, much needed food and second-hand clothes for 3\$ from a street market – the clothes (in photo above) came from overseas. The children were so appreciative.



Artist Christine (left) thanks us again for more support to buy art materials to help youngsters with problems. She writes: [I want to thank you so much for the money you sent for art materials to use with the children. I have had a couple of sessions with them but already I see issues coming through in their drawings. One girl comes from a broken home and it reflects in her drawings because the family is always the subject of her drawings. The other girl has a most complex personality. She has a lot to say but something always holds her back. In today's session I see some release. She is a lovely girl but one who needs to find her expression and I think](#)

we may be on to something with these lessons. I've had a word with their parents too that these are not just art lessons but therapy and also, we get a chance to talk about life and all its happenings too. My heart is pounding because this may be bigger than I bargained for but there's a part of me that is singing because I think it will be good for me too'.

Isabella an orphan, is another example of donations being put to good use. She has been looked

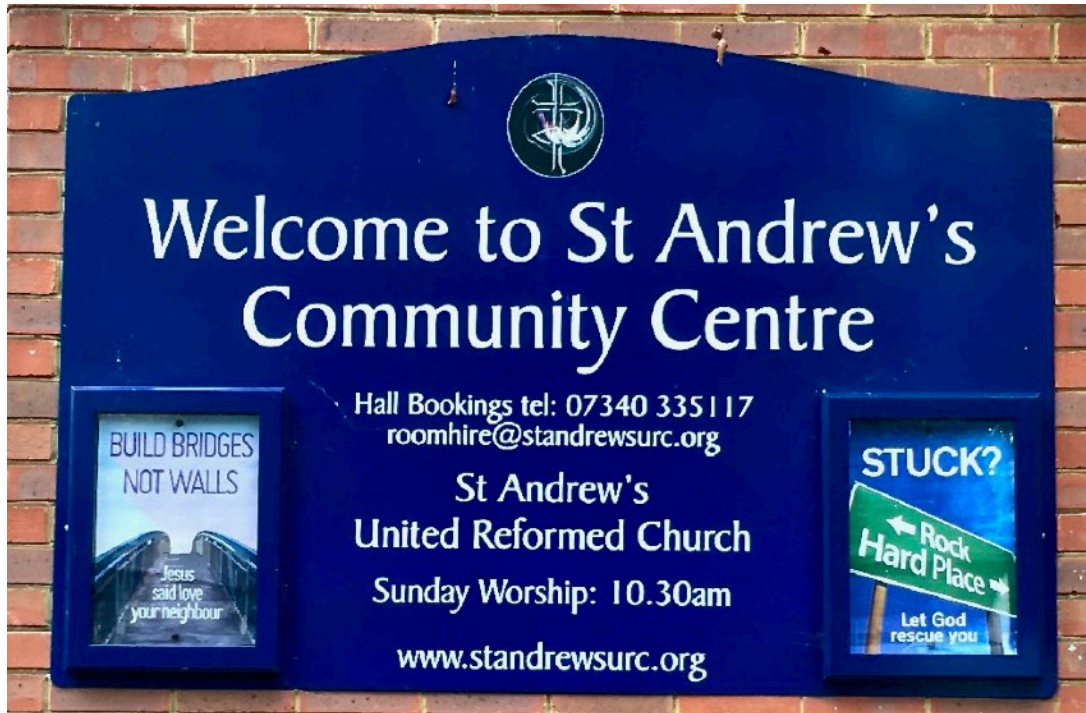


after by artist Lizeni for many years and but was so dejected at being unable to attend school. Donations from a member of St A's changed her life. I lost touch with Isabella for several years, but she recently got in touch to inform me that by doing piece jobs - washing clothes, ironing and cleaning people's homes she was able to raise money to go to university. She is now studying for an International Marketing degree at Chinhoyi University of Technology. At least she now has a chance in life instead of joining the millions of unemployed. A little helping hand goes a long way! Photo far left of Isabella with a proud Lizeni.

THE JANUARY WEATHER in Zimbabwe was on a par with the UK – largely leaden skies with waves of heavy rain and gales; crackling lightening with massive booms of thunder but unlike us, it put big smiles on faces as it encouraged the growth of maize in their fields upon which all



our friends depend so much to see them through the year. This, coupled with our efforts in providing quality seed and fertiliser, looks like resulting in a good harvest. Left: a happy Fortune with his crop. Artpeace cannot find the words to thank all who have made such a difference to their lives in so many ways: these examples are but the tip of the iceberg. They wish their UK friends a far better New Year and share our worries about the Covid pandemic. **Johnston Simpson**



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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**

February 2021



Dear friends

Isabel Cameron was a Scottish author, writing in the 1920 -1940s. A number of the books she wrote are collections of simple, rather sentimental stories about everyday life in the Scottish Highlands. To be honest, there's little to challenge anyone in them, but if you want a gentle, "feel-good" read then they make a perfect antidote to Lockdown depression. Winter nights are with us and I admit that this is not a time of year I particularly enjoy. Re-reading one of the Isabel Cameron books though, I read something that really chimed in with my experience as well. Apparently, there was an old superstition in the north of Scotland that when the fire went out in a home, or else when it just wouldn't catch or give out any heat, the evil fairies and the kelpies had stolen the fire. Mrs Cameron wrote that there was a saying which, translated from the Gaelic, runs along the lines of "He who steals the fire, steals the blessing". As soon as I read that saying I knew exactly what it meant.

I love an open fire and have enjoyed them for most of my life. Growing up there was always a fire in the back room at home during the winter- and it was in the back room only as well. I'm talking about the days when most people only heated one room, when the front room only had a fire at Christmas and fire in the bedroom grate meant that someone was seriously ill and basically dying! I've always loved to watch the flames dancing, hear the crackles and sometimes see the little bits of soot on the back of the grate glow orange, like stars against the black. If it's raining heavily and it's coming down the chimney there's that hiss as the water hits the fire and evaporates with a comforting hiss of steam - the fire repelling the storm. Having lived for 12 years in the Welsh mountains, I can also think of many times when there's been a "rare hooley" going on outside. The rain's been battering the windows and the slates have been rattling on the roof as the weather tries to do its worst - but what a wonderful thing a fire in the grate is then, with its bright comfort and cheer and feeling of security, particularly if the electricity had gone out (which it did frequently). "He who steals the fire, steals the blessing" caught my imagination. I immediately understood that saying and identified with it.

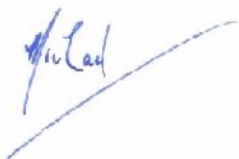
Many's the occasion that I've had to wrestle back the fire from those evil fairies and pesky kelpies too. I'm no stranger to sitting on my haunches, holding a couple of sheets of newspaper across the opening in order to get the fire to draw through properly. Drawing pictures in the ice on the inside of your bedroom window may well have been great fun at the time but I don't hanker after it now. I certainly hold no nostalgia for the smell of paraffin; but when "the north wind both blow and we shall have snow" there's certainly something very cosy about making up a good fire - and a real sense of blessing fills the room.

One of the churches in my first pastorate was Appledore URC. We only had a couple of Church Meetings a year and they were held in the schoolroom there. It had a couple of grates at one end. We always made up good fires for the evening - and put the kettles on too. People used to bring bread and butter and jam and toasting forks with them. When the meeting was over, we used to make a cup of tea, do toast on the fire and have a bit of a sing-song. Looking back, I don't remember the meetings being long or difficult. I suspect that everyone just wanted to get on to tea and toast and have a good warm by the fire. It was such a social time.

"He who steals the fire steals the blessing." I know exactly what that means and I expect that many of you do too. A gas boiler may be more effective but a warm radiator does feel a rather meagre blessing when compared to a nice, blazing fire on the hearth with the prospect of toast for supper.

God blesses us in so many ways and I've certainly been thankful for the blessing of a good fire in the grate on many occasions. I'll tell you one thing... I'm not letting any pesky fairies or kelpies steal it from me.

With all good wishes,



CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY 2021

Sundays: 11.30 am Zoom Worship followed by Zoom Chat

Tuesday 2nd 7.30 pm St Andrew's Elders

Tuesday 9th 7.30 pm Weybridge Elders

Friday 12th 12.30 pm People who Lunch

At the time of writing all events are being held online. In line with URC guidance, the church premises are closed for both public worship and private prayer. Since the Covid vaccine is now being rolled out and an increasing number of our two congregations are receiving it, the hope is that the situation will soon change. Once the infection and death rate falls, Government regulations begin to lift and the URC's advice changes, we are hoping to be able to start resuming normal service. Watch this space!

LENT 2021

Ash Wednesday this year is on 17th February and I am currently writing a Lent Course again for 2021. In 2020 we picked up on some of the Holy Habits identified in Acts 2. With the difficulty of getting totally fresh material I intend to pick up the habits we didn't look at, namely Making more Disciples - Sharing Resources - Serving - Breaking Bread and Worship.

Last year, as well as the booklet we began with two Lent Groups which both came to a swift end as the first lockdown came into effect. This year I don't think that the face-to-face groups will be possible but the booklet and questions are. Reading the official booklets, it also becomes immediately obvious just how much has changed since March 2020 and that some of the topics need considerable rethinking. This could be both interesting and stimulating.

So, there will be a pastorate Lent Course this year. It will pick look at the Holy Habits which we didn't look at last year and will be with you just as soon as I've completed it. I hope that you will find it helpful.

Michael Hodgson

ELDERS' DEVOTIONS - DECEMBER 2020

Constitution

Reading Isaiah Ch 61 v11 - Ch 62 v2

In thinking about this, was I struck by an article in 'Reform', a magazine well worth reading full of interest, thought-provoking, news and fun.

'Silence is golden.' A proverbial saying, often used in circumstances where it is thought that saying nothing is preferable to speaking. Probably at times a good thing. But Silence is also very much a bad thing. Silence can be frightening, lonely and a killer of hope.

Marcus Rashford spoke out about meals for school children; to start with, the Government listened but when he asked for them to be continued the answer was no. Those families in such desperate need must have lost hope in the silence of response to the pleas he was making. But he did not stay silent and now they continue.

Our reading in Isaiah has Isaiah saying he will not stay silent but will sing out the praises of the Lord. Our churches may have been silent at the start of the pandemic, but now we are raising our voices, albeit in a different way, to good effect. Rather than looking inwards we have looked beyond the walls of our buildings using technology to spread the word.

As we come now to discuss our Christmas praise and worship, we need to bring the good news of hope in very different ways to previous years. We will not be Silent.

Let Us Pray

Getting the room ready, the meeting room, the guest bedroom, making sure that all is clean and covid secure. Pouring the coffee, preparing the agenda and circulating the minutes.

God, help us at those times when we are called to do the preparing jobs, the jobs that nobody wants to hear about and nobody sees done.

Thank you for those times when someone recognises the validity of our contribution. But when they don't, may we be motivated to do what is right, encouraged by the rightness of what we do and not the need for applause.

Dismantling the current way of doing things, challenging how it has always been done, pointing out how things are failing, turning the world upside down.

God, enable us, empower us, strengthen us, when what we have to say and do, is not easy to hear or understand.

We will not stay silent. We will go in the way of Jesus.

AMEN

Anna Crawford

Cover photograph: Thanks to Carol Lee's brother, Raymond Gosland, who took our cover photograph of the White Cart River in Glasgow's Pollock Park.

PEOPLE WHO LUNCH

Following the very successful experiment of an online “People Who Lunch” in December, it’s been decided to resume Ladies who Lunch but entirely as People who Lunch, initially online and then moving to “actual” as soon as this becomes possible.

People Who Lunch will meet at 12.30 pm on the second Friday of each month with the first one of 2021 having taken place on Friday 8 January.



What happens is really quite simple. Prepare your lunch and bring it to your computer. Log on (or phone in) and then eat your lunch at the computer in the company of others. (No one will mind if your napkin is only paper or even if it’s not starched!) This is one meal you don’t have to eat alone or in silence. After a short, initial gathering time we split into “groups”, so that you can have a natter with the others round your “table”. We then come back together for a short time at the end. So, it’s all very straightforward and low key.

Do join us and help put the world to rights. Everyone is welcome!

Here is the Zoom code.

Topic: Ladies/People who Lunch

Every month on the Second Friday until Jun 11, 2021 - 6 sessions

Feb 12, 2021 12:30 PM

Mar 12, 2021 12:30 PM

Apr 9, 2021 12:30 PM

May 14, 2021 12:30 PM

Jun 11, 2021 12:30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83222298639?pwd=Z29Sbkh5WWF3bEJkbS95M21jU29Ndz09>

Meeting ID: 832 2229 8639

Passcode: 402038

Dial by your location

0203 051 2874 United Kingdom

0203 481 5237 United Kingdom

0203 481 5240 United Kingdom

0203 901 7895 United Kingdom

0131 460 1196 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: 832 2229 8639

Passcode: 402038

PARADE OF THE COLOURS



We were delighted to be joined for our Zoom service on 13 December by members of our local Uniformed organisations whose participation is always a joy. The Call to Worship was 'A Rainbow' and those who paraded the Colours represented the Union, the Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, with the Brownie Flag online and the Rainbows. A Brownie read the first prayer and readings followed by Beavers. A Cub made our mouths water reading a lovely poem about the making of mincemeat that our minister had learnt as a child:

'Oh hurry! All you sailors,
And bring your cargoes in.
For all the mincemeat makers
Are anxious to begin...'

The theme of the address 'Give a little love - together we can make a difference' came from the John Lewis Christmas advertisement - the story follows. "A lad's football is stuck in a tree. A pigeon lands on the branch beside it and the lad hopes that he'll dislodge it but the pigeon is indifferent to the lad's plight, as only pigeons can be, and flies off, leaving the boy no further forward. A girl, however, sees the problem and comes over. She throws her umbrella up into the tree and her aim is spot on. The boy gets his ball back, happy because of a simple act of kindness. As the advert continues the boy then does an act of kindness to the snowman, who then does an act of kindness to the snow family whose snow car has broken down. This then enables them to do a kindness to an elderly, housebound couple, who can then do a kindness to their neighbour - and so it continues- and in each scenario, each person is able to do a kindness because of the kindness that they've received. So it goes on until a little girl gets her broken glasses mended as an act of kindness by a stranger and, of course, that little girl with the broken glasses is the same little girl who started off this chain in the first place. The advertisement ends with their slogan for this year- "Give a little love - together we can make a big difference".

There followed prayers led by a Scout and finally, in our individual homes, we all lit a candle before singing the last hymn "This little light of mine".

Ed



Our last Messy Church in St Andrew's was on 15 March last year. We have tried to keep in touch with our regular families by sending regularly emails entitled Messy Church at Home, containing suggestions for activities relating to a different biblical topic. This link is also useful: <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-church-home-new-beginnings>



Goody bags full of surprises

Just before Christmas, Keith and I delivered bags containing a book obtained from Scripture Union or the Bible Society telling the Christmas Story, a puzzle or colouring book, crayons and pencils, chocolate or sweets, as well as Christmas craft activities. We tried to vary what was in the bags according to the age of the child and different from their sibling.

We had some very appreciative messages afterwards. We were also pleased that one of our families joined us for the Zoom Nativity Service.

Anne Fitzgerald



All ready for the off!

CHRISTMAS 2020



*Entering into the spirit of
Christmas present*

I think that there are going to be write-ups about the Christmas services elsewhere in this magazine but I should like to say a big thank you to all who attended and took part in the Christmas services. The decision not to hold services in buildings but to hold them in other ways was a very one difficult to make. As events turned out, it proved to have been a very wise one. We were able to run all our planned services in the way in which we intended and we had some lovely, memorable services as well. Christmas certainly wasn't cancelled

The Parade Service on 13 December is one which I know touched many of you and certainly kicked things off really positively. We also uploaded two pre-recorded services to our websites. A number of people put a lot of hard work into them all and I certainly look back content that we truly celebrated the birth of Jesus, albeit differently from normal.

On a personal note, may I also thank you for your message of support in your Christmas cards. I did appreciate them very much and was touched. 2020 was jolly hard work. Knowing what to do for the best hasn't been easy but I do think that we are coming through this crisis by all pulling together. Zoom has been invaluable and let's hope that it won't be long before both buildings are open again on a Sunday. I think that there is now light at the end of the tunnel.

Michael Hodgson



A NEW ADVENT WREATH STAND

Those on Zoom will have seen behind Michael the St Andrew's backdrop with the Christmas tree and the Advent wreath. Some of you will have thought that it looked different to the usual one. Well spotted!!!

Christchurch URC in Leatherhead sadly closed in October and I had the opportunity to have their Advent wreath stand from amongst the items they were trying to re-home. I have taken services at Christchurch on a number of occasions and always been made very welcome. So, to have the wreath stand was special as it was through a flower arranging friend, an Elder there, that I was invited.

It is made of oak so fits with our wood work at St Andrew's, although rather newer. There are proper holders for the candles and it is much easier to decorate. With the added height, it can be seen from the back of the church. You can see it standing in its full glory and this year we have all been able to enjoy it, albeit on Zoom. Next year we look forward to being able to see it in the church, in person!



Anna Crawford



! CHURCH DIRECTORY AMENDMENT !

Please note that Anne Lewis lives at 8 Elm **Gardens**, not Elm Grove.

NEWS FROM URC WESSEX SYNOD

ZOOM EVENT

In the light of our desire to encourage varying types of ministry and vocation in our local churches and across the wider URC, please pass this on – we do not always know who God is preparing to receive this. Please note that this is a broad event covering different forms of vocation. Thanking you in advance for disseminating the information and encouraging people to sign up.

What is God asking of You?

Saturday 27 February 2021 - 10 am - 3 pm Online

Register with ministries@urc.org.uk to receive the Zoom details

Ministry Enquirers' Event to help you think about God's call to

- Worship Leading
- Lay Preaching
- Ministry with children and young people
- The Ministry of Word and Sacraments
- Church Related Community Work

SHARING THE VISION

The January edition of Sharing the Vision is now available to download from our website www.urcwessex.org.uk (if you experience problems with the link please copy and paste it into your browser).

It is called "[Sharing the Vision –January edition](#)" and is available in both Word and pdf formats. Links to both versions can be found in the scrolling news section or by clicking on the Newsletter icon.

(Direct link address: <https://wessexsynodurc.org.uk/sharing-the-vision-january-edition/>)

COPY DATE FOR MARCH ISSUE WEDNESDAY 17 FEBRUARY

ALL ITEMS TO THE EDITOR, NORMA REID, 3 GWALIOR ROAD, LONDON SW15 1NP
Tel: 020 8785 4392 Email: aristocats.2000@gmail.com



FRIENDS REMEMBERED

John Roddan



We were all saddened by the loss of John Roddan last October at 90 years of age. A member of our church and fellowship for many years. John and Valerie were married for 66 years and he joined the church around 1958.

He was a very active member of St Andrew's for over 40 years. In these earlier years, it was normal to serve on the Deacon's Court which was responsible for the fabric and general maintenance of the church, and then, for those who so wished and subject to members' approval, a move to the Eldership followed.

John followed this route serving on the Deacon's Court and subsequently being ordained as an Elder. He was very visible on both of these bodies and took his duties seriously. In debate and discussion, his voice was usually heard. He was also, as Valerie says, a great support to her in running the Cub Scout Group.

In fact, the Roddan family played a significant role in St Andrew's for almost 40 years and we are appreciative of that.

John could be called a borderer (although he was born in Lenzie, north of Glasgow). The Roddan family came from the border area near Torthorwald which was the name they gave to their Weybridge home.

My overriding memory is the Christmas gathering each year at the Roddan home. This took place on Christmas Eve and really became part of the Christmas scene. We began assembling early, because the intention was to end the evening shortly after 11pm and then head for St Andrew's and the Midnight service, where the birth of Jesus would be celebrated in a meaningful way. This Midnight service attracted a large congregation, with a full choir to support wonderful carols. On these evenings, Valerie provided food delights and John topped up glasses with his secret, magical Punch. The lively Roddan springer spaniel provided entertainment to complete a happy scene.

So, now John has gone to a better place in the safe hands of Our Lord. We should be grateful for people like John. Best described as "Pillars of the Kirk".

He is sorely missed but is well remembered.

Holms Carlile

John was a good friend and always had the interests of youngsters in our church and was a great supporter of our then Scout troop, the 8th Walton.

Johnston Simpson

Our thoughts and prayers and love go to John's wife, Valerie and to his family and friends.

The Reverend Norman Edsall

We were very sorry to learn that that Norman Edsall died on 15 January. For many years Norman was Minister at Hersham URC and no doubt there are those in the church who will remember him. We send our sympathy to his wife, Maureen, and all the family.

ZOOM WORSHIP AND OUR TECH TEAM



Since the beginning of April, we have relied on a small “Tech team” to run and manage our services. They’ve been brilliant and have also given many of us a lot of help and support with our own IT skills so that most of us now can access and engage with Zoom worship and with our chat-time with confidence. Hilary Netherwood and Paula Walsh have been the real techies and Carol Lee has enabled our chats. We owe all three a lot and through their work we’ve been able to keep our two fellowships together in such difficult times. The pressure on them is considerable but I am delighted to tell you that the team is being expanded. Hilary Bennett, Anna Crawford, Fiona Little and Norma Reid are joining the Tech team and Margaret

Faultless will be joining Carol as part of the hosting team. Their help and involvement will, I know, make a massive difference and we wish them well in these new roles.

With the resumption of Sunday services at both church buildings hopefully now only just around the corner, you may well be wondering if we need such a team in the future? Well, I think that the answer is a very definite “yes”. St Andrew’s has already decided that its services will be live-streamed on a Sunday so that those who can’t get to church can still join us for worship if they wish. Weybridge probably wants to as well although, if we go ahead with alterations to the church building, it may be best to get the main equipment needed installed as part of that. Installing WiFi in the church now, however, would allow us to make a basic start.

So, it’s with great joy that we welcome new members to our Tech team and our Host team. This has already proved to be an outreach opportunity and the intention is to build on it post-lockdown. More members will be very welcome and may I particularly put out a plea to Weybridge members please? If we want to live-stream services from Weybridge URC in the future then we’re going to need more on our Tech team than we currently have. This is the ideal time to join a knowledgeable, caring but also fun group and acquire the necessary skills. Any volunteers?

Michael Hodgson

PRAYER AND SHARE

Now that more of us are becoming accustomed to using Zoom to contact each other, it has been suggested that there might be an opportunity to set up a “Prayer and Share” group.

This would be a monthly get-together online, where people could share their needs and pray together with others about them. The aim would be for it to take place once a month for 15 – 20 minutes. I could only run one during the daytime, due to other commitments in the evening. One could be set up in the evening, if someone else were prepared to run it.

This would be set up initially as a short-term measure, over the next few months, given that both churches are closed due to lock-down and we cannot meet face-to-face or use the Prayer Tree.

I am aware that Elders of both churches are contacting the members allocated to their care on a regular basis, so, before any preparations are made, it would be useful to know the level of demand for such a meeting.

Please can you let me know if you would find it useful.

Claire Ward

Email: jem.ward2010@hotmail.co.uk

T: (01932) 560 679



HAPPY NEWS!

We were delighted to hear from Roy Bones that he became a Great Grandpa on 4 January at 4.17 am when Florence Ellen was born to Matt and Emma Woods. Many congratulations!

A GIFT FOR GREAT AUNTY ELSIE



My sister Elsie, who lives on her own in Pyrford, was due to go to her daughter's for Christmas. On Christmas Eve morning she had the news that one of her grandchildren had tested positive for Covid 19. On Christmas Eve morning my grandchildren Sara aged 14 and her brother Adam 13 dropped parcels at our house. On hearing the news that great Aunty Elsie could not go to her daughter's for Christmas and that she had no Christmas food, they sprang into action. They went home and raided their Christmas treats insisting that Aunty Elsie must have some treats for Christmas. I cooked extra dinner and made up a bag of fruit, cheese and bread. As soon as we finished our dinner, Eric and I went over to my

sister with Christmas dinner and goodies. We shared Face Time together in the evening. I felt overwhelmed and proud that my grandchildren were so thoughtful with no prompting from any adults. They each wrote her a letter telling her how much they loved her.

Jean Rigden

LETTER FROM AMERICA (HOUSTON CALLING)

Having learned something of the customs and origins of Thanksgiving from Sophia Swanson on one of our weekly Zoom catch-up chats with Hilary and Ghislaine, I asked Sophia if she would make a contribution to the Newsletter. Sophia has also been putting her sewing skills to good use by making masks for family and friends. Ed

"We celebrate Thanksgiving in the US every year on the fourth Thursday in November to say thank you to the English pilgrims and puritans that arrived in New England in the 1620s, to celebrate the harvest and give thanks God along with Native Americans. Here in Texas, the feast usually consists of a smoked turkey and smoked ham with all the trimmings. Cornbread stuffing in the south and bread stuffing in the north of the US (cornbread is better!). Since we usually have a large family gathering for Thanksgiving, we 'trim' the Christmas tree soon after eating and decorate it having many hands available to help. Pumpkin pie is enjoyed after a job well done by all.



Now it's on to Christmas and making Elf on the Shelf merchandise for neighbours, needing tiny mask (new for this year), tiny shirts or sleeping bags. Elf on the Shelf is a phenomenon that begins December 1 and ends on Christmas Eve, where Elf gets into mischief each day as a welcome distraction for children at home. In other words, mums are in need of Elf merchandise to get them through the 24 days leading up to Christmas! "

LOCKDOWN - WHERE CAN I EXERCISE?

Before Christmas, there was discussion after the Zoom service about the importance of taking exercise in the fresh air. Now that we are in full-scale lockdown again, this is even more important. Some of you can walk easily across any terrain, but there are others who cannot. If your knees are “not as young as they were” (whose are?) you may wish to consider a walk in Holmwood Park, near St. Peter’s Hospital.

This is open parkland and is relatively flat, with a tarmac path leading from one end to the other, a distance of about half a mile. There are several open wooden benches beside the path, if you don’t want to walk the whole length in one go – or at all!

On a hill in the park is Botleys Mansion, a Palladian mansion house now used as a wedding venue, and there are details of its history near to the park entrance from the car park. There are also unmade tracks through the woods at the top end of the car park, accessed by crossing the road leading to Botleys Mansion, which are very pleasant to walk along in Spring and Summer.

The site has its own car park, which is free of charge for up to three hours by pressing a button on the ticket machine. The car park is accessed from Stonehill Road. If you head from St Peter’s towards Chertsey, turn left at the first mini roundabout (by The White Lodge) onto Holloway Hill, at the top of which is the Chertsey branch of Squire’s Garden Centre. After another 200 metres, fork left onto Stonehill Road, and the car park entrance is signposted about 100 metres further on the left.

We visit the place regularly, as it is close to our home – the grandchildren enjoy climbing on the fallen logs!

Jem Ward

*If anyone else has direct experience of a walk, please send in the details,
as it is always good to have a personal recommendation! Ed*

Elmbridge Borough Council also do self-guided walks that can be found on the Council’s website elmbridge.gov.uk/sports-and-health/healthy-walks-and-cycle-rides Log on for details.

One such is Broadwater Lake and Desborough Island, a short circular route of 4 km (approx 55 minutes) or a longer, circular route of 5.3 km (approx one hour and 10 minutes). It is described as a “relaxing and scenic route along the wooded banks of a lake and the Thames towpath, with an optional loop around the tranquil meadows of Desborough Island.” Both routes are said to be suitable for most reasonably fit, occasional walkers. The shorter route is all flat on well-maintained countryside footpaths and suitable for normal walking footwear and all terrain buggies. There is one small ‘kissing gate’ to get through. The longer route includes steep steps up to and back down from the river crossing bridges, and a road with a gradual uphill incline as you exit the island. The island meadow footpaths have grass under foot so can be muddy, so strong waterproof footwear is advised in wetter months.



SIMPLE ARITHMETIC?

Ten little churchgoers said "We're doing fine!"
Till a Golf Club claimed one - then there were nine.

Nine little churchgoers, not all considerate,
Caused one to feel unwelcome - then there were eight.

Eight little churchgoers aspiring towards Heaven,
But one became an atheist, reducing them to seven.

Seven little churchgoers in dogmatic fix
Scared one off with rules and regs, leaving only six.

Six little churchgoers striving still to thrive
One lay longer in his bed - then there were five.

Five little churchgoers found praying such a chore,
One gave up completely - then there were four.

Four little churchgoers sang choruses with glee
But one of them was out of tune with the other three.

Three little churchgoers all caught a dose of 'flu,
No-one called on one of them - then there were two.

Two little churchgoers unsure what could be done
Had a difference of opinion, leaving only one.

One little Christian, knowing what to do
By praying, praising, witnessing soon became two.

Two little Christians, as a faithful core
Converted soon another two, adding up to four.

Four little Christians their faith did demonstrate
By doubling their number - resulting now in eight,

Eight little Christians witnessed more and more
Until their church was full of - Christians galore!

Source Unknown

HAPPINESS IS ... A SHOT IN THE ARM



A VIEW FROM THE PUTNEY HUB

At last we can see that there is an end in sight. Many of us in the older age groups have had the first jab (or 'jag' if you are a Scot) with the second either already administered to a few or not more than 12 weeks away for the rest of us. I am one of the lucky ones whose experience was a good one. A text message from my surgery gave me the date, time and place for the first jab and there was a follow-up date in 11 weeks.

The Scout Hut in Putney, sadly long unoccupied, was suddenly full of bustle and good cheer. The venue brought back happy memories of bygone days in Glasgow and weekly Brownie meetings, in my mini-length Brownie uniform (lovingly made by my Mum), arms awash with badges and droopy hand-knitted hat with the bobble on the end (respectively lovingly sewn on and knitted by my Mum). I rolled up at the Scout Hut, suitably masked, ten minutes before my 10.40 am appointment and waited all of half a minute before being ushered in by a similarly masked, smiling-eyed marshal. I checked in to the desk and was immediately shown to one of the booths and made to feel at ease. I was asked if I had any allergies and when I admitted to one (last experienced about 10 years ago), a Dr came over to question me about it. It was thought to be insignificant in the context of the vaccination and at 10.39 am precisely the jab was put into my arm and I was off to sit down in the far end of the hall for 15 minutes before being released. 'Are you feeling ok?' "Fine thanks". 'Would you like a sticker?' "Oh, yes please!" There was tea and biscuits available but it seemed not on offer unless you admitted to feeling wobbly. Although I missed it, I understand that the Putney Scouts Hut featured in the local London Six-o-clock News slot recently, presumably as an example of a smooth-running operation. I was lucky. For those of you still waiting, I hope you will be called up very soon. Suddenly the world opens up again. The feeling of relief together with gratitude to all those involved in the development and production and now distribution and administration of the vaccine is quite overwhelming. Thank you!

Norma Reid (aka Ed)

A TEST OF FAITH

Two of my nieces have contracted Covid 19. One not too badly but the other, Caroline, who is only 27 and has two daughters 5 and 2, was in hospital for 10 days and over a week on oxygen. Thankfully, she is now home with her family. She is still not back to normal and gets very tired.

I must confess, my faith has taken a big hit at times this year and I questioned my belief. A friend of mine, Carol, who attends St Johns Church in Walton sent me an email telling me that her sister is very unwell. I spoke of my dwindling faith and she sent me this.

'As we meet with adversity we praise God that He gives us the strength and peace of mind to move forward with courage. We give thanks that no situation is too difficult for Him to see us through. He will see us through and He is with your nieces, especially the young mum in hospital.'

A few simple words that made such a huge difference, I also passed them on to my sister and she said they gave her great comfort.

Jean Rigden

"I ask not for a lighter burden, but for broader shoulders." – Jewish Proverb

REMEMBERING THE BARD



With so many Scots in our two congregations, particularly at St Andrew's with its Scottish origins, we could not forget to mark Burns Night in our after-service chat on 24 January. Volunteers who read their favourite poems by The Bard delighted us all. It set the scene for those of us who would be celebrating the following day with traditional fare of haggis, tatties and neeps, perhaps with a typical Scottish dessert such as Cranachan (typically oatmeal, raspberries, double cream, heather honey and whisky) washed down by a wee dram.

Holms Carlile started us off with a great rendering of 'A Man's a Man for a' that', said to promote both Burns' political and moral sensibilities. It was chosen to be sung at the opening of the devolved Scottish Parliament in 1999. Michael's choice of Jon Anderson my Jo' (once described as 'the most touching of Burns' songs) was followed by an extract from 'Tam o'Shanter', a farmer who often gets drunk with his friends in a public house in Ayr, with his thoughtless ways. His wife, furious at his late arrival home after rather too much of the 'bevvy' is described as sitting "Gathering her brows like gathering storm, Nursing her wrath to keep it warm". What a great description! Margaret Faultless read 'Ae fond Kiss', one of Burns' most famous love songs that had always meant a lot to her and Gordon. Jean Ridgen selected 'Tae a Moose' as it brought back happy memories of her Scottish father reciting it every year to her daughter, Sue, who was born on Burns Night. 'Tae a Moose' was written by Burns, a farmer, after he had turned over the nest of a tiny field mouse with his plough. Janet Sommerville lifted our spirits when the snow was around with 'Bonie Bell'. "The smiling spring comes in rejoicing, And surly winter grimly flies..." reminded us that Spring is on the way.

Thanks to all those who so aptly and royally entertained us!



WHAT IS LOVE?

With Valentine's Day fast approaching, as ever, the children can be relied upon to get it right!

'Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and just listen.'
Bobby - age 7

'If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate.'
Nikka - age 6

'I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones.'
Lauren - age 4

'When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you.'
Karen - age 7

'You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.'
Jessica - age 8

A four-year old child's elderly neighbour had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his mother asked what he had said to the neighbour, the little boy said, 'Nothing, I just helped him cry.'

ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

KIND READERS who sent donations certainly lifted AP spirits over the Christmas period which would otherwise have been bleak to say the least. The money helped all our friends buy food



such as chicken and rice to enjoy with their families and share with neighbours. Artist Herbert's son Elias foraged in the bush for these lovely mushrooms to supplement their meal – a feast fit for a king! Charmaine (13) bought her sisters Chipu (5) and Rudo (3) all orphans, much needed food and second-hand clothes for 3\$ from a street market – the clothes (in photo above) came from overseas. The children were so appreciative.



Artist Christine (left) thanks us again for more support to buy art materials to help youngsters with problems. She writes: [I want to thank you so much for the money you sent for art materials to use with the children. I have had a couple of sessions with them but already I see issues coming through in their drawings. One girl comes from a broken home and it reflects in her drawings because the family is always the subject of her drawings. The other girl has a most complex personality. She has a lot to say but something always holds her back. In today's session I see some release. She is a lovely girl but one who needs to find her expression and I think](#)

we may be on to something with these lessons. I've had a word with their parents too that these are not just art lessons but therapy and also, we get a chance to talk about life and all its happenings too. My heart is pounding because this may be bigger than I bargained for but there's a part of me that is singing because I think it will be good for me too'.

Isabella an orphan, is another example of donations being put to good use. She has been looked

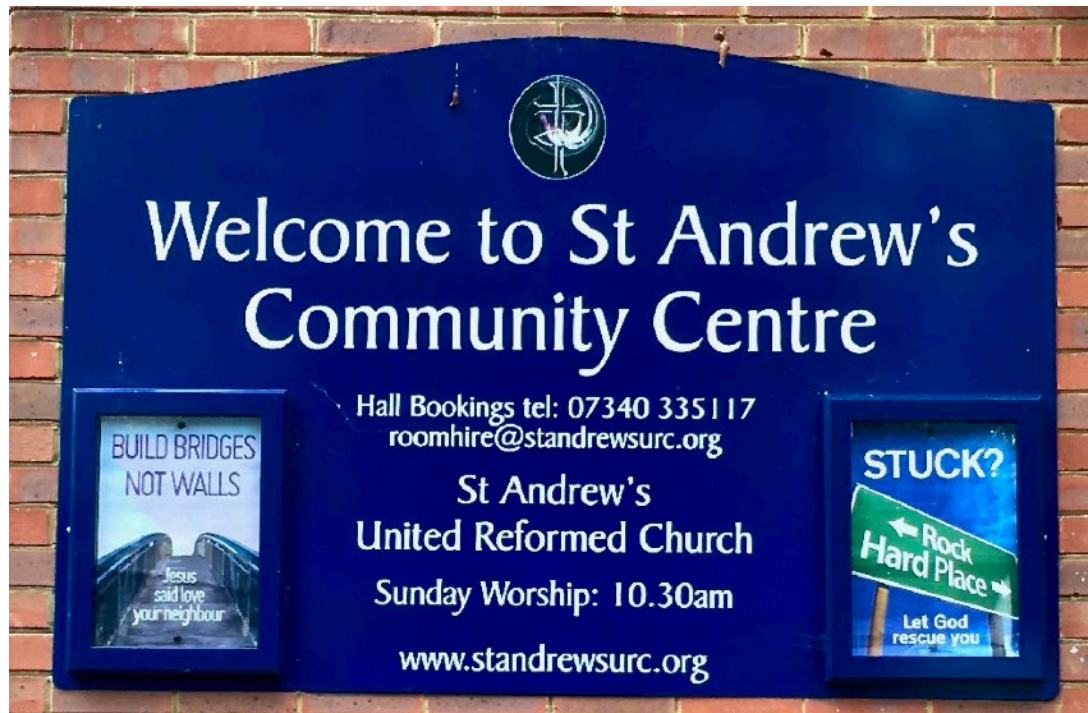


after by artist Lizeni for many years and but was so dejected at being unable to attend school. Donations from a member of St A's changed her life. I lost touch with Isabella for several years, but she recently got in touch to inform me that by doing piece jobs - washing clothes, ironing and cleaning people's homes she was able to raise money to go to university. She is now studying for an International Marketing degree at Chinhoyi University of Technology. At least she now has a chance in life instead of joining the millions of unemployed. A little helping hand goes a long way! Photo far left of Isabella with a proud Lizeni.

THE JANUARY WEATHER in Zimbabwe was on a par with the UK – largely leaden skies with waves of heavy rain and gales; crackling lightening with massive booms of thunder but unlike us, it put big smiles on faces as it encouraged the growth of maize in their fields upon which all



our friends depend so much to see them through the year. This, coupled with our efforts in providing quality seed and fertiliser, looks like resulting in a good harvest. Left: a happy Fortune with his crop. Artpeace cannot find the words to thank all who have made such a difference to their lives in so many ways: these examples are but the tip of the iceberg. They wish their UK friends a far better New Year and share our worries about the Covid pandemic. **Johnston Simpson**



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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