



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

**NEWSLETTER**

**Volume 77 No 3**

**MAY 2020**



*Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words —  
And never stops at all.*

*Emily Dickinson*



*From The Manse*

*May 2020*



*Dear friends*

These are strange time we're living in. Who knows when, and how, the current restrictions will be lifted but a month on a new style of church life is beginning to emerge for the moment so let me take this opportunity to run through a few things that are happening. Let's begin with worship.

On a Sunday, full services are available via the media and on the internet. As well as those on BBC radio you can join in a weekly URC service at 10.00am via the URC's website. Woking URC are streaming a live service at 10.30am, again accessibly via their website and their Facebook page. Within our pastorate I am writing and sending out a weekly "Thought for the day" and a prayer and this is going to everyone, either via email or by post. There is also a weekly "Zoom" service at 11.30am, slightly expanding on the "Thought for the Day" material which is followed by an opportunity to see each other and have a bit of a chat. This is developing as our IT skills develop! By the way, the 11.30am start is so as not to clash with the main URC service at 10.00am. So, there are lots of worship opportunities and materials available, created both within and without the pastorate.

Moving on to pastoral care I know that a number of you are keeping in touch with each other by all sorts of different methods and this is really important. The caring phone calls being made by the Elders to the people in their districts are so important too. I have phoned and spoken to almost everyone at least once in the last month. I'll probably do another "phone all" if the current restrictions go on much longer because I think that keeping in touch and hearing a friendly, familiar voice is so significant at the moment.

One of the advantages of an increasing number of you having Zoom is that it does give you the chance not only to chat with one another but to see each other. The importance of that was obvious on Easter Day and in the responses to the Zoom Communion. The feeling of togetherness when we were all feeling rather at sea was extremely moving and something that I think I'll always remember as being a highlight in my ministry. So, do use Zoom to chat to each other. You can easily initiate a meeting and invite people to join you and if any of you don't know how to go about it, just give me a ring and I'll explain as best I can.

Molly and Norma are making another important contribution to church life in keeping the magazines going. It's not an easy task at the best of times and at the moment getting material to create an interesting magazine to read is challenging. I know they'd both be grateful to receive anything from you. What they are editing is particularly crucial at the moment and we are greatly indebted to them.

So, we are finding ways of communicating and of worshipping and of "being church" in new ways, even if some of us are on steep learning curves. Actually, I can see that there are some positives emerging which we can build on in the future but, inevitably, there are problems at this time too.

Actually visiting the sick and the dying isn't possible, even for immediate families. I can not do home or hospital visits other than by phone. Families cannot be together at critical times and precious, irreplaceable moments are being lost. Trying to organise a funeral at the moment is a nightmare and what's possible is, let's be honest, fairly unsatisfactory. Trying to support elderly relatives from a distance is also extremely difficult and many people are worried about money and job security, fearing that the future is going to be pretty bleak.

In all of this though there is one thing that we do know. The restrictions will eventually be lifted and we shall be able to reopen our church buildings and resume regular services. What are we going to do to celebrate? How are we going to part? How are we going to give thanks to God? Let me have some ideas and suggestions. Vera Lynn used to sing, "When the lights go on again all over the world". Let's look forward and start to have some ideas for then.

Finally, I am here! I'm always happy to be a familiar voice or a listening ear and I'm only a phone call away- though you may have to try a couple of times because the telephone line is quite busy at the moment.

With all good wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY (Monday 23 March)

Tuesday 17th March had been a difficult day. We'd been advised that church services were going to have to be suspended and that the halls would have to be closed too as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. The next days were very busy implementing this and contacting everyone. Realising that further restrictions were inevitable, I did a dash down to Mum to do what I could there, knowing that it might be some time before I'd be allowed go again. So, the morning of Monday 23rd March dawned but what should I do? How should I proceed? How did I actually do my job now? For that matter, what was my job now? Typically, the phone rang constantly throughout the day and I went to bed shattered and, if I'm honest, a little frustrated because I'd had no time to think about my role now and felt that I didn't really know what I was doing.

Tuesday 24th duly arrived and I set the phone to "answer". I needed a moment or two! It was when I realised that, in many ways, my job was little changed - it was just the way that I did it that had changed - that my brain began to stop racing. The more I thought about it, the more I realised that it was like taking one of my old teachers from their classroom and removing their blackboard, chalk, textbooks, rows of desks, wooden-sided blackboard rubber (for throwing) and cane - and then putting them in a classroom of today with the students, grouped round tables; telling them to call them by their first names, not their surnames; give them a laptop and an interactive whiteboard and expect them to teach the lesson. They'd still know the subject - that wouldn't have changed - but, boy, would they struggle with how to deliver it.

So, I decided that I still knew what I was called to do and so that's really what I've still been doing. I'm working long hours and working in a very different way but I'm holding on to what I'm called to do, having accepted that my modus operandi changed completely overnight.

*Michael*

"At last came the golden month of the wild folk - honey-sweet May, when the birds come back, and the flowers come out, and the air is full of the sunrise scents and songs of the dawning year."

*Samuel Scoville Jr - 'Wild Folk'*

## STATEMENT OF NATURE, FAITH AND ORDER OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

In this month of May, we our turn attention to what the URC says about the Bible.

The highest authority  
for what we believe and do  
is God's Word in the Bible,  
alive for his people today  
through the help of the Spirit.  
**We respond to this Word,  
whose servants we are  
with all God's people  
through the years.**

In this section, we state very clearly our belief in the Bible and in its supremacy. There is no higher authority. Everything else, be it a creed or a statement or a declaration or whatever, is always subordinate to the Bible. (The "posh" term for such things is "subordinate standard.") We also clearly state our belief that what is written in the Bible is "alive for his people today" and that the Holy Spirit gives us fresh understandings to which we respond. This September will see the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrim Fathers setting sail from Plymouth. John Robinson, pastor of the Separatist congregation in Leyden, affirmed, "The Lord (has) more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy Word." Over the centuries since then, Robinson's statement has effectively epitomised our view on the authority of the Word of God and the decision of the editors of Rejoice and Sing to drop George Rawson's hymn, "We limit not the truth of God" remains one of their more controversial ones. George Caird's hymns, "Not far beyond the sea (R&S 318) deserves to be better known and more regularly sung than it is and it too picks up on Robinson's thinking. Next time you're bored in a sermon, look it up!

The assertion that nothing should be done in worship without scriptural warrant - that scripture must give permission - can be seen very clearly in our Orders of Service. For example, at communion a number of denominations will put the story of the Last Supper (The Narrative of the Institution) after the Prayer of Thanksgiving. In the URC, it would be normal for it to be read at the start as the warrant for what we're about to do. Many times you'll have heard those leading communion read the account of the Last Supper and then saying, "Following his command and his example we take this bread and wine and give thanks." Similarly, at a Baptism you will hear me start by saying, "We read in the Bible that, at the beginning of his ministry, our Lord was baptised by John in the River Jordan." You'll hear me pick up that "permission" idea a few sentences later as I say "on the day of Pentecost Peter said to the people, 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ...'" It's the scriptural warrant - the Biblical permission being given for what we're doing. The first words spoken in a service will normally be from the Bible as a call to worship. At both St Andrew's and at Weybridge the Bible is brought into church at the start of each service and we stand as the Bible comes in as a mark of our respect for it. (The same happens at URC General Assembly.)

So, in this statement we make no bones about what we believe about the Bible and if that is then borne out in our service structure, it is also borne out in another important symbol in many churches - central pulpit in so many of our churches, (the centrality of the word) and the open Bible, facing the congregation on the Communion Table.

Such an apparently simple thing, but it's not there for ascetic reasons. It's there to show our belief that the Bible is for all, open for all, to be read by all, and not just by the Minister. Remember William Tyndale's famous statement: "I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy who drives the plough to know more of the scriptures than you do."

So, I may have gone off on a couple of tangents this month, but this clause in our Statement of Nature, Faith and Order is where we say something about our understanding of the Bible and its importance.

With all good wishes,



### HOW ARE YOU PASSING THE TIME?

Like it or not, the coronavirus is giving us all lots more time at home – time to catch up on all those jobs we never quite seem to get around to. Whilst Johnston has been furiously gardening and clearing out sheds and garage etc, Susan conjured up memories of their rail holiday to Italy last year, as both doubted it would be possible to have a holiday this year so it would be nice to reminisce. Using photos taken in Venice, she has created her own interpretation of these lovely Venice scenes which now brighten and adorn Johnston's wee den.



Please let me know how YOU are passing the time. Ed

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## ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS



Although Zimbabwe appears so far to have escaped lightly from the pandemic, the future looks bleak. ArtPeace are frightened by all the coronavirus world news, only too aware of their country's chronic lack of facilities to deal with this disease. Day after day since their own lockdown was declared, there have been sights of crowds of desperate people clamouring for food, clearly unable to stay at home because their families are hungry. There have been many reports of people beaten by soldiers and police for violating lockdown which culminated in Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights making an urgent application to the High Court to get the beatings stopped. Our friends are desperate for some support to buy food and much needed medicines for their families. Sales of their work are non-existent, and donations have all but dried up. The photo on left shows artist Fortune, exhausted and despondent, leaning against his home – what chance do poor people like him have!

At least they will have some maize next month when their crops mature. However, artists are already forced to eat 'green maize' not yet ripened as they are so hungry. Their eventual crop has been estimated to be around half the size of last year owing to the drought. Fr David Harold-Barry SJ is social distancing at Silveira House outside Harare and largely occupying his time writing. He offers this Easter reflection:

**Johnston Simpson**

## OF GRACE AND GRIEF

Near where I live, there is a graveyard 'in which no one has yet been buried'. Someone had the idea of investing in the dead and bought a large piece of land and crisscrossed it with pristine roads that would be the joy of our suburbs. That was all some time ago but up to now, as I walk its perimeters, there is no sign of death or burial. I ask a man, who seems like a caretaker, when they would start to bury people. 'There will soon be a pilot project', he said. A pilot project? I continue on my way, baffled, as the images of the mass burials in New York come to mind.

Death is such an enemy! For Paul, reflecting ever deeper on the mystery of God's death, it is the visible sign of Sin. And Sin, like Death, touches all of us. No one can say they are 'without sin' even though we are quick to cast stones. For Paul, the whole world was under the power of Sin and Death, two enemies of human nature personified in Satan or the devil. These days we are remembering that death on Calvary, and what happened afterwards.

Up till then death was the end. People erected tomb stones to ease their pain and then walked away. But this death changed everything. No human being could overcome the awful virus of Sin and Death that had entered the world. Only someone from outside humanity could do that and God entered humanity precisely for that purpose. He 'carried our offences' and the 'burden of our guilt was laid on him'. What we celebrate these days is the victory over Sin and Death. They no longer have power over us.

But we need the grace, the life-giving power, of God to make this truth our own. Otherwise it will pass us by. We cannot grieve 'for ourselves or for our children' unless we have the grace to grieve. Sorrow is a grace, a gift. We know it can set us on a new track – in our relationships, the way we work and so forth. But we cannot force sorrow. We have to wait for it. A therapist has to wait for her patient to understand, to 'come to their senses'. Sorrow and grief are life-giving. We have only to look at the woman who covered Jesus' feet with her tears. She was a new person. The prodigal son was a far better man after his tears than he was before.

And so we come back to Calvary and the empty tomb. They are not two events but one. Jesus is the one who 'passed through (our human misery) ... and entered the sanctuary once and for all' (Hebrews 9:11-12). It is a decisive moment of universal and eternal meaning. No wonder we will spend the next 40 days rejoicing.

**Fr David Harold-Barry SJ. 19 April 2020**



**GARDEN TALK:** I have always been 'moved' by colour and am sure many of the congregation feel likewise. As many are incarcerated at home, I again thought it would be nice to update you on the riot of colour in St Andrew's garden. The tulip bulbs were gifted by Anna's flower club and look quite splendid. Sadly, after the recent heavy night's rainfall the weeds are gaining ground so goodness knows what things will be like when we return but nature is full of surprises! **JS**





## EASTER 2020



We will all remember where we celebrated Easter 2020: thanks to the Coronavirus we were all in our own homes. Like me, you may have found this Eastertide to be a particularly worrying time. Isolated from friends and family and not even allowed to go to church, it felt that this Easter might slip by, celebrated by us in ones or twos.

But that was before we discovered the wonders of Zoom - a video conferencing app used to allow groups of people to come together. Michael's suggestion that we have a 'self service' communion service on Zoom on Easter Sunday may have caused a few ripples but, thanks to the perseverance of the congregations of St Andrew's and Weybridge URC (and help from friends and family), over 30 households joined to celebrate the Easter message. What a magnificent response to today's crisis and a massive well done to all those who overcame their apprehension about technology to come to our virtual church.

Maybe next time we can have a drink on hand and finish with a virtual coffee? [*This is now happening! Ed*]

Thank you to everyone, and especially Michael, who showed us again that with God's help we will come through.

*Carol Lee*

### AN EASTER STORY

This morning, a family walking past waved at me when they saw me opening the front bedroom window. So we had a little chat. They were going shopping to Tesco. The three little girls told me they'd had lots of chocolate eggs for Easter. I said I hadn't had any. A while later, there was a knock on my door and they were all standing out in the road and there was an Easter egg on my doorstep! The Mum said that everyone should have chocolate for Easter. I was very tearful! I don't even know them. They live on the estate by the industrial estate on the canal between Addlestone and Weybridge and were taking a shortcut down our road! Made my day!

*Beryl Watson*

### CHURCH SERVICES WITH ZOOM



Those of you receiving the weekly, "Thought for the Day" by e-mail will also be receiving an invitation to join a Zoom event at 11.30 am each Sunday. What happens in this spot is still evolving, but it is a time for us to be together in sound and in sight. There will be a short service, including a slightly expanded "Thought for the Day" and we're trying to see how we can then move more into virtual "after-church coffee" (supply your own beverage and biscuits).

Just click on the link in the emailed invitation. It may be that you don't even have to have Zoom downloaded first, just a computer capable of accessing it. I'm also exploring how those without computer access can join in by phone but remember, we're all on a steep learning curve at the moment. Do come and join us if you'd like, though. You will be most welcome. *Michael*



## A VIEW FROM THE ZOOM PEW

Modern technology is a wondrous thing - when it works - and we have proved that, with a little help from our friends it DOES work and with impressive results. Our first Zoom service, described on the preceding page by Carol, was held on Easter Sunday with communion. It was wonderful to be able to see so many of our long lost friends on the screen and to feel the warmth of friendship envelop us albeit in a new way. With a click of the mouse, the Gallery view appeared as you can see below.



Lovely to spot, amongst others, Netta, who hasn't been able to get to church for a while. During the service, only those leading it could be seen on screen - Michael and those reading or saying prayers. At the end, as if by magic, we were all 'unmuted' and hey presto, there we were in our respective living-rooms or kitchens with our coffee mugs or other after-service refreshments, able to wave at one another or, by raising a virtual hand and with guidance from Carol, speak to one another. The virtual hand system is important as it enables the person who wants to speak to be individually identified and to appear on screen to say their piece without others speaking at the same time so that a babble ensues and no-one can hear what anyone else is saying!

As someone mentioned to me afterwards "no one was in their jim-jams" - a good point. After all, it would be a brave person who would turn up at church in their jim-jams (unless circumstances were exceptional, of course) and our Zoom service is church after all, and a opportunity to dress up, however modestly, for a change. I don't know about you, but I am getting really fed up with my jeans and sloppy Joe jumpers - I have even got to the point of putting on my earrings for my weekly "oldies hour" jaunt to the supermarket!

So, I can highly recommend joining in our Zoom service. Michael makes it easy for us by sending an e-mailed invitation with the details to join a session. Any problems, please get in touch with our experts, Carol, Hilary, Paula or Michael.

I can't wait for the next service. Hope to see you there!

*Ed*



## FRIENDS REMEMBERED



*The Reverend Leslie Harold Watson 1939-2019*

Although a lot of you will not have known my brother as he moved away from the area in 1965, I wanted to write about how our upbringing in St Andrew's influenced his life.

Les died on 27th December 2019, aged 80. He was born in Margate in May 1939, not long before war broke out. After Dunkirk, there were no defences between Margate and the German forces in France, so my parents and Les moved to Walton-on-Thames because Dad's sister and family were already living there. My brother, Philip, was born in 1942, I arrived in 1944 and then sister Rosslyn in 1945, all born in the Rodney Road Maternity Unit.

Our parents were Congregationalists, but there was no church in Walton so Philip and I were christened in St Mary's parish church. My mother was told about the Presbyterian church and realised it was very similar to Congregationalist. Rosslyn was baptised at St Andrew's, so I was not very old when we started attending regularly. When Revd Eddie Lane took over as minister in 1955, he became a big influence in our lives. Among other things, he started a Fellowship of Youth (FOY) group. This was the national youth organisation of the Presbyterian Church of England, with an age range of 17 - 30. All four of us joined as we became old enough and the FOY became a big influence on Les's spiritual life.

At the age of 18, he decided to get his National Service over and done with, and signed on with the RAF for three years. This meant he had the choice of where he wanted to serve and he ended up in Malaya, where he was attached to two helicopter squadrons. He spent most of his time at RAAF Butterworth, an Australian air base. At the time, Malaya was one of the mission fields of the Presbyterian Church of England. He was able to attend the Presbyterian church on the island of Penang, off the coast from Butterworth, and taught in the Sunday School, checking out the lesson plan for the week during the ferry crossing!

In 1961 he returned to civilian life and got a job as a River Purification Inspector for the Thames Conservancy, based in Guildford. He was able to get involved in St Andrew's again, especially the FOY. Through the FOY, in 1962 he was a delegate to the first ever British Council of Churches Youth Conference in Leicester for a week. There he met his wife Shirley from Belfast. They were married in Belfast in 1964 after a long distance relationship, which in those days meant a lot of letter writing and long-distance phone calls! Initially they lived in Guildford. Their son, Nigel, was born in July 1965 and later that year they moved to Manchester where he joined Manchester Corporation as a River Purification Inspector. Their daughter, Clare, was born in 1966. In 1970 they moved to Stony Stratford for Les to work for the Milton Keynes Development Corporation and then in 1974 he was employed by Anglian Water in Sewage Purification. During the following years until redundancy in 1995, his jobs included trade effluent inspector, sewage works manager in Leighton Buzzard, area operations manager, and digital mapping of the sewer systems dating from the 1920s. Somebody has to do it!



When they first moved to Stony Stratford, the family became involved in Wolverton Congregational church (URC in 1972), and both he and Shirley integrated themselves into all aspects of local church life. Les inaugurated the First Wolverton Boys Brigade, was an Elder, also Church Treasurer for a while.

In 1983, Les started an Open University Degree course and was eventually ordained as a non-stipendiary Minister in 1991. During part of this time, he was studying with Cecil Macaulay, who became Minister at Weybridge URC. He was actually at Les's funeral, and it was good to catch up with him again. Les became Minister at Hodge Lea United Reformed Church, putting in 10 to 15 hours a week and preaching every other Sunday, as well as working full time. He also held many posts within the URC at District and Synod levels, in the Milton Keynes Mission Partnership and in Churches Together in Wolverton.

Following his redundancy in 1995, he became Stores Officer for Two Shires Ambulance Service until he retired in 2004. Les and Shirley had big plans to travel but, sadly, Shirley became ill and died not long after. Les began to suffer from ill health himself and had to retire from the Ministry in 2006. He also supported the Willen Hospice and continued his voluntary work helping in their bookshop in Stony Stratford until his final illness last year.

Les was described by people he knew and worked with as unassuming, amiable and gentle. In his Tribute to Les at the funeral, my brother, Philip, concluded with:

"Les was a man of faith.

He got involved.

He helped people.

The best epitaph one can say about anybody is that the world is a better place for their having been in it. In his own small way, I think that this applies to Les."

And St Andrew's had a lot to do with it.

*Beryl Watson*

## IN QUIRES ...

*In quires and places where they sing*

It's possibly just as well that we're not singing many hymns at the moment. You see, many of them contravene the Government's Covid 19 advice. Let me share with you a little of the problem.

|                                   |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Breathe on me, breath of God      | Nope                     |
| Take my hand, precious Lord       | Nope                     |
| O for a closer walk with God      | Nope                     |
| I come to the garden alone        | OK                       |
| Bind us together, Lord            | Nope                     |
| Shall we gather at the river      | Nope                     |
| Jesus walked this lonesome valley | OK                       |
| Put peace into each other's hands | Nope                     |
| Wash me throughly                 | OK (anthem by SS Wesley) |

Matthew Chapter 18 verse 20 causes a problem too!

Perhaps the next hymnbook we're going to need is *The Covid 19 Hymnal*. Doesn't look like it's going to be a very big book.

*Michael*

## PETS IN LOCKDOWN

Our pets cannot understand why we are frustrated by lockdown. It's what they have dreamed of - having their humans stuck at home all day with all the additional attention that provides. It has to be said, we are extra thankful to have them around right now!

Here are some of St Andrew's pets enjoying themselves as never before. Can you spot the human...? *Ed*



*Rosie Simpson relaxes after a busy day catching up with her tail*



*Nona and Elsie Pearson give Irene a reason to get up early in the morning*



*Jimmy-Georgie Reid is alert after a few hours' snooze and has taken up moth-spotting on the ceiling*



*Chloe Netherwood enjoys her role as support staff to Hilary who is working from home, while Rosie prefers to sit and dream of the next helping of treats*



*Zoom Ballet is all the rage these days.... Ed*



*Nissa Hampton used to live in Lebanon. Her owner died and Nissa was one of eight dogs found in the house when it was being cleared out. She had to stay in Lebanon in quarantine for six months but has now found her forever home with Nancy, where she is growing more beautiful every day. She looks forward to more outings in the car when things return to normal.*



## SOME USEFUL LOCAL INFORMATION

Thanks to Ghislaine Stevenson for investigating this useful website (others may know of it already) - <https://www.wotta.co.uk/latest-news.html> . It belongs to the Walton on Thames Trading Alliance and has the advantage of bringing together *in one place* local up-to-date practical information about alterations to operating hours of shops, pharmacies, supermarkets, take-aways, buses, support services, mail deliveries, parking etc.

There is also an interesting section under the tab 'Walton on Thames - our town> Visiting Walton> Walton Trail' covering a number of historical locations you may not know and might consider visiting once we can move around again.

It is worth noting that Elmbridge Council have extended the suspension of charges in council car parks for the foreseeable future, not just until 14 April as mentioned in the website (which may since have been updated).



We only had three families with three children for Messy Church in March. Nevertheless, we had fun.



*Pounding the grapes*

We decorated candles, made bread and grape juice and tried an egg drop.

We had to put the wrapped food into bags for our meal, reminding me of Sunday School Picnics when I was wee. In those days, we had a sausage roll and iced bun and had a tin cup on string over our shoulder. Changed days! There was plenty of choice in the supermarket, I suppose, to put in packed lunches. It was a very happy relaxed occasion.

We really miss our monthly gatherings and look forward to when we can start up again!

*Anne Fitzgerald*



*Those candles look quite professional!*



*Careful how you fill the bag ...*



*Cooking the bread - my speciality*

## WELCOME HOME TO THE SOMMERVILLES!

Janet writes:

*"Jim and I had a wonderful month with our daughter and family in Auckland before embarking on Arcadia to cruise home, before coronavirus. Our first 3 stops, Bay of Islands, Sydney and Brisbane went as planned. Asia was cancelled and, instead, we sailed round the south coast of Australia to Fremantle for Perth, enjoying many new places. Sri Lanka, and Dubai were not accepting cruise ships, but South Africa was agreeable and we berthed in Durban, though only for fuel and food. We sailed back to Southampton, 32 days at sea without touching land. We enjoyed the cruise with lots of entertainment, music and talks, observing social distancing. We are so thankful that we have a garden at home and Sunbury Park is close by for exercise. However, while trying hard to be positive, we have to confess that, after our wonderful break, we are not enjoying this at all!"*

## NEWS FROM SOPHIA SWANSON IN TEXAS

*"Things are similar to what you described, unfortunately. No church, no school, limited stock at stores, although our restaurants have been open for carry out or drive thru orders. I was very sad to hear of May's passing, she was a lovely friend. I am trying to make home-made masks for family and friends. Watched some YouTube videos and it gives me something to do that helps with going out in public. I have plenty of fabric scraps!"*

### THIS IS TIMELESS

And people stayed at home  
And read books  
And listened  
And they rested  
And did exercises  
And made art and played  
And learned new ways of being  
And stopped and listened  
More deeply  
Someone meditated, someone prayed  
Someone met their shadow  
And people began to think differently  
And people healed.  
And in the absence of people who  
Lived in ignorant ways  
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,  
The earth also began to heal  
And when the danger ended and  
People found themselves  
They grieved for the dead  
And made new choices  
And dreamed of new visions  
And created new ways of living  
And completely healed the earth  
Just as they were healed.

*There is a claim that this poem was originally written in 1869 by Kathleen O'Mara and reprinted in 1919 during the Spanish Flu pandemic. Another claim gives authorship to one Catherine O'Meara, a former teacher in Madison, Wisconsin, in modern times. Whatever its origins, it speaks to us all right now. Ed*



## A SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNEY - SHORT AND SWEET



We had planned a grand tour of South Africa but had to return two weeks into our seven-week holiday. This was rather sad, as we had booked so many places and were taking my sister with us on part of the journey around the country. When we left, there had been hardly any Covid 19 cases, but the SA Government reacted very swiftly and decided that the country would go into lockdown on March 26th. We realised that we had to get home before that happened and managed to get on to the last British Airways flight leaving Johannesburg. After that there were no aircraft landing or leaving SA.

*Cosmos under African skies*

When we arrived in South Africa, we were very impressed that every passenger's temperature was taken as they moved into the airport and to passport control. On every pillar and outside every toilet door there were hand sanitisers. Staff were wearing masks and gloves. On our return to Heathrow there was not a single measure of any kind to test or protect passengers arriving. Considering that the virus was brought in by a man returning from a skiing holiday in Italy, this seemed unbelievably lax.

We were really pleased that we did manage to have a week in a holiday resort in the Drakensberg (Dragon's) mountain with my sister, niece and her partner. We had booked a three bedroomed cottage and were familiar with the accommodation, as we used to have a timeshare there. The resort is in a nature reserve where there are a lot of animals (not the big 5) and is on the shores of a lake. The drive there was lovely, as the area has had very good rains. We much enjoyed the three-hour scenic trip. We drove through areas of farmlands which sustain cattle and produce crops such as maize and wheat. Passing through these farmlands one cannot help but be mesmerised by the fields of rich gold sunflower crops and the huge swathes of delicate, wild cosmos. It was as if an artist had drawn broad brush strokes of pink, white and burgundy. There was some weather building up and the vast, tall African skies loomed with their magnificent cloud formations of mostly huge, cumulus clouds.

As we progressed, the backdrop of towering golden sandstone mountains came into view. They are rugged and rocky with huge boulders sometimes seeming to balance precariously on the edge of the ravines. The area has wonderful wild flowers amongst which are the arum lilies, watsonias (wild gladiolus) fire lilies and red hot pokers. We also saw wagon wheel proteas which have flatter pink flowers than the well known Cape protea. There are more than 140 species of birds and we were thrilled to see the huge black and white bateleur eagles and many species kites riding the thermals as they swirled around above the mountains.

We turned off the main road and drove along a bumpy dirt road, climbing through the mountains until we came to the thatched entrance of the reserve. After unpacking our cases and what seemed enough food for an army, we sat on the verandah and enjoyed the view over the lake. We took a boat ride the next day and sadly the weather was drizzly and rather cold. We were the only people on the boat and our wonderful black helmsman was quicker than any of us at spotting the wild life like zebra and various deer. We were happy to make a fire on our return and to have the traditional South African BBQ (braai).

We were lucky enough to have been lent our nephew's large 4x4 vehicle which made it possible to do a lot of driving and exploring of the surrounding area. We visited a little town called Clarence, known as an artist's colony, and had too many cups of tea with home made cakes and scones at our various stops. We were so happy to have had this break and thoroughly enjoyed our time in the mountains.

*Moir de Kok*



## NEWS RELEASE

Wednesday 15 April 2020

### **Christian Aid Week - May 10 - 16 2020 - goes digital**



*Helping Rohingya refugees understand about the risks of the virus and how not to catch it in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh*

Think of Christian Aid Week and you might picture red envelopes through doors, plant sales, Big Brekkies, banners in front of churches, special services and much more.

Since 1957 the week has brought communities together in action and prayer and while the coronavirus pandemic means that Christian Aid Week 2020 (May10-16) will be different, churches across the diocese are being invited to stand in solidarity with the world's most vulnerable people in new and innovative ways.

With daily quizzes and live-streamed worship, supporters can be involved from their own homes and could also take part in the 300,000 steps in May challenge which will be run through Facebook or send an electronic donation envelope - an 'e-envelope' – to friends and family. Some groups are arranging online plant sales, while others are doing sponsored runs, cycles or walks in their daily

outdoor exercise or in their own homes and gardens.

Christian Aid Week manager Sophie Brightwell said: "Coronavirus is teaching us what it feels like to feel vulnerable, to fear, to be separated and experience scarcity. "It is at times like these – testing and painful times – that we recognise we are all in this together. Coronavirus impacts everyone, but love unites us all. Christian Aid Week has always been a joyful celebration of what we can achieve together for the world's poorest people and in this time of global crisis Christian Aid's work is needed as much as ever before.

"The most vulnerable and marginalised people are at the greatest risk from coronavirus. In Sierra Leone there are no ICU beds and in Malawi there is one ICU bed for every one million people. In refugee camps, people are not able to keep socially distant from one other and 40% of the world's population do not have access to soap and water.

"Christian Aid was established after the Second World War when people across this country had lost so much but knew that refugees across Europe had were in a desperate situation. As we mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day at the start of Christian Aid Week, my hope is that we can show that same compassion and resolve as we saw in a different time of crisis as together we show that love never fails."

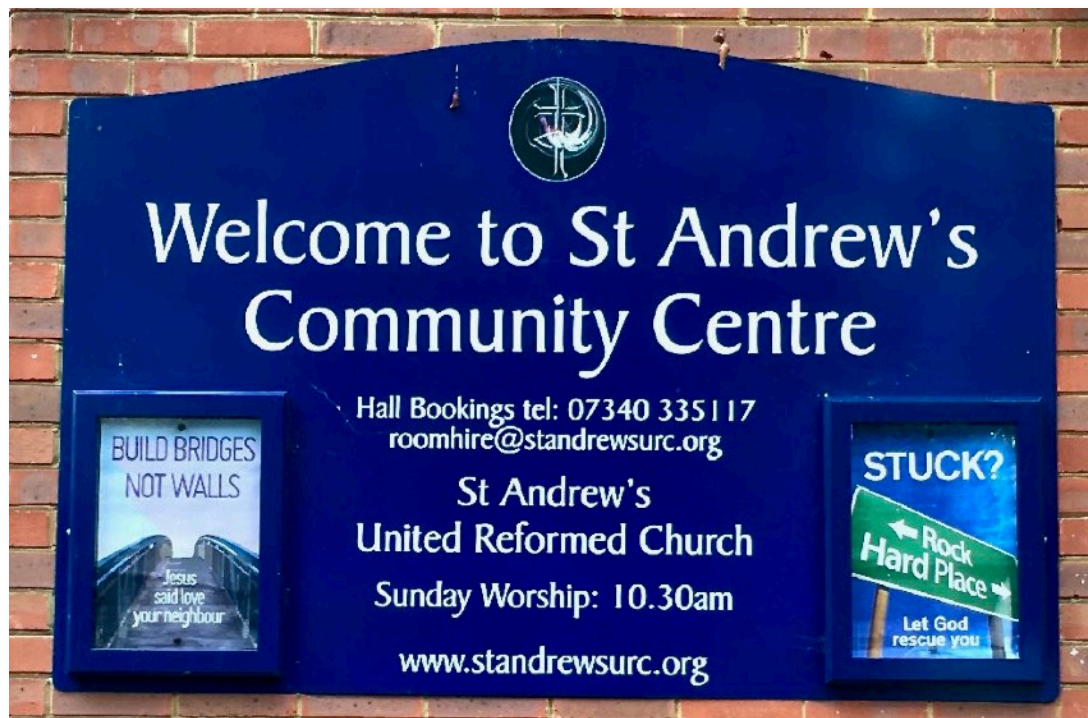
Christian Aid churches engagement officer for Somerset & Dorset Callum Humphries said: "In recent weeks, we have been overwhelmed by the messages from our fundraising community, looking for guidance on how they can support us.

"Communities and churches across the South West have shown their resilience and adaptability since social distancing began and Christian Aid groups have inspired me with their inventiveness and resolve, with a broad range of initiatives from petition signing to virtual plant sales and virtual hymn singing. It will be a different Christian Aid Week but with all the great hallmarks that we recognise of compassion, love and vision for a more just, equitable and healthy world. Please join us if you can."

To explore ideas about how to celebrate Christian Aid Week digitally call our **churches support team on 01925 573769** or visit [caweek.org/virtualresources](https://caweek.org/virtualresources)

**If you would like further information, please contact Christian Aid's regional media coordinator Emma Nutbrown on 07814 131169 or [enutbrown@christian-aid.org](mailto:enutbrown@christian-aid.org)**





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Please note that, at the moment, in keeping with Government policy due to the Covid 19 virus pandemic, the church building is closed. However, we are holding services every Sunday with Zoom at the later time of 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**