

# The Parish Voice



# Richard Stebbings Funeral Service



- Independent family business
- Personal 24 hour service
- Pre-payment funeral plans
- Monumental masonry
- Floral tributes

Funeral Director:  
Richard Stebbings Dip FD, LMBIFD

Kendal House, Cambridge Road,  
Impington, Cambridge

**01223 232309**

A.K.MARSHALL

# GAS

## HEATING SPECIALISTS

FOR ALL DOMESTIC &  
COMMERCIAL GAS  
HEATING WORK

Landlord Certification

Servicing  
Maintenance  
Breakdowns

Cambridge

**245106**

Fully Qualified  
City & Guilds  
Gas Engineers

Gas safe Reg No. 23623

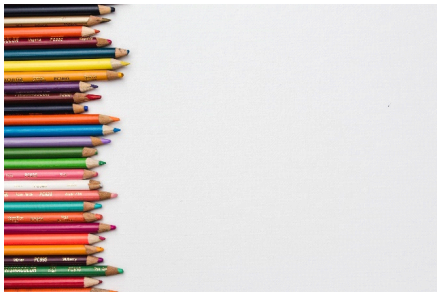
**HARRISON BROTHERS**  
ALL KINDS OF BUILDING WORK  
UNDERTAKEN

- ★ New Build
- ★ Loft Conversion / Extensions
- ★ Fitting Kitchens & Bathrooms
- ★ Ground work - Paving



Call Stephen Harrison - 07798722573

## Chris writes:



## Back to.....?

It is fantastic to be writing to you all in our latest edition of Parish Voice. With all the uncertainties of recent months, our editions have not been as regular as in previous years; so it is great to be sharing this one with you!

For many, if not most, of us, September always feels like a time of new beginnings. Perhaps it's because, even if we're not in school or don't have young children any more, the recollection of 'Back to School' is always there in the background.

To me, memories of September often focus on lining up bright new stationery, perhaps with a shiny colourful pencil case or bag. It's about rubbers that are white and not grey, pencils that sharpen to a perfect point and black patent shoes that aren't scuffed. It's about the first lesson in each new class and opening up a brand-new exercise book and taking extra care over the first page – earnestly vowing that this time it will stay beautiful throughout... (it never did!). It's about new classes, and fresh starts, and worrying about whether the people you were friends with before the school

holidays would still be your friends now that you've moved up a year. It's about the nervous uncertainty of which teacher you'd get for PE, and whether your form room would be up 3 flights of stairs, and whether you'd have moved down a set in your favourite subject.

I think something of that stays in all of us, so that whether or not we've been away over the summer, September feels like a time when we gear-up and get going.

But this year, all that seems a little different. For children and young adults, September has become even more significant, because for many it will be the first time back after 6 months, instead of the usual 6 weeks. And of course, even that isn't entirely certain (I'm writing this in mid-August, and there is no way of knowing if things will go exactly as planned). And so for many, all the usual Back to School nerves will be amplified massively; not just because there has been such a long break from being in school, but also because of their concerns about safety and the knowledge that lots of the 'normally' ways that school will do things will have changed due to the pandemic.

For those of working-age, that uncertainty is also there. Although back in the spring, we might have hoped all would be 'back to normal' by the autumn, we now know it won't. Many workplaces have told employees they should continue to work at home into 2021, and beyond! For those who have returned to the workplace, there are still many safety measures in place. And as we look at the news, we know the infection figures across Europe are rising

and we realistically wonder if we're on the verge of a second wave and if the gradually reopening of so many of the things we missed (including church), might have to be reversed.

The supermarkets might still have all the usual 'Back to School' marketing displayed, but this September is going to be very different from any we have previously experienced.

Later in this issue of Parish Voice I've written about an introduction to the narratives we've recently been reading from Genesis. Another great narrative story in the Old Testament, is that of Esther. The story of Esther takes place during the reign of King Xerxes (5<sup>th</sup> century BC). Esther is an orphan, who was adopted by her cousin Mordecai and raised as his own daughter. Although they are Jewish, they are part of the remnant, living as aliens without rights in the land of Persia. It is a wonderful rags-to-riches story, through which we see Esther and Mordecai adapting to ever changing situations in order to save their people. It's a story that is so great that it is still celebrated today, in the Jewish festival of Purim.

When I face difficult circumstances, I often think of Esther. As an ethnic minority woman she would have had very little control over her life or her circumstances and during her story she was thrown into new situations which must have been frightening and could easily have been overwhelming! But throughout, her confidence, wisdom and self-assurance are inspiring.

Esther is also well-known for being one of only two books in the bible that don't mention God (the other is Song of

Songs); but just because it doesn't mention God by name, it doesn't mean that God isn't there. It may be that throughout the story God may be hidden, but clearly God is present and active in the lives of Esther and Mordecai. In fact, I don't believe that Esther could have had the inner strength that she did, without God's ever certain presence in her life.

And the same is true now. We may feel at times that God is hidden, but God is present and active even if at first we can't see that.

Recently Kate A led us, either individually or in our home groups, through thinking about 'where God has been' during this current pandemic. It was clear that, despite all the challenges of the last few months, we had all had experiences of God at work in our homes, our communities and our nation. Whether it was giving us a still small sense of calm amidst the every changing guidelines; or in the lives of our key workers who gave of themselves so freely; or in everyday acts of kindness in our local community; God was there. And God will continue to be.

This September might not feel like the usual 'restart' but in all our uncertainties, God is constant. God walks beside us, reassuring and directing us, in new situations and unfamiliar circumstances. Whether that's back at school or still working from home, whether out in the community or still shielding, God is there. God is with us. For as we hear in the book of Joshua *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."* (Joshua 1.9)

## WORSHIP

"Why do you pay homage to the empty churches,  
The silent choir-stalls and deserted pews,  
The pious remnant of the faithful few  
Clinging to ancient tradition and obsolete views?"  
"Why pay homage to all this?" said my Critical Enquirer.

For the sake of the holy water  
In the baptismal font,  
By the token of the Cross  
In new life sanctified,  
Is Christ born again.

For the sake of the souls arrayed in white  
Before the Bishop kneeling.  
The laying-on-of hands  
The quickening of the spirit  
Born anew in Christ.

For the agony of the Cross  
The private griefs and pains  
With Christ identified,  
The cleansing and healing  
Blessing and Absolution.

For the sake of the holy sacrifice  
The consecrated bread and wine  
The words of the Priest softly intoned,  
"This is my body, This is my blood."

The kneeling figures at the altar rail,  
The invisible offering  
The Church's body broken  
The living sacrifice  
All bide in Christ.

For the sake of the tolling bell  
When day is done  
The whispers of Evening Vespers  
The ghosts of spirits long since gone  
"Rest in peace."

The solitary flame that burns over the altar  
Its watch maintains by day and night,  
The light on the golden Cross reflects  
The victory over death.  
Christ is risen!

All these things remind me  
That Christ dwells here.

Beryl Johnson

## St John's Parish News from Priest in Charge

It has certainly been a challenging period, since the start of lock-down and during the coronavirus pandemic more widely. It has tested our spirits, and brought both suffering, uncertainty and (at times) fresh hope. It remains challenging even as various restrictions are lifted. In some ways coming out of lock-down is more difficult than staying in. There was so much to think about at St John's - including online worship, pastoral care, community action, and - more recently - an even more complex process of planning for our phased re-opening.

On 15<sup>th</sup> June we re-opened for private prayer. On 12<sup>th</sup> July we re-opened for public worship, with a new pattern of services, and a range of measures in place to ensure that we are fully covid-safe and compliant. And, more recently, on 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> August (Wednesday and Sunday) we held the eucharist for the first time in five months!

Not since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, during the reign of King John and Pope Innocent III has the ordinary worshiping life of the Church in Britain been interrupted for so long! I am pleased that this Parish Voice includes some material from our consultation on people's stories, and what God has been up to during this pandemic.

Also included, in this Parish Voice, is a Pastoral Letter written by James, on 9<sup>th</sup> July, on the eve of our re-opening of St John's for public worship; this contains some vital reflections on the pandemic. As of 1<sup>st</sup> September there will be a new worship pattern at St John's, in terms of

how services of Holy Communion will dovetail with the wider post-lockdown distribution of services:-

### New Monthly Pattern of Services (from September 2020)

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday 9.30am Holy Communion (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> All Age)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday 11.00am Holy Communion (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Service of the Word)  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday 6.00pm Holy Communion (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Evensong)  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday 11.00am Holy Communion (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Service of the Word)  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday No Communion (9.30am All Age, 11.00am Service of the Word, 6.00pm Evensong)

We continue to provide online Sunday worship, filming and posting online, each Sunday afternoon, the 11am service. We take seriously the needs of those still shielding or unable to join us physically.

Every Wednesday 10.00am BCP Holy Communion  
Also Wednesdays 9.00pm Online Compline (Night Prayer)  
Zoom Meeting ID: 763 9772 2761. Passcode: 6a1xwu

In terms of Holy Communion, there is briefing note is posted on the St John's website. It makes clear that, in line with Church of England guidelines, our practice is fully safe, and does not provide risk for the congregation.

### St John's Announcements

There are a number of announcements at St John's, in terms of ministry personnel, and we are pleased to share the detail of these new appointments and developments, for your awareness and for your prayers.

- The appointment of Dr Muthuraj Swamy as self-supporting part-time Assistant Curate, from 1<sup>st</sup> September, and to be ordained at Ely Cathedral on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September at 1.00pm. You will find in Parish Voice further details about Muthuraj, and we assure Muthuraj, Mahiba, and daughters Mona & Mano, our sincerest prayer and welcome, as they join us.
- The appointment of Andrew Hurst as part-time Assistant Curate in the Parishes of Newnham and Grantchester, and to be ordained at Ely Cathedral also on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September. On 12<sup>th</sup> July at 6pm at Evensong, a special presentation was made to Andrew, in appreciation of all his ministry at St John's during his training with the Eastern Regional Training Course. Andrew is in our prayers, as he begins his new ministry in Cambridge at this time.
- On Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July James announced Sian Binley's completion of her ALM ministry course as a pioneer minister. Sian joined the St John's Ministry Team several months ago. But at this service Sian explained about her new ministry, and encouraged us to join her, in terms of seeking new expressions of Christian community within the wider Parish. You can listen to Sian talking about her new ministry on our website: <https://youtu.be/fX96yAr1yvE>
- Also on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July, James gave a special presentation and thank you to June Huntsman, who has retired as a member of the St John's Ministry Team and Pastoral ALM, after many years of faithful service. June has made a remarkable impact on our Christian life and ministry, not least as leader of our lay visiting team, Home Communion, regular visitor herself, instigator of Companions, past Children's Church & Youth leader, and much else besides. June continues at St John's, and we are so grateful for her inspiring leadership.
- James, our Priest in Charge, in response to an invitation from Addenbrooke's, has joined the Chaplaincy Team, as a part-time local chaplain (half a day per week), to assist their ministry to staff and non-covid patients, during this challenging time of the pandemic.

### **St John's Ordinands**

St John's has always been blessed by its theological college ordinands, on placement at St John's during their training. On 5<sup>th</sup> July, at our final 'Church at Home' service, Chris made gave a formal thank you, on our behalf, to Freya Bradley, who has been with us for two years, but now moves on – in her final year – to a different placement. Freya has brought so much sparkle to our ministry, not least through her lively sermons, and enthusiastic support to St John's Youth Group.

We have been very grateful, also, for the enthusiastic presence, and ministry, of Sam Duckhouse and Will Lyon Tupman, over the past year, from Westcott House. They will be continuing with us for another year. We will also be joined, in September, by at least one new Ridley ordinand, including Tom Owen & his family.

In addition, I can report about three recent ordinands, who have moved on. A year ago Tom Couper, previously a Westcott ordinand, was ordained deacon, and now serves in the Diocese of London.

Also Nathan Joss, our Westcott ordinand, was ordained deacon, and service in the Parish of Harlow, in Chelmsford Diocese. And finally, William Ellis, our Ridley ordinand, is being ordained at this time, and now serves as curate in Whitby.

**St John’s Pastoral News**

Since the last edition of Parish Voice, we are sad to announce, from our congregation, the death of Margaret Owen, and Mary Piggott.

Margaret joined St John’s in recent years, from St Martin’s parish, and was a wonderfully warm, kind

**From the Parish Register:**

Funeral:

July 14 Mary Piggott

July 21: Andrew Strachan

and joyful church member! Mary was formerly a resident of Hartington Grove, and a long-time member of St John’s, as well as a dedicated ward sister at Addenbrooke’s for many years. In recent years she lived at Edward House. Both will be much missed.

**The Botanic Gardens**



One Wednesday in the school holiday we went to the Botanical Gardens with Charlotte and Emily, while Chris was at church. Our favourite parts were the ramp which overlooks the systematic bed designed to take you through time. The greenhouses were beautiful and we really loved them except we could only go in the ones with an entrance and an exit to maintain social distancing. There was a very exciting tree which we had great fun sitting on as the branches were so low to the ground. At the end of our visit we went to the scented garden and we were amazed at a plant that smelt like sherbet lemons. Here are some pictures we took whilst we were there.



Harriet and Alex



*This month we welcome Dr Muthuraj Swamy, who begins his ministry with St John's as part of our clergy team.*



*Commenting on his appointment, James said: 'It is a joy to be welcoming Muthuraj, with his cross-cultural perspective, Indian background, and expertise in reconciliation and peace-making. I am confident that his work will strength our capacity, as a local Christian community, to work with diverse communities, religious and secular, to explore the place of faith and serve the common good.'*

## **Muthuraj writes:**

Dear St John's, greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am very happy to be connected with you through the Parish Voice.

### **Background**

To give a brief background about myself, I and my family come from rural South India – from Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu – which is at the southern tip of India where the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal meet together. We are from the Church of South India, which is part of the Anglican Communion.

I came to Christianity at the age of 7 when I was invited by my peers to go with them to a nearby church. I decided to go to the church continuously when I saw and experienced the love of Christ witnessed by the Christians there in their everyday and simple attitudes of welcome and hospitality. Later my parents and some siblings came to Christianity while two of my brothers remained Hindus. Thus inside my home and also outside it surrounded by Hindu and Muslim neighbours, I grew as a Christian interreligiously.

### **Call to ministry**

Seeing my interest in learning the Bible, my mother encouraged me towards Christian ministry when I was young. At 17, I felt I had received the call of God, while reading Isaiah 61:1-3, and I committed myself to God's ministry.

### **Theological training**

I began my theological training in 1993. After my undergraduate theological education, I was encouraged by my teachers and mentors to continue higher theological education in order to teach in theological colleges, which I felt was the right thing to do. After doing my Masters in Theology in Bangalore in India, I got an opportunity to do a PhD at the University of Edinburgh where I did an ethnographic work on interreligious dialogue.

### **Church ministry**

During and in between these years of education, I got some opportunities to participate in different kinds of church ministry in India: in Mumbai, Chennai, Kanyakumari and Pune. But I felt I was not yet prepared for ordained ministry. However my participation in the church ministry as a lay theological educator has shaped my formation and work to a great extent.

### **Interreligious work**

During some of these years I also worked with church and church-connected organisations promoting interreligious dialogue, peace and reconciliation and harmonious relationships between communities. I have gained good experience and learning through this work.

### **Teaching and work in India**

In the last 10 years I have had the opportunity to train theological students for ministry (the first seven and half years in India). To live in a residential theological college community and grow with the students there is a very enriching experience.

As I was preparing to move to Cambridge in 2018, I got the privilege of being invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby to write the 2019 Archbishop's Lent book on the theme *Reconciliation*. This has been really a great and blessed experience.

### **Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide (CCCW)**

I joined CCCW (<https://www.cccw.cam.ac.uk/>) in April 2018, and am enjoying my work here. CCCW works at the intersection of Church-Mission-Academy. Our main focus is the interconnected nature of global Christianity where churches in one part of the world can learn from the other. Through our courses and activities, we work to encourage such openness and learning among Christian communities in Cambridge and beyond.

### **Anglican Communion Office**

I am also working part time with the Theological Education department at the Anglican Communion Office. I manage a

project, TEMAC, which has produced three Preparing for Lambeth Conference volumes on three themes: Reconciliation, Evangelism and Witness, and Prayer. All written by global Anglican scholars, these three books have been published as *Walking Together* (2018), *Witnessing Together* (2019) and *Listening Together* (2020).

### **My family**

My wife's name is Ezhil Packia Mahiba. We have been married since 2005. Mahiba is a trained science school teacher, but in Cambridge at the moment, she spends all her time in taking care of our family. Our daughters Mona (13) and Mano (12) attend the Parkside Community College.

### **Looking forward to being at St John's...**

We as family look forward to seeing and getting to know you all. I am eager to learn more about St John's, about you all, and about church and ministry in this country. I am aware cultures and contexts are different but intercultural learning is important and enriching. Also, I remain to listen to you about what you as a church think I may bring to St John's.

It is very good to get to know some of you through Bible Study groups and I cannot wait for my formal joining at St John's from September, and my deacon ordination on 27<sup>th</sup> Sep. We as family appreciate your prayers for us.

We are living in strange times due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and please be assured of my prayers for you all at these difficult times. May God's grace and peace encompass you all.

## Congratulations Lois!

On Lois Strangeways' 100th birthday in July some 40 neighbours gathered outside her house in Rock Road to sing Happy Birthday. Here is Lois reading the card, made by a neighbour using photos of flowers in the library garden, which we all signed. Cards were also sent from the congregation and from church groups she has belonged to.

Katie



## News from the Choir

It is with great sadness that the choir are unable to sing together. This has been the longest time that we have gone without meeting and singing together. We have enjoyed recording the music for the online services and we have been busy in other ways. The choir adults have met up via zoom, the trebles had a virtual end of term party, and Sheena has kindly made 10 new cravats.



*10 new cravats*



*Bishop's Award  
ribbons*

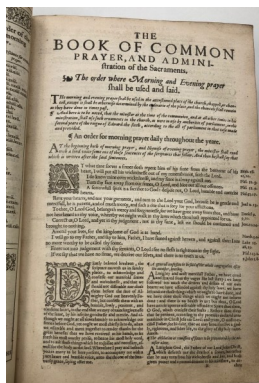
In March (the week before lock down) Harriet and Nicole took the RSCM Silver Bishop's Award. I'm delighted to say that they both passed—they were the only candidates in the Ely diocese. We are looking forward to awarding them with their certificates and purple ribbons once we are singing again.

Elizabeth



*Choir adults meeting on Zoom!*

## The Cambridge Prayer Book skill



Our latest venture is making the Prayer Book available on *Alexa*, Amazon's virtual assistant. If you have an 'Alexa' device, you can ask her questions in the same way you might run a search on the Internet. You can also give her orders — 'Give me a Christmas carol', or 'When's the next train to Ely?' You can also use Alexa skills to listen to Bible readings and prayers — including some from Common Worship provided by the Church of England.

With the Cambridge Prayer Book skill, let Alexa take you to a service of Morning or Evening Prayer, using the 1662 Book of Common Prayer liturgy. Alexa will take you through the service, from the Sentences of Scripture to The Grace.

The voices may sound familiar — that's because they are. Leading the service are our very own clergy James Shakespeare and Chris Campbell, accompanied by Cambridge University Press staff, who will keep you company in the congregational responses. We would like to thank James and Chris for fluently recording the services for us, and also for their professional advice on structure and content.



We also worked with the Prayer Book Society, and benefited from their advice on structure, as well as the likely take-up of the new skill. The collaboration began at an event held by the Society at Lambeth Palace, when we ran a poll on which parts of the BCP to offer. We presented participants with a set of Killner jars — labelled not with preserves, but with prayers and psalms and creeds.



We asked people to place beads in the different jars to indicate their 'go-to' parts of the Prayer Book.

In line with our findings, we have developed recordings for Morning and Evening Prayer, together with ten Bible readings to accompany the text. James and Chris recorded the Morning and Evening Prayer services, with the staff team recording the congregational responses. We later improved on this by recruiting the CUP choir, as they are practised at reading in unison. We also recorded 14 Bible lessons for use with the services, two for each day of the week to start off with. The Bible readings will alternate, as will the officiant — sometimes the Alexa users will hear James, and sometimes Chris.



Some people have asked why the services are split into different sections. This is a technical constraint: four minutes is the maximum length of time Alexa allows for each discrete piece of recorded material. We've done our best to split the services at sensible points, but if you come upon an odd join, then it's down to that four-minute rule.

I said at the beginning that the Prayer Book's great strength is its ability to evolve and adapt. When we started this project, we could not have imagined, let

alone believed, that churches would be closed and that people would be worshipping on their phones and computers. However, out of the grim circumstances of the pandemic, has come some fruit: the Church has done a sterling job in producing services you can join on line and sermons you can hear on your phone, as well as the TV services we already had. Even though churches are now re-opening, there are always people who cannot physically get to a church to worship, whether the obstacle be distance, timing, immobility, caring commitments — or just not their type of service. We offer the Alexa Cambridge Prayer Book skill in the hope that it will enable people to do their devotions whenever they want to, wherever they are.

Amanda Taylor

*Marketing and Sales  
Executive, on behalf of the  
Cambridge Bibles team*

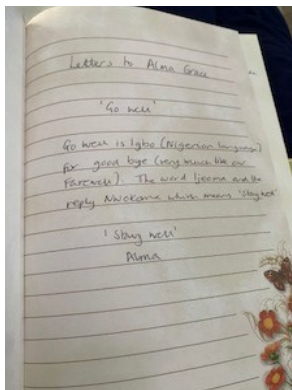


**[www.cambridge.org/  
bibles](http://www.cambridge.org/bibles)**



## Letters to Alma

In response to your email re Lockdown stories/experiences, I thought I'd share my journey re writing daily letters to our first born grandchild - Alma.



*The front page of Letters to Alma*

Now, 6 months on I still write each morning and recently have enjoyed sharing summer stories of her first camping trip with all of the family.

My plan is to pass these letters onto her on her First Birthday - but ssssh they are a secret at the moment.



*The cover*

Alma Grace was born on 20th February 2020.

Before 'Lockdown' I had already decided to write a letter a day to Alma. These letters were to be simple accounts of daily life as well as a record of special days, like Easter, Spring etc. I would also reference the weather and my faith, in a subtle way. However, little did I realise that these letters would end up being a diary about a pandemic - COVID-19!

I have always enjoyed writing journals and I am sure others have written their accounts of these COVID-19 days. How great these accounts will be for future generations in understanding this pandemic in years to come.

I look forward to my role as Writer-in-residence at The Rock Road library (even if this ends up being via Zoom!) so others can 'get writing' or share their 'writing'.

Kay

Many members of St John's will remember **Jessica Reid**, one of our Westcott ordinands from a few years ago. She and her husband now have a lively toddler called Jack, and Jess has been serving her curacy at St Nicholas's of Myra, 'The Ancient Mother Church of Brighton'. Coincidentally St Nicholas's is the church I attend when I am in Brighton. I visited on 9<sup>th</sup> August, and was pleased to see that Jess was taking the service. She preached and celebrated Holy Communion, distributing the host to the well spaced out congregation. She has been keeping an eye on us through St John's At Home, which she said was impressive, and she asked me to send you all her love.

Amanda

## From the Editors...

First of all, a really big thank you to everyone who's contributed to this comeback issue of the Parish Voice: you've all been just fantastic, as we're sure our readers will agree! And we hope very much everyone will enjoy what is quite a varied package.

Note especially:

- the reprint of James's pastoral letter (originally sent in July, but reprinted because of its continuing relevance) on p. 27
- Chris's article on Genesis, p.22 and
- Kate's 'taster' article on the 'Seeking God's Way Together' consultation (p.18).

We hope very much that this issue will herald a smooth resumption of monthly publication as before. All contributions are welcome: if you have something you would like to submit for a coming issue, please send it to us at our new email address, [parishvoicesje@gmail.com](mailto:parishvoicesje@gmail.com), preferably in a not too fancy file format, ie one that doesn't require the latest software to open it! (Do ring if you have questions, our numbers are on the back page.)

Deadline for copy is usually the Wednesday two before the last Sunday in the month; we always look forward to seeing what comes in!

With very best wishes to everyone  
Liz and Paula

## Home Away From Home – The Penn Club

If like me you have ever needed to stay overnight in London and wanted an alternative to an impersonal hotel experience, let me introduce you to the Penn Club near Russell Square. It is in its centenary year, having been established with monies left over from the Friends Ambulance Unit, active in World War 1. The club's purpose is to provide premises in central London for the enjoyment of members and guests from around the world. The spirit of fellowship together with the employment and purchasing policies reflect Quaker values. An extensive refurbishment has been undertaken recently.

When my stay is short, I usually walk from King's Cross with just a small bag or rucksack, enjoying that very historic area. Many museums, galleries and institutions are accessible without recourse to

further public transport. I have stayed at the club before early trains or planes out of London, and many people use it during a period of academic study. I have always felt relaxed and extremely comfortable there.

In these unsettling times, covid is delivering harsh blows to many organisations and the Penn Club is no exception. Now we are beginning to take tentative steps further afield, the club is encouraging people to stay and to spread the word about it as a safe haven in a London that is uniquely quiet at the moment. Feedback from recent visitors indicates they were totally reassured by health and safety processes and found local attractions open and welcoming. Should the club be forced to close with low room occupancy, there will be many people left feeling deeply sad and of course valued staff without work. For further information do ask me (01223 213607) and/or go to [www.pennclub.co.uk](http://www.pennclub.co.uk)

Erica Lowry

## The Annual Plant Sale

Will it happen? Won't it happen? It did in the end, during the weekend of 9/10 May, but very differently from our previous sales held in the church garden.

### ***Roger writes:***

By the time you read this hopefully you will have enjoyed, and be still enjoying, the fruits of your summer gardening. We had two large conifers at the bottom of our garden removed last winter because their trunks were infected by fungus. They had always blocked out light and rain. The result was to create a perfect microclimate outside as well as inside the greenhouse.

As a result, even though I have given up my allotment, this has been my most rewarding year's gardening for a long time. (Helped by not being able to go anywhere else!) I have grown my first ever aubergines, cucumbers of all shapes and sizes, melons, tomatoes, courgettes .... One failure has been strawberries - not a good year, nor many raspberries.

The plant sale in May was a strange event but financially considerably more successful even than previous years. I was even able, once orders had been placed, to grow seedlings to order. We all hope 2021 will bring normality but after this year's experience I hope that many of you will feel like placing advance orders again. This will enable me to grow exactly what you want; I won't have to carry tray loads of plants down to church and you will be able to pickup knowing exactly how many pots you have to carry.

One option might be to have a pickup session one day or one week before a more casual sale on the church lawn. Let Katie and me know what you think of this idea.

### ***Katie writes:***

After some warm, pleasant, early summer days, Sunday 10 May dawned wet, cold and windy with the cold wind continuing all day – not ideal for selling plants for summer gardens! Undeterred, courtesy of the Violin Workshop, we set out our display in their car park behind Rock Road. There was plenty of space to spread out the tables of perennials, herbs and geraniums, and brave customers came to peruse and buy, wrapped up against the elements and keeping to the regulation distancing. At the end of the afternoon most plants had been sold and we donated what remained to the Rock Road Library plant sale the following weekend.



I hope that everything you bought has grown well and given you great pleasure during lockdown. Tricia sent me this photograph of the plants she purchased. So many of you kindly booked geraniums before the sale that only a few remained on the day so I plan to grow many more next spring. Although I'm restricted by the size of my conservatory, I am hoping to find other people who have frost-free spaces where the plants can be grown on for the next plant sale.

See you next May!

## Sunday Services at St John's in September

<b>Sunday 6th September</b>	9.30 am	Holy Communion
	11.00am	Service of the Word; Baptism 12.30
	6.00 pm	Evensong
<b>Sunday 13th September</b>	9.30am	All age service
	11.00am	Holy Communion
	6.00pm	Evensong
<b>Sunday 20th September</b>	9.30 am	All age service
	11.00am	Service of the Word; Baptism 12.30
	6.00pm	Holy Communion
<b>Sunday 27th September</b>	9.30am	All age service
	11.00 am	Holy Communion
	6.00pm	Evensong

We continue to provide online Sunday worship, filming and posting online, each Sunday afternoon, the 11am service. We take seriously the needs of those still shielding or unable to join us physically.

## Other dates for your diary

<b>Tuesdays</b>	9.00am: Morning Prayer (8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th; also Thursday Sept 24th.)
<b>Wednesdays</b>	10.00am: BCP Holy Communion
	9.00 pm: Online Compline (Night Prayer) Zoom Meeting: ID: 763 9772 2761. Passcode: 6a1xwu
<b>Sunday, 27th September</b>	Ordination of Muthuraj Swamy (1.00 pm) at Ely Cathedral; Ordination of Andrew Hurst at Ely Cathedral

## Seeking God's Way Together— July 2020

*As a church and local community, (and globally) we have experienced unexpected times during the past months:*

- *we have learned to live differently*
- *we have learned to be with God, and worship together, differently;*
- *we have learned to share God's love with others differently.*

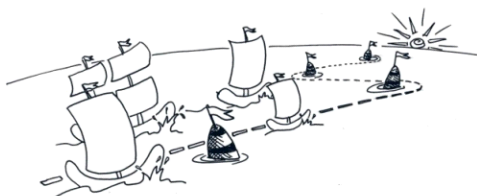
*Many things are not as they were, and that is why I have been gathering our 'stories', to help record our experiences and reflections. These will become the next chapter in our 'St John's Timeline', and will help us discern together where God is leading us, and in what ways we can respond.*

*Many of you have made a contribution to this, as individuals or as regular meeting groups, and I thank you all so much, for together these help God show us a much 'richer picture'.*

*As space allows here, we can listen to snippets of those stories...*

The big miss has been singing with the Choir, as music is so central to worship for me. However, we have been able to record music for use in our online services. Hopefully, this can be further developed. The social side of Choir has been maintained by setting up a WhatsApp Group and by having a weekly chat via Zoom—very grateful for all this. So for me, God has still been there, just in a different way....

Overall, I have found this time to be a gift as a family—for us all to be at home together all the time, eat together 3 times a day, and generally spend more



time together. Yes, there have been challenges, but I think we as individuals and groups can learn a lot from what has happened.

Several weeks ago - during 'lockdown', I went to my \*PROMISE BOX to withdraw a text. I hadn't done this for several months, and for some reason felt compelled to take a tiny scroll at that point. On unravelling it, I was surprised if not astounded to read the following from Psalm 91 v 10:

*'There shall no evil befall thee,  
neither shall any plague come  
nigh thy dwelling.'*

2

I have not visited the box since then, but felt I needed to share this with you.

*[\*What is a Promise Box?*

*It is a treasure store of 144 Bible texts rolled up into tiny scrolls and fitted neatly into a box, resembling a honey comb. Each text is a promise from God. They were widely used by the Victorians and it is thought that they were given as a keepsake to their wives and sweethearts by men going to fight in the 1st World War.]*

1

4

I have been very much encouraged and inspired by the dedication and self sacrifice of NHS staff, carers and people of all faiths who have gone to great lengths to feed and help those in need. Also by the amazing fundraising of so many people.

People have been inspired and required to take a fresh look at what really is important to them. I think we are living out the commandment to "love thy

neighbour as thyself” where we have witnessed many random acts of kindness in our neighbourhoods, and in our local communities nationwide.

Very mixed experiences. Some things good: quietness, more connection to neighbourhood and being out in the community; talking to those we might not have normally talked to, smiling at people, looking out for people practically (eg shopping) and just enjoying new connections. But downsides have included the lack of physical contact and not being able to see people we care about.

Weekly online church has been a grounding point... Even though we’ve argued with them, we have become closer to our family....

Part of being church has been this homegroup. Meeting on Zoom has brought us into each others’ homes which gives an additional, valuable dimension. If we meet physically, we just see each others’ bodies and one person’s home. There is a sense of trust and intimacy in visiting each other’s homes via Zoom.

We’ve all loved the contributions of more diverse members of the congregation in the online services and hope this will continue....

When we do communicate with each other, it has been more real and less trivial. More genuine.

‘I always thought my faith wouldn’t survive being tested but I’ve found it’s strengthened.’

The psalms have provided a new insight and a personal connection with the Psalmists... a new reality.

The absence of road and air traffic brought about an uncanny and deep silence—except for bird song, which was loud and clear. The air was purer than I had ever experienced, and the smell of the blossom... was intoxicating!

And through the slowing, the stillness, the quiet God said, “Look. Listen. Savour.” My world got smaller and smaller but bigger too as the rush hurried away, leaving time to hear the cuckoo in the fields and the owls from my bedroom. I finally got to see eternity in my particular grain of sand. And it was beautiful.

But what about my faith? God crept into my heart in the silence—or did I creep into his? I only know that he is woven more firmly into my days so that I value stillness. It’s still a struggle to read the bible, to pray but instead of giving up I’ve noticed that the struggle doesn’t block the glory out, it’s part of it. So I keep on.’

*Remembering that this is a whole church reflection, if you have any further insights, or would still like to tell your story, please do send them to me.*

thank  
you!

*I am looking forward enormously to a few weeks time when the Ministry team and the ‘Partnership for Missional Church’ Steering group will be drawing all these together, and we would value your continuing prayers as we do so.*

Kate Aylmer – Licensed Lay Minister

## Grounders at Tuesley Farm

During lockdown, 'Grounders' launched its first ever project, supporting young people aged 18 – 24 into fruit and vegetable picking employment. This was born from a personal passion of founder Becky Grove, for modernising 'careers' education and how we integrate young people into our economy. Hearing about the agricultural labour shortages the UK faces, Becky, along with a committed team of supporters and young Grounders themselves, wanted to gauge the potential of bringing young local labour back into the sector, both as a potential solution to this problem and to give young people real work and life experience.

Looking for a local connection, Becky contacted leading soft fruits producer Harry Hall, to see if The Hall Hunter Partnership could help test this out at Tuesley Farm in Surrey. We organised a team of 10 young adults to join Tuesley's local UK team for 3 weeks. We lived on site in working 'bubbles' alongside Tuesley's established workforce to better experience outdoor living, as well as building independence, team-building skills, confidence, a sense of purpose, and community more generally.

Not so long ago, young people (our parents) used to help harvest in the summer holidays and, whilst the pandemic has been tragic in many ways, it has taught us all the importance of our food source and a greater appreciation for how our food gets from farm to fork. We all expected it to be tough work, and we knew we wouldn't be as good as professional pickers straight away, but we really wanted to work alongside, and

learn from, skilled agricultural workers, many of whom live hundreds of miles from their families for months on end to provide Britons with enough to eat. We quickly realised how much harder this skill is to master than we first thought: quality control, fruit sizing and being thorough at pace is not easy! But we now understand that, without these high standards, supermarkets wouldn't readily stock the product. Everyone at Tuesley was very patient with us, which we are very grateful for, and we're proud of our team for sticking at it. By week 3, we knew we had all got better at picking, though it can take years to become as productive in the job as the professional pickers. We hope that in time we will get better at the skill, and maybe even keep up with our new friends on the farm!

It's fair to say that we'll never look at food in the shops the same again. We'll think more about how it was grown, who picked it and how much effort goes into feeding people. We've also come to have a new understanding of why poly tunnels are necessary if we want to continue consuming the nearly 200k tonnes of British strawberries we eat each year.

Poly tunnels in the countryside might not be everyone's favourite thing but we're not convinced everyone would have stuck at the job without them (it was over 30 degrees on one day and pouring with rain the next!). We were also glad of the waist-height tabletop growing system: we can't believe that people still have to pick strawberries on the ground in other places – "literally, no way could I do that" was a common response!

It really is an experience we will cherish and we are so grateful for the local support we received: keeping us going

## Traidcraft during and after lockdown



**TRAIDCRAFT**  
Fighting poverty through trade

Several of the staff at Traidcraft's HQ in Gateshead were furloughed during lockdown, leaving the remaining teams working so hard to keep the fairtrade products moving into and out of the warehouse and, in addition, supporting local food hubs. Many thanks to those of you at St John's who have enabled our 'stall' to continue functioning by purchasing goods by phone and email from the mini-store in my dining room. You have contributed greatly to Traidcraft's efforts to assist producers in the developing world at this difficult time for everyone.

You also contributed to my personal wellbeing by staying for a chat when

collecting your orders—you at the gate and me on my doorstep. Sometimes others would pass by and join the conversation from a distance! It was good to see real people—thank you.

We don't yet know when it will be possible to resume our monthly fairtrade stall at St John's but in the meantime please do keep in touch and continue sending me your orders. If what you require isn't in stock at home I can easily order it from Traidcraft. To see the whole range please check [traidcraftshop.co.uk](http://traidcraftshop.co.uk).

Katie Knapton Tel 212089  
[katieknapton@talktalk.net](mailto:katieknapton@talktalk.net)

with lovely cakes, lending us a barbecue, chilled lemonade and bringing us a paddling pool when it was 32 degrees! We've loved being part of the farm's community and getting to know people from different places, everyone has been so welcoming. Even if language barriers were challenging at times, every morning and evening we received smiles and hellos a plenty.

On top of this, we've enjoyed some lovely local walks, received a fascinating talk about the business from Harry and HHP's Managing Director, Brent Lawson, taken a socially-distanced yoga class, and even made some jam with [@wild\\_garlic\\_cookery](#). On top of that, everyone got linked up with someone in their field of interest for a careers session, which has really helped us see how we can apply our new skills in our futures.

Looking ahead, we think Grounders could be adapted to an array of farms with 'picking' needs: a good training ground for rural employment and a way of integrating local employment with an overseas workforce. It can help instill a greater awareness of the global food system at the same time as building resilience in young people and drawing on the experience of local youth workers to lead the programmes.

Some pictures from our experience can be found on the social media handle [@groundersuk](#). Thanks so much Tuesley, 3 weeks we'll never forget!

The Grounders Team

*[Many thanks to Becky Grove for this article. (She is Gail's daughter in law.)]*

## Reading from the beginning...

You might have noticed that over the summer, our Old Testament readings focussed on the narratives from Genesis. This was a wonderful opportunity for many of us to immerse ourselves in these foundational texts, but as you read them you might have found yourself asking more questions than you got answers; this was certainly our experience in the Tuesday evening bible study group, as we walked with them each week. The lectionary has now just moved on to Exodus readings (which I might write about next time), but whilst they were still fresh in our minds I wanted to spend time exploring with you some of the rewards (and challenges) of reading this very first book of the bible!

## So what is Genesis?

Genesis is a book of the bible. The first of 66 books.

When we talk about the bible, we often talk about it being a book of books, or even a library of books! And, like a library, not all the books in it are the same. There are books of poetry and of law, there are letters and prophecies and histories.

Genesis, and much of Exodus, are narratives – they are stories which unfold the relationship of God with God's people.

Even within the book of Genesis, there are two, or probably three, different types of narratives.

The first eleven chapters are often referred to as primeval history and they need to be read in a very different way to the rest of Genesis. They are some of

the most important parts of scripture, because they tell us all about how God calls the world into relationship with God and that God's ultimate desire is for creation to be unified, both amongst itself and with God. These early stories have often been misunderstood, but most (although not all) would now agree that these are best described as myths. Myths which contain deep truths and which, by taking place outside of time and the constraints of either science or history, can teach us about the nature of both God and humanity.

The rest of the book of Genesis can be split into two; the stories of the Patriarchs and the story of Joseph. On first glance these look very similar, however there are some differences between them. Like around 40% of the Old Testament, they are both narratives: powerful and purposeful stories of how ancient people experienced God. A God who is not remote or impersonal, but is present in and concerned with all of their everyday lives. A God who can be trusted and who keeps God's promises. And, as well as being stories about how people individually experienced God, they are also stories of the birth of a nation. A nation which will grow to define themselves as God's people.

A common question I hear about the stories in Genesis is 'are they true?': were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel real people, to whom these things actually happened?

The answer is not a simple yes or no.

On the face of it, Genesis 12 onwards looks a bit like history. There are references to people, and to places. However, there are several significant anachronisms, if we were to treat it in

such a way. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most commentators thought that these patriarchal narratives were fiction, or at most vague memories of a tribe, which represented a social movement and formation of a would-be nation.

Today many conclude that, although there are anachronisms (such as the mention of Philistines and camels...) and although archaeology has never proven any given event in patriarchal tradition, the stories do seem to authentically reflect life in the middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BC). The narratives are *historically plausible*, but possibly act more like a collection of ancestral legends – a bit like King Arthur or Robin Hood. We can probably assume that there *were* historical figures and possibly even that they were called Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (and Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel). But we can't know exactly when and where these people lived and we don't know who put these narratives together in the way we have them today.

Most likely, these stories had been told down the ages, passed from one generation to another. As it was passed down it was always loved and always cherished, but sometimes it was criticised and sometimes it was changed slightly, as different parts were deemed more important, or less important, to the tribes and the families that told them. It is a memory that has been held close to the heart and transformed as each group of people heard it afresh. And then, at some point in time, all these stories were written down and compiled into the (relatively) cohesive narrative we have today. But when we look at Genesis (and the rest of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the bible)) now, we can sometimes see those different

priorities reflected; for instance, in the different names used for God. (We call this 'source criticism' and some scholars have spent a lot of time, dividing up the Pentateuch into 4 different sources – J, E, P and D).

In many ways though, the question about historicity isn't the most important question, but it is one that we often seem to fall back on. But if it isn't the most important question, what should we be asking ourselves as we listen to the stories of Genesis?

One question we can ask is why was a story like this told? In some places, Genesis contains cultic etiology, stories that were told to explain things (e.g. why a particular place was considered holy, why the people don't eat meat from the thigh etc...), and understanding that can help us in our interpretation of the text. But in most places, the narratives are just giving us stories about God and God's people. These texts are certainly not there to teach us 'morals' (or principles for living) and neither are the narrative stories there to directly teach doctrine (although they might illustrate it).

It is also helpful when reading Genesis to consider the different levels in the story. So for instance, we have all the individual stories and episodes; and sometimes it will be easy to see why those stories are important and sometimes it won't! Sometimes we can feel totally unsatisfied and even disturbed by a particular passage. But as we zoom out, and read more widely, we can often see how that small part might fit within a great whole. This can really be seen in many of these narratives, for instance that of Jacob. When we first meet Jacob we can often be pretty unimpressed – he's a trickster,

who has stolen his brother's blessing and run away. We can wonder why God is working in his life.... But as we read on, we do see how Jacob's character develops and there are moments of real faithfulness in his life that stand out. But many of the characters who we follow in these narratives are far from perfect, and this can remind us of our own lives, and the lives of those around us, that nobody's journey with God is a straight line and that all of us are messy people who make mistakes.

Above these individual stories, we have a second level, which in Genesis is all about God's forming and calling of a specific people into relationship with God. A people who are defined by *promise*, by a covenant, with God. So when we read the Genesis story, we might also ask how this fits in with the story of that particular people and how they grow in faith, trust and relationship with their God.

Finally, we have a top level narrative, the 'metanarrative', which is to do with the whole of God's plan. It is a narrative that spans the whole of the Bible and beyond; starting with God's creation, journeying through the many ways humanity sins and falls away from being in relationship with God, showing us our need for redemption and bringing us to all the way to the cross and Christ's perfect act of salvation.

As Christians, remembering these different levels of narrative is really important when reading the old testament, so that we don't try and appropriate it. The Old Testament was Jesus' scriptures, which he knew, and studied and loved. And so by reading

## Homerton College Charter Choir

Greetings from Homerton!

Firstly, many thanks to Rev Chris and to all who worked so hard to produce and enable the presentation of the Choir's Virtual Evensong on Sunday 3 July. This is still available for you to participate, on You Tube.

Now, we are now looking forward to being back at St John's at the start of the Michaelmas Term.

Watch this space for details of the first Evensong on 13 October.

Trish

them, we can deepen our faith and understanding considerably. But, although there are some Old Testament passages that we do see as messianic, we shouldn't try to 'read Jesus' into every passage. Instead, we need to keep in mind what these stories do best for our faith – which is to demonstrate how God is intimately concerned with the world and to illustrate ways in which God's concern and God's calling have taken place.

There is so much more I could say about the book of Genesis and for me it has been a real joy to delve into it each Sunday. But our lectionary also leaves a lot out. So my challenge for you would be to spend some time rereading from the beginning. Take time to dwell in the stories. I would love to hear what you discover!

Chris

## Homerton Singers

The reformed Homerton Singers made a great start last October. I use the word reformed as membership is now open, not only to students and staff of Homerton College but also the general public. Though many know about this, I feel that it is worth repeating as there are always newcomers to the area and of course, dare I say it, there are usually some who missed previous announcements!

Since last October the choir (50 members) has sung in two Homerton College Music Society Concerts and last March gave a full concert in the church to a large appreciative audience. This concert also included three students conducting a guest choir, The Ensemble of Friends. Then alas, with choirs around the world, we had to stop because of COVID-19. Now we have to wait until given the all clear before we can restart, but from various correspondence I have received, we are all 'champing at the bit.' For the future I

have several ideas such as the choir singing an Evensong in the church as well as giving a combined concert with a local school choir, performing a work together.

Now seemingly this is an odd time to be welcoming new members when we are not meeting but I believe in being prepared so if you would like to join Homerton Singers please get in touch with me [-dcoombes@clara.net](mailto:-dcoombes@clara.net) Already, during lockdown a soprano has joined. It means that though there is no singing you will receive up-dates etc from me on a regular basis. If you are not a member of Homerton College the subscription in 'normal times' would be £25 pounds per term, but until we meet again membership is free. And if you do join you have the opportunity of taking part in the General Musicianship Matters for Choirs that I have devised -and that is also free.

So I look forward to welcoming new members in these strange times.

Dr Douglas Coombes.

## Our Overseas Mission Partners

While we in the UK have been struggling with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, our overseas mission partners are doing the same but with fewer resources both personal and governmental. Here is a quick update.

### The Bethesda Project, Burundi

The Rev Rob Burch, our contact in Cumbria for Bethesda, tells us that during the pandemic there has of necessity been a shift at the Project from

outdoor activities and team building to helping with desperate health and social circumstances in the community.

A Western-style lockdown is not possible with crowded living conditions and virtually no social security but the new President takes the pandemic more seriously than his predecessor, having launched a campaign of mass screening and promising to fight the spread of the virus.

The project is still hoping to find funds to buy a new 4 x 4 vehicle (essential for their work), to which we at St John's are contributing from our Lenten Giving -

interrupted by lockdown. There are still envelopes in the lobby if you would like to contribute towards helping those in one of the poorest countries in the world.

As Rob Burch says, 'there is much to pray for: I am constantly amazed by the impact we supporters can have in our prayers and donations'

### **CMS Mission Partners in NW India**

Kylie and Bhim Bahadur, whom many of you have met during their visits to St John's, moved last year from NE to NW India. Kylie says 'In Kalimpong, witnessing and our work went more hand in hand than they do here in West Bengal. In this new field (and more so for me as more of my time is on homeschool and the small baby stage of life) we have less opportunity for evangelism as we are so far working with established faith organisations.' During the pandemic they are able to continue their own work intermittently, sometimes by making small donations to support groups close to those in need of urgent help.

Kylie and Bhim have created a short video, thanking God, their funding churches and the CMS for their help and support during this challenging time. They send their love to the people of St John's and say 'We are united with you all in prayers during this Corona virus epidemic. Please take care of yourselves and know that Jesus hears our prayers and he answers them. Thank you all for praying and supporting us for so many years.'

### **St Peter's Happiness Nursery, Arua, N Uganda**

Northern Uganda is at particular risk from the spread of the pandemic as it borders South Sudan and D R Congo where there are large refugee camps. In March all businesses, schools, churches, mosques, bars and public transport were closed indefinitely although in July a few businesses were unlocked. Schools and churches are being monitored until September pending a decision on their reopening. In the meantime church services take place outdoors wherever possible but there is no schooling.

Loice Kokanyi, the headteacher of St Peter's, gives money to the teachers so they can start small enterprises and earn money to support their families. Loice says 'Life is tough even for my family. I have to resort to making cakes from wheat flour to sell by walking through the market while announcing my products, an idea I shared with my teachers. They could choose the same during the lockdown.' She adds that the management of Covid 19 is very effective in Uganda where there have been very few deaths. She ended a recent email with 'Greet all. I am praying for you'.

**Please pray for the safety and welfare of all our overseas contacts at this difficult time.**

Katie

***This is a reprint of James' Pastoral Letter to St John's Congregation, written in July.***

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair." (Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*) Almost four months ago, on 19th March, I wrote a Pastoral Letter at the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, as restrictions on public worship came into force, and on the eve of lock-down. I now write to you as we anticipate St John's re-opening for public worship and as some lock-down measures are lifted. It is a significant milestone, and an opportunity to reflect back on these past four months, as well as to discern a direction of travel for the future, listening to one another and to God, in terms of the challenges and opportunities ahead of us.

The purpose of this letter, therefore, is to reflect a little on what has been, to listen to some of the voices that are speaking into this time of transition and change, and to acknowledge the significance of our re-opening, as well as inviting you to be part of a conversation about what's been going on, and what God might be doing through this time of crisis. I am fully aware that some of you remain vulnerable and shielding, and will not be able to return to gathered Church in the near future. Your voices are particularly important, and you remain part of the dispersed Body of Christ, 'united in prayer... and one in joy and simplicity of heart.' (Acts 2) We have already been open for private

prayer since 15th June, and on Sunday we held an afternoon of open prayer, but inevitably there is poignancy and significance about being permitted to worship together again physically, even as –like other Churches – we hope to continue an online presence. Charles Dickens' famous words seem to be especially relevant to 2020 and our once -in-a-lifetime public health crisis, with the dramatic impact on societies, economies and communities, right across the globe. Having been involved in a number of structured conversations about the impact of COVID-19, one thing that stands out for me is the very different way in which different individuals and groups have experienced this time.

For some people, as we are all too aware, it's been a time of acute suffering and dislocation. Whether because of loss of work or livelihoods, physical ill health and mortality (not just Covid, but also radical effects on cancer sufferers, and many others who've kept away from hospital), mental health impacts, or conflicts in the home, let alone the challenges – for our young people – of missed educational opportunities, the effects of Covid would have been, just six months ago, unimaginable. But of course there are others, perhaps in a more privileged position, for whatever reason, for whom lock-down has been an irritation, but maybe also a welcome space for quiet, peace and reflection, an opportunity to enjoy the abundance of nature and some fine spring sunshine. Nature has indeed rebounded, and for those with time and space to enjoy it, this has been a blessing.

Then there is, linking back to Charles Dickens, the moral level of how different individuals or groups have reacted to the

Coronavirus pandemic. For many, including volunteers and those working at the frontline in the NHS and other key services, there has been the impulse to generosity of spirit, to public service, and to working together to respond to the vulnerable, and to do what we can to help one another get through this period of vulnerability. I am sure we've all found it inspiring to hear stories of health workers, and to join in the 'clap for carers and the NHS'. I for one have been inspired by our local Church partnership with the Queen Edith's Forum, in terms of the 'Happy to Help' scheme and local Food Hub, which has motivated dozens of volunteers, and helped hundreds of families who might otherwise have gone hungry, or been unable to access prescriptions or supermarkets.

But undoubtedly there are also those who may not have been so public spirited, or considered the needs of others, or been willing to imagine a different kind of future, in which we take more seriously our inter-dependence, the persistence of inequality and racial injustice - exposed by the unequal impacts of COVID-19 - or indeed the long-term needs of our planet, over and against human greed. Interestingly, one of the good things to emerge from this pandemic – out of the crisis of human suffering – has been God refreshing the Church's ministry, through new insights into how to 'be' Church, through and beyond this difficult season. We have noticed, locally, fresh opportunities for creativity, not least through 'Church at Home' with many different voices coming forward, as well as pastoral contact via phone, and a strengthening of our common bonds.

In an article in the Church Times on 29th May, the notion was expressed that

maybe we could shift – as a result of the crisis – from 'going to Church' to 'becoming Church' all over again; something involving less obsession with the building, and a concern with unleashing the whole life of our community of faith: in prayer, spiritual formation, pastoral care and mission. Bishop Stephen, writing to the clergy, challenges us to allow such insights to shape whatever 'new normal' we may prayerfully envisage and plan towards, into the future. He writes,

"How do we imagine the 'normal' of the church of the future? It would be easy, and tempting, to emerge from lockdown and retreat into our buildings and our institutional anxieties; it would be easy to go into survival mode. It would be easy, in church as in society, to be so preoccupied with getting things back to 'normal' that we fail to see what is going on around us, or that we postpone all the wider questions of social justice until later. That would be to walk away from the mirror of this situation and immediately forget what the world looked like. We must capture what we have learnt and are learning about what it has meant to be God's church in such a time as this. As a diocese we pray to be generous and visible people of Jesus Christ; we have a vision of lives and communities transformed, fully alive in him."

And writing about our imminent return to gathered Church, Archbishop Justin Welby has spoken about the importance of lament for what has been, as well as trusting God to hold and guide us into his future: "It's wonderful that we will soon be able to gather again for worship in our churches... Over the coming weeks I'll be praying for clergy and congregations, especially those for whom returning to

church will not be straightforward, and for all those who are called to love and serve. As we prepare to gather together again, we do so bearing new burdens of grief and anxiety. Others will be filled with hope and excitement. But we do not gather just by ourselves. We are gathered in the embrace of God, who holds our griefs, fears and hopes, and who walks with us into this new and uncertain future, lighting our path along the way."

As indicated above, one of the things we will be making space for – alongside our planning and adjusting to new patterns of worship, with social distancing and hygiene measures in place, for our own safety and protection, and our care of each other – is some discernment of what God has been doing, from our perspectives, as well as what he may be prompting us to be and do into the future. I'm very grateful to Kate Aylmer for producing some questions to prompt our sharing and storytelling, which different groups will be looking at, and all

of you are encouraged to spend time with. 'What's my experience of being church through this crisis?' and 'At heart, what's going on in our society, and what might our Gospel have to say about this?' Just two of our potential questions. Please do engage with this critical discernment conversation, and you will find a paper on 'St John's corporate discernment

Please be assured of my prayers for all of you, and may God bless our congregation, at St John's, and all those amongst whom we live and work, and may he guide our footsteps, in love and faithfulness, into his future. Finally, I wish to thank all those who have sustained our Church life through the lock-down, especially our Ministry Team, our Churchwardens, and Chris Campbell, for her skilled oversight of 'Church at Home'.

With love and prayers

James



Priest in Charge  
Assistant Curate  
Honorary Assistant Priests

Lay Minister Emeritus  
Licensed Lay Minister  
Churchwarden  
Churchwarden Emeritus  
Parish Administrator

Email:

Office Hours

Church Treasurer  
Gift Aid Secretary  
Organist & Choirmaster  
Pastoral Assistant  
Safeguarding Coordinator  
Parish Magazine Editors

Email:

Advertising

Distribution

Health and Safety Officer  
Community Rooms Caretaker  
Traidcraft  
Toddle Along and  
Children's Church  
Mother & Toddler Group

Revd James Shakespeare (Tel: 241815)  
Revd Chris Campbell (Tel: 07383 512636)  
Revd. Dr. Peter Heslam (Tel: 722822)  
Revd John Hillier (Tel: 844282)  
Beryl Johnson (Tel: 243409)  
Kate Aylmer  
Peter Tavner (Tel 842226)  
Peter West (Tel: 243834)  
Lyn Harrison (Tel: 241316)  
stjecambridge@gmail.com  
Mon-Fri: 9–12  
Roger Lilley (Tel: 570884)  
Joseph Philip  
Elizabeth Trenchard (Tel: 01954 201381)  
Anne Rigby (Tel: 210871)  
Sarah Talmage (Tel: 01954 211252)  
Paula Wolff (Tel: 520669) and  
Liz Radice (Tel: 244791)  
parishvoicesje@gmail.com  
Parish Office (Tel: 241316)  
Cherry Hopkins (Tel: 247361)  
Peter Tavner (Tel: 842226)  
David Biggs (Tel: 248474)  
Katie Knapton (Tel: 212089)  
Parish Office, Tel 241316)  
  
Lesley Jenkins (Tel: 565974)

### *Uniformed Organisations*

5th Cambridge Brownies Shelly Palazzo (Tel: 07971 696626)  
(Tuesday 6pm term time only)  
5th Cambridge Guides Kristie Bewers (Tel: 510352)  
(Tuesday 7:30pm term time only)  
28th Cambridge Beaver Scouts\* Denise Owen (Tel: 510357)  
(Wednesday 6pm term time only)  
28th Cambridge Cub Scouts\* Jeremy Racher (Tel: 244085)  
(Monday 6pm term time only)  
28th Cambridge Scouts\* Geoff Oliver (Tel: 413553)  
(Tuesday 7:30pm term time only)

\*At HQ, Flamsteed Road

## Chiropody/Podiatry

**CELIA KENNEY**  
(HPC Registered Podiatrist)

The Beechwood Practice  
41 Hills Road  
Cambridge  
**01223 315541**

Treatments cover:  
Corn and callus reduction

Nail conditions

Ingrowing toenails


Fungal infections and  
athletes foot

Hyperhidrosis

Verruce/warts

Home appointments  
available

**Call 07939 227195**

  
**PEASGOOD  
& SKEATES**

THE FAMILY FUNERAL SERVICE

*Personal care & attention  
24 hours a day by local qualified staff*

Traditional & Contemporary Funerals  
Memorials  
Pre-Paid Funeral Plans  
Off Road Parking

 **617 Newmarket Road  
CAMBRIDGE  
(01223) 415255**

**45 Moorfield Road  
DUXFORD  
(01223) 833463**

[www.peasgoodandskeates.co.uk](http://www.peasgoodandskeates.co.uk)

**N W**  
**BROWN**  
& COMPANY LIMITED

**EXPERT IN  
INVESTMENT**

**01223 357131**  
[www.nwbrown.co.uk](http://www.nwbrown.co.uk)

NW Brown & Company Ltd is authorised and  
regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority

