

# The Parish Voice



**ST JOHN**  
the Evangelist

May 2021



## Upcoming Events: Spring – Summer 2021

### CCCW Silver Jubilee Lectures

#### *Theme: Transfiguring World Christianity*

2021 marks the Silver Jubilee of The Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide and 140 years of the Henry Martyn Trust that runs CCCW. To celebrate, the Centre is organising five Silver Jubilee lectures through this year on the theme *Transfiguring World Christianity*.

The transfiguration of Jesus Christ is a key event in his mission and ministry. Confirmed once again by God that he is the one to be listened to, Jesus comes down from the mountain of transfiguration ready to move into suffering and glory. Jesus' disciples participate in this divine event by attempting to *figure out* and interpret it. The disciples' continued participation in figuring out Christ and interpreting to others – connecting the event and its interpretations – has been central to Christianity's relevance.

Today, transfiguring Christianity is an ongoing event which has led to what we call 'World Christianity', with its centre of gravity shifted to the global South and East. How Christians participate in transfiguring World Christianity is key to its relevance. Ongoing interpretation is needed to make sense of the new shape of the Church in our current contexts.

**To register for the Lectures, please email:**

[centre@cccw.cam.ac.uk](mailto:centre@cccw.cam.ac.uk)



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## ‘New beginnings’



Photo by [Francesco Gallarotti](#) on [Unsplash](#)

It's that time of year when we consider new beginnings in the church, for this month (May) we celebrate Pentecost, the sending of the Holy Spirit – ten days after the Ascension of Jesus into heaven – when the Christian church essentially first came into being.

The narrative of Acts, in the New Testament, is a tantalising picture of what followed; a story perhaps better entitled the ‘Acts of the Holy Spirit’, since God's Spirit was very much at work – as he continues to be, in the world today. Closer to home, at St John's, we anticipate three particular ‘new beginnings’. First, the ordination of new deacons and priests, around six weeks after Pentecost, when women and men are commissioned for sacramental leadership in the church; including Ceri Payne, to be ordained as our new deacon, and Muthuraj Swamy, to be made priest.

Second, the confirmation of some of our young people, as adult Christian disciples, equipped by God and commissioned by the Bishop to live out their adult Christian lives in the world.

And third, on the day of Pentecost itself (23<sup>rd</sup> May), I will be collated and inducted as vicar of St John's, after four years as priest in charge. This change is, in technical terms, a legal shift in status, both for myself and the parish. However I believe it is also, more fundamentally, another ‘new

beginning’, as we celebrate God’s Spirit at work through St John’s, and dedicate our future afresh to him.

Another key New Testament text, in terms of the theology of the Holy Spirit and its outworking in both the individual believer and the life of the church, is St Paul’s Letter to the Romans, and chapters 5 to 8 in particular. For reasons that will be laid bare shortly, it’s good to notice one particular section of Paul’s words, early on, which I believe pertinent to our situation. In Romans 5.3-5, Paul writes:

‘we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.’

There may seem to be an irony in talking about or contemplating ‘new beginnings’ when we’ve all – within our city, our nation and our world at large – been through such a collective trauma over the past fifteen months of pandemic. How can it make sense to talk in terms of a ‘new beginning’, when people have suffered so much, lives have been radically dislocated, and even now the future is uncertain for many? And I say this with a profound sense of solidarity, compassion and concern for the sufferings of other people (young and old), in our parish and our world – not least, at this time, holding in prayer the tragic situation unfolding in India.

However there are a few theological insights that I would like to share, rooted in the Gospel and our experience of how God may be at work. Insights that might encourage and help us, as we rebuild and indeed pray for ‘new beginnings’, through the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit.

First, we need to acknowledge that much of our life is about gestation; in other words, allowing God to grow his new life and character and fulfilment in us. Sometimes we see real fruits and feel that we are achieving something worthwhile. But often it’s as if nothing glamorous or noteworthy

– beyond the mundanity of day-to-day existence – is happening. Nonetheless the point is that God’s Spirit is still at work, whatever the highs or lows of our experience. And this points us to two core qualities of our Christian faith and spiritual practice: trust and perseverance. St Paul suggests that, contrary to what we may believe, suffering can actually lead to perseverance, and perseverance to character and hope. In other words it’s all about keeping going, and allow our times of struggle to nurture fresh seeds of wisdom, hope and love.

Second, we believe (as Christians) that God is in the mess; Jesus Christ is incarnate in the pain of the world and the chaos of our lives. ‘The word became flesh and dwelt among us.’ And he is still among us, from the heart of God’s ever-present love, and through the agency of the Holy Spirit, dwelling in our hearts and our world. We reject a dualistic notion, inherent in our consumer culture, advertising and ideas of progress today, that perfection is about rising above all of these things – in this life – and spirituality is about leaving the bodily behind. This is not what the Bible teaches. Rather we find solace in knowing that God is in the mess, he is at work – bringing healing and new life – and he invites us to be compassionate towards others also.

Third, I have become more aware – during this latest stage of the pandemic, as we begin to exit from lock-down – that there is an unexplored gift, in all of us, given by God, to navigate these times; namely the gift of reflection and recollection. At times we allow our hearts and minds and imaginations to be filled with borrowed images from the media, or our own innate fears. And these can stifle our growth or awareness of God’s Spirit. But other times we dare to clear some space, so we can begin to discern God praying and imagining within us, and directing us. And for those of us getting a bit older, we begin to harness the power of memory, in allowing God to heal the wounds of the past, and ‘do a new thing’. Some people’s lives are so stressful that there is no time to reflect, recollect or dream dreams. But I believe that real spiritual growth – ‘new beginnings’ – is in

part about allowing or finding the space (like Jesus himself), to open up the depths of our heart and mind, to see what the Holy Spirit is saying, and to learn to better co-operate with God.

Trust in God, with perseverance; recognising God in the mess; and learning to open our hearts and minds, in order to listen to God, discern, and follow him into more life-giving pastures. All ways in which we see God at work, and despite hard times, allow God's new hope to emerge.

Like everyone, I don't know what the future is going to look like. And there is much in the wider world that is a cause for genuine concern – which is why I'm glad that St John's is engaging in eco church, and seeking to partner with our local community, as we witness to God's love by both word and action, in troubled times. But I do have great hopes for St John's, as we begin to discern how God is leading us; as we seek (whole-heartedly) to follow Christ; as we are filled by the Holy Spirit, empowering each of our gifts; and as we commit afresh to the offering of our lives in witnessing to God's love today. God bless you all.

Rev. James Shakespeare

## The Parish Voice

The next issue of The Parish Voice is likely to be in two or three months' time. All contributions are welcome—if there is something you would like us to include, please send it to us at [parishvoicesje@gmail.com](mailto:parishvoicesje@gmail.com), ideally in a very common format, eg Word, jpg file, etc. Regular contributors will get the usual email about the copy deadline, but we will try to publish it in the e-news also. Pictures make a great difference: please be aware that you will need to make sure anyone featured in them is happy that it will go on the internet. Similarly, if you take a picture from the internet, please check that it is copyright-free and let us have its provenance so we can acknowledge it.

With very best wishes

Liz and Paula

## How did I get here?



I've been worshipping at St John's for eighteen months or so now, but we probably haven't spoken, not because, I hasten to add, I don't like a chat but because of the pandemic. You might have spotted me being an intercessor and thought 'Who is that?' or in a play - Passion or Nativity - or even at Morning or Evening Prayer on Zoom and vaguely wondered but then had to dash off to the rest of your life, which, if it's anything like mine, has required a lot of concentration over the last year or so.

For those of you who don't know, I'm a retired teacher and I live at the Addenbrooke's end of the parish. I taught in various local secondary schools for years and retired when my husband died just over four years ago. I've belonged to various local churches for most of my adult life and have always taken God fairly seriously but, with a living to earn, a daughter, an invalid husband and an elderly mother-in-law to care for, there wasn't a lot of time to spare. But times and seasons change and about two years ago, when I started to recover a bit from the wrecking ball of grief, I knew that I was moving into a new season which meant finding a new church. It was very difficult to leave the familiar and people who had supported me during a very dark time, but the idea wouldn't go away and, after consulting a small group of close and trusted friends, I made the move.

St John's couldn't have made me more welcome, and I settled into a Bible Study group, started to get to know people and was happier at church than I had been for years. Thank you so much for that. But that 'Yes' to moving here wasn't done. It was Chris who suggested that I might like to consider 'Something Goddy' now I had time and energy to spare and before I knew where I was, I had agreed to spend the winter studying remotely on the



Diocesan Foundations for Ministry course which meant that I also had to take part in a Vocations course. With the help of a Vocations Advisor and our own lovely Kate, I applied and was accepted to train to be an LLM (Licensed Lay Minister) on a course which starts in September. I've no idea where all this is going, I've no idea what I'll be doing this time next year, and it's not yet clear what form the course will take, but if the last year has taught me anything it's that God has a plan and it's up to me whether I join in with it and so far I'm really glad that I said that initial 'Yes.'

Please do come and talk to me if you see me because I'd really like to get to know more people and if you'd like to know more about either of the courses I've taken then do get in touch. I love to chat, usually have baking in the tin and own a small dog who adores visitors.

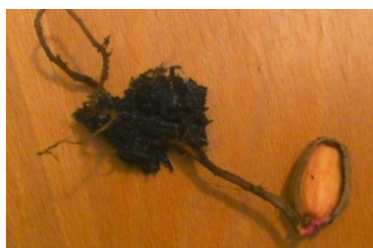
So how did I get here? I'm still not really sure but I do know that right now I'm in the right place and it is a truly excellent feeling.

Jane G

## A Message from Kate

About a month ago I did the talk at the 9.30am Church@Home service on Zoom. It was about where Jesus (talking about his own coming death) explains that a seed has to fall to the ground and die before it can fulfil its potential. [John 12:24]

I showed a video of an acorn I had accidentally dug up, which had begun to grow roots. I promised the congregation I would put it back in the soil and look after it. I kept my promise, and this is how the little acorn has progressed...





## Homerton College News

The Charter Choir is looking forward to singing Evensong this term at St John's. Details will follow via the weekly Parish E-News.

## Homerton Singers

We are hoping that The Homerton Singers will be able to start rehearsing again in October when the University term starts after the summer breaks. Rehearsals take place at the College and if the current situation continues to improve then there is a good possibility that we will be able to restart.

Just in case you are a new reader of the Parish Voice, the Homerton Singers is made up of college staff, students and members of the general public. The latter pay a termly subscription of £25, but all music is provided and in most cases teaching tracks are provided.

The choir was reformed in October 2019 under the conductorship of Dr Douglas Coombes and gave performances in two Homerton College Music Society concerts. In March 2020 the Singers gave their first public concert, just days before the first lockdown.

If all goes well and the restart happens in October, the Singers plan to give a Christmas concert, combining with a local school choir. Rehearsals take place every Monday evening (7.30-9.15pm) in term time and there are no auditions. The repertoire is very eclectic and includes folk -songs, musicals, opera choruses, spirituals and part songs. Indeed, for that March concert, the programme included a song which was composed by the choir in a rehearsal under guidance of Douglas. So as they say, watch this space and when the time comes, do join us. You will be assured of a warm welcome, and good singing and fun.

Trish Maude on behalf of Douglas Coombes

### ***A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO POVERTY***

After what seemed like months of lockdown we were finally able to hold our first Traidcraft stall since December, on 18 April. Fortunately, because it had to be an outdoor event, this was a fine, sunny day and our 'shop' and the congregation made a colourful addition to the church lawn. It was great to be back at St John's again after another long gap.



During that gap, doorstep sales continued and we were able to supply our customers whenever the need arose. Here is a photo of Katie displaying some of the wares on her doorstep and one (overleaf) of Amanda with her colourful Traidcraft rainbow pottery. Many thanks to all the supporters of this service, ensuring a steady income stream for Traidcraft. On a personal note, it was a joyful opportunity to have a socially-distanced chat.

As reported for the ACPM, the income at the end of 2020 was, for obvious reasons, lower than for 2019, but we have still been able to donate £700 to Traidcraft Exchange, the linked charity which supports and trains people in developing countries, helping them to get a fair deal for the work they do.

With the recent Earth Day in mind, it is worth noting that Traidcraft is working in many ways to reduce/counteract our carbon footprint, both in the daily running of the business and also in the producers they support:

- The entire range of Traidcraft sweets comes in 100% compostable packaging;

- Sustainable clothing, made by Thought, includes jumpers, dresses, trousers and socks manufactured from naturally renewable raw materials including bamboo, beech tree pulp (Modal™), hemp and organic cotton;
- The employees of the Cycle of Good company in Malawi are all women trained in sewing, literacy and the world of work. They use waste bicycle inner tubes to create their eye-catching products such as belts, wallets, wash bags. Plus, all of their sewing machines are solar-powered.
- VENT for Change, a Bristol-based stationery brand, makes pencils from recycled CD cases (saving them from landfill), pens whose ink lasts up to 5 times as long as average pens, notebooks with covers made from leather recycled from the Italian shoe and handbag industry. Proceeds support children's education projects world-wide.
- The colourful Liquorice Flip-Flop Doormats are again in stock. They are made in The Philippines using offcuts from the production of flip-flops.

The above products are among those in the current catalogue.

Unless there is a change to the Roadmap, our next stall, with social distancing still in place, will be on **Sunday 23 May** (the day of James' Licensing as Vicar) followed on **27 June** by the first possible one without restrictions. Then on **1 August** we plan to revert to our monthly first-Sunday stalls.

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



## Mission Committee

### Our Mission Partners

We have had both good news and bad from our Mission Partners. The good news is that the fundraising effort by Keppleway (the charity which supports ***The Bethesda Project*** in Burundi) to buy a new 4 x 4 vehicle for the Project has been successful and a search is under way to locate a suitable second-hand vehicle from Tanzania. This will enable the team to travel more easily and further afield to help and support people with disabilities. The need in this very poor country continues to be enormous. The Bethesda Project was one of two charities nominated for our Lenten Giving this year.

Loice Kokanyi, the Head of ***St Peter's Happiness Nursery*** in Arua, Northern Uganda, has written with some bad news on top of all the difficulties she, the teachers and the children have experienced during the pandemic. The Church Council of St Peter's Church, whose land they rent for the school premises, has given them one year's notice to quit on the grounds that the land is required for a new Archdeacon's office. Loice is of course distraught and sees little hope of re-establishing the school elsewhere. There is land available for purchase but at an exorbitant price, even without buildings, and she has no funds.

After many years of supporting Kylie and Bhim Bahadur whom many of you will have met when they visited St John's, we are in the process of adopting a ***new Mission Partner***. We will be able to give more information about this new Partner, whose area will be the Middle East, in the next issue of Parish Voice.

### Toilet Twinning update

In the last Parish Voice we reported that the PCC had agreed to fund the twinning of two of the toilets in the St John's Centre, proposed by

the committee at the suggestion of Paula Wolff. An initiative of Tear Fund, Toilet Twinning funds projects in poor communities that will enable families to build a basic toilet, have access to clean water and learn about hygiene - a vital combination that saves lives.

We have now finalised our twinning process with two toilets in South Sudan, a country suffering the effects of war which also has a huge refugee population. The certificates, shown in the photograph, are on display outside the toilets.

It would be wonderful if we could twin all six of the church toilets. This would be at a one-off cost of £60 each. Anyone wishing to fund a twinning or contribute towards one should please contact the Treasurer, Roger Lilley [rlilley71@gmail.com](mailto:rlilley71@gmail.com)



## **The Church Gardens**

During this last year the church gardens have been a place of calm for reflection and relaxation more than ever before and enjoyed and appreciated by the many who relax on the benches or simply walk through.

A number of us who have been gardening our own patches at church over the years thought it would make sense to form a team and work on a general plan for the whole garden which will include the requirements for becoming an Eco Church. After some informal meetings amongst ourselves and with others we have some ideas for the future, making the garden attractive to users of all ages and backgrounds, the wider public as well as our own congregation and to pollinators. Look out for some new innovations already installed, including bird feeders in the trees along the Blinco Grove boundary and some new water butts. We are introducing 'no-mow' areas on the front lawns by the hedge so keep an eye open for new native plants, flowers and grasses which should naturalise there.

There is more to come.....

## **Plant Sale**

Our Plant Sale on Sunday 25 April turned out to be the most successful ever! For several months Roger has been growing many varieties of vegetable seedlings and Kate and Katie have been nurturing 140 geraniums purchased initially as plugs. Pre-ordered plants were collected on the Saturday and the rest were taken to church for selling, along with more donated plants, after both services. Thanks to the power of the Queen Edith's Community



Forum weekly email, where we advertised the sale, lots of people from the area came along to buy and everything was sold in 1½ hours! We were sorry to disappoint those who arrived later in the morning to find empty tables but we hope to organise another event in the early summer and sell the plants which weren't sufficiently developed for this plant sale.

We raised the amazing total of £725! Many thanks to everyone who supported the sale and gave so generously. When your purchases have been planted out, it would be much appreciated if you would return your pots for use next year.





## Parish Worship at St John's

Mondays	9.00am	Morning Prayer in Church
Tuesdays	9.00am	Morning Prayer on Zoom
	10.30am	Bible Study on Zoom
	6.30 pm	Sung Evensong with Charter Choir
Wednesdays	9.00 am	Morning Prayer in Church
	10.00am	Holy Communion in Church
Thursdays	9.00am	Morning Prayer – on Zoom
	6.30pm	Choir Practice (Trebles)
Sundays	9.30am	All Age Communion (in Church)
	11.00am	Holy Communion in Church with live-streaming
	6.00pm	BCP Evensong in Church (on Zoom)

If the government restrictions lift then from the beginning of July we will revert to pre-pandemic pattern of one 10.00am service on a Sunday morning and Evensong will take place in church

## From the Parish Registers

### Funerals

17<sup>th</sup> February – Jean Gilchrist Fordham  
 23<sup>rd</sup> February – Russell James Bailey

Priest in Charge  
 Assistant Curate  
 Parish Office

Rev'd James Shakespeare (Tel: 241815)  
 Rev'd Chris Campbell (Tel: 07383 512636)  
 Tel: 241316

## Dates for Your Diary

Sunday 23 May	11.00am	Service of Celebration & Dedication of St John's, with Holy Communion, and Collation and Induction of Rev James Shakespeare, with the Bishop of Ely and the Archdeacon of Cambridge
Sunday 30 May	12.30pm	Annual Parochial Church Meeting at St John's
Friday 18 June		Marriage of Frances Chilvers and Jonah Balmford
Sunday 20 June	12.30pm	Baptism of Alma Blayney
	3.00pm	Service of Confirmation with the Bishop of Ely, at St John's
Saturday 26 June	2pm	Marriage of Imogen Pickup and Alexander Hartland
Monday 28 June	2.30pm	Memorial Service for Mary Pigott, at St John's – all friends welcome
Saturday 3 July		Ordination of Rev Dr Muthuraj Swamy as priest, at Ely Cathedral
Sunday 4 July		Ordination of Ceri Payne as deacon, at Ely Cathedral
Sunday 11 July		Service of welcome to Ceri Payne, as new Assistant Curate
Sunday 18 July		Overseas Mission Links Sunday
Sunday 28 July		Cambridge Summer Music Festival Concerts at St John's
Saturday 14 August	2pm	Marriage of Ka-Wai Chan and Robert Weatherley

## Mary, the Mother of Jesus

She will sing no more  
She of the pierced heart  
Tho' Love's harbouring arms  
Will shield her  
From Life's crueller blows.

Her Love has risen and gone  
And left an empty vacuum  
Which homely duties fill  
And kindly words and gentle gestures  
Dimly touches.

All she had she gave, and willingly so  
Her life a Song  
Knowing his presence so close  
His life, love, laughter all shared  
'Til He was gone and Love had died.

But content now  
Knowing in the Awakening  
The rose-scent and dew-brushed petals  
Of the eternal Morn  
And Love expectantly awaiting.

16.4.85 Zimbabwe

(Written in the early hours of the morning. Afterwards, I went out into the garden. A single pink rose was blooming, its petals brushed with dew.)

Beryl Johnson

## Memories of The Duke of Edinburgh

I much appreciated Chris's sermon on the Sunday following the sad news of the death of the Duke of Edinburgh, at a time when many church leaders were paying tribute to him, and the way she linked it with the lively interest he took in religion. I watched the episode of *The Crown* she referred to and it was interesting to hear the true story behind that fictional account. She told us how St George's House, a study centre for the exploration of faith and philosophy, was established in the grounds of Windsor Castle with support from the Duke of Edinburgh and his ongoing involvement, an outstanding example of Christian service. I gather from other reports that he read more books on religion than any other subject and was well known for his special interest in discussing their sermon with preachers after the service.

I was privileged to meet The Duke of Edinburgh on several occasions in his role as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. In April 2007 the world's most experienced plaque-unveiler, as he described himself, formally opened the Stephen Hawking Building at 5 West Road and I was responsible for presenting 20 or 30 members of Caius College to the Chancellor. If my introduction didn't naturally lead to conversation he seemed to recognise every club or military tie worn by the long line of Caius alumni presented to him and I was truly impressed by his remarkable ability to interact with everyone and to put them at ease. Earlier he had spoken with the same keen interest and enthusiasm as he discussed the design of the building with the architects and spoke to a group of students living there.

In his final year as Chancellor, on 24 March 2011, I had an urgent call from the Vice-Chancellor's office asking for help with a problem. The Royal Chancellor was with the Vice-Chancellor in the Old Schools and a large crowd of noisy demonstrators had gathered outside. The protest was a University and College Union demonstration about the raising of the

retirement age which provoked a lot of amusement when explained to our 89-year-old Chancellor still carrying out a full role of Royal duties! As a result of this protest HRH Prince Philip could not be collected as planned, outside the Senate House, so they needed an alternative route for him. The Vice-Chancellor asked if I could go to the Gate of Honour on Senate House Passage, open it and, as a Fellow of the College, welcome the Chancellor to Gonville & Caius and show him through to the Porters' Lodge on Trinity Street, where his car would be waiting.

The Master was in London and they wanted to slip the Chancellor out before the crowd of demonstrators grew larger. Could I be ready to open the Gate when they knocked on it at 11am? It was now 10.55, so I moved fast. Just time to put a comb through my hair and a touch of lipstick on and I flew past the members of my team drinking coffee on the stairs, declaring I would have washed my hair that morning (and put on my best suit!) had I known I was going to be welcoming royalty to the College. With a bowler-hatted Porter, I sped to the Gate of Honour. A couple of Fellows spotted us *en route* and came to observe.

On the dot of eleven the entourage arrived, the Porter opened the Gate and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, presented me to the Chancellor, who was clearly in a hurry to move on. Walking briskly through Caius Court, he looked up at the Master's Lodge and said he knew it well from the days when Masters of Colleges took it in turn to be Vice-Chancellor. He said how much he had enjoyed staying in all the Colleges.



Photo: James Howell

He was very chirpy and chatty as we shot through Tree Court, striding out so fast I could hardly keep up with him. As he boarded his car, he thanked me profusely for providing this escape route and I reflected what an amazing and hugely impressive 89-year-old he was, both in the sharpness and wit of his conversation (he can't possibly have been briefed for this detour!) and his speedy gait as we moved through the College.

It has been heartening to hear so many around this country, and the world, remembering with affection the Duke of Edinburgh's life of extraordinary service to others.

Anne Lyon

## Cambridge Summer Music Festival

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July  
St John the Evangelist Church

Cambridge Handel Opera Company  
Handel Cantatas  
1pm

and

David Hill and David Ponsford with an evening of Harpsichord duets  
featuring Bach, Vivaldi and Couperin  
6pm

## Numbers

In the Autumn, I started a series of articles in Parish Voice about the first five books in the bible (the Pentateuch). After a little break, we're now onto the fourth book, the Book of Numbers.

I think sometimes people get put off the book of Numbers before they even start. As a former Maths teacher I know that even the mention of 'numbers' can send some into a cold sweat. But interestingly, in the Hebrew tradition the book is not even called Numbers, it's called "Bemidbar", which translates as '*In the Wilderness*'. And so, although the book of Numbers does contain numbers, in the form of various censuses, the majority of it contains the story of the people of Israel's continuing journeys in the wilderness, starting out from Mount Sinai, through the wilderness of Paran, the plain of Moab and to the boundaries of the Promised Land. Occasionally the book of Numbers has been called the 'treasure box' or 'attic' of the Old Testament; it contains lots of different material that doesn't quite fit anywhere else!

### ***So what is the book of Numbers all about?***

In the book of Exodus, we heard the story of Moses and the Israelite people and how those oppressed people escaped that oppression and entered into the wilderness. That book continues in giving instructions for how the Israelites should live, including the giving of the Covenant on Mount Sinai, the 10 commandments, and a blueprint for the building of the tabernacle. But as we read in that book, the people kept breaking that covenant, even early on (remember the Golden Calf?). In the book of Leviticus, we then hear God's plan for how to reconcile the goodness and holiness of God with the persistent sinfulness of Israel, and this is mainly shown through quite a lot of rules and instructions about how a particular tribe, the Levites, would stay holy and pure.

The book of Numbers then continues this story, starting off with a great census of all the tribes at the foot of Mount Sinai. They have been there for



a year, but now it is time to move on, and restart their journey to the Promised Land. Along with the census, there are instructions as to how the tribes should arrange themselves, both as they travel and as they camp, with God's holiness, the tabernacle, always taking a central place in everything they do.

The book of Numbers has three main parts, linked by two accounts of journeying. They are:

Chapters 1 – 10: Based at Mount Sinai

Chapters 12-19: Based in the Wilderness of Paran

Chapters 22 – 36: Based in the Plains of Moab.

### ***Rebellions***

As perhaps could have been expected, things go wrong pretty much as soon as the tribes leave Mount Sinai and enter the wilderness. The people begin to complain about their hardships and their hunger; and as they had done before they start wishing they were back in Egypt. Moses speaks to the Lord and appeases his anger, and the Lord provides quails for the people, but he also punishes them with a plague. Then things get even worse, and Miriam and Aaron oppose Moses, questioning whether the Lord spoke only through him.

Against all these troubles, the Israelites make camp again, this time in the Wilderness of Paran, from where spies are sent out from each tribe, to explore the land of Canaan. Two of these spies (Caleb and Joshua) came back with favourable reports, but the other ten urged caution and were fearful. As a result of this, the people rebelled again, and as punishment the Lord decreed that they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years; that none of that generation would see the Promised Land due to their rebelliousness.

But these aren't the only rebellions in the book of Numbers, and alongside these rebellions, we see a range of ingenious judgements coming from the Lord.

Miriam's rebellion was punished with a skin disease.

A rebellion led by Korah was punished by the ground opening up and swallowing up all their tents and their households.

More rebellion by the whole people is punished by a plague of venomous snakes.

The book of Numbers continually shows that God's judgement for rebelliousness is very real; but it is never overwhelming. It is always tempered by mercy, life and a way back into relationship with God. And so, taking the example of the snakes, God also commanded Moses to create a bronze snake, to be put on a pole. Anyone who had been bitten, but then looked up at the snake, would live.

### **The Plains of Moab**

As the Israelites continue in the wilderness, they come to the land of Moab. Here, Balak, the King of Moab is terrified by the sheer number of the Israelites and all they are reported to have done elsewhere. So he employs a pagan sorcerer, Balaam, to curse the Israelites. But God speaks to Balaam, and he is unable to curse the Israelites, and instead can only bless them. These passages (numbers 22-24) also contain the amusing story of Balaam's Donkey; a speaking ass who is able to see the hand of God working (in the form of an angel), when Balaam was unable to do so.

Here we see again that, in the face of the Israelites' continual grumblings and rebellions, God keeps being faithful and keeps blessing his people.

At the end of the book of Numbers, the focus moves to the children of the generation, those who would enter the Promised Land. The book ends with a second census, the succession of Moses by Joshua, a great battle and a few more rules and regulations.

## The Daughters of Zelophehad

A story from the book of Numbers that is worth mentioning is about the Daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27 and 36). Zelophehad had 5 daughters and no sons, but he had died in the wilderness. These daughters came to Moses, to plead for the right to inherit their father's property. Moses agreed with them and made it clear that a woman had both the right and the obligation to inherit property in the absence of a male heir in the family. As well as being a good step for the rights of women, these passages also give a clear precedent for the adaption of statutes and ordinances in light of new circumstances – a good reminder for us all!

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### ***A beautiful blessing...***

*Perhaps the most well known verses from Numbers come in the form of the Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6.24-26). The words for this blessing were given from God to Moses, to be used by Aaron and his sons when blessing the Israelite people:*

*'The Lord bless you  
and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.'*

*In 2020, in the midst of the COVID pandemic, this blessing reached millions of people, as it was recorded by over 65 UK churches, who come together online to sing a blessing over our land. Many of us will have seen the video, recorded in the homes of many Christian singers, and pieced together seamlessly. Other versions were recorded across the world. But although the technology that made this beautiful song possible was very new, the words used were over 3000 years old. They remain as powerful today as they must have been then.*

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### ***So why read Numbers?***

- If you've been put off reading Numbers because of all the lists and censuses, it's worth discovering there a large sections of narrative too!
- Many references to the stories from the book of Numbers appear in other parts of the bible; including in Isaiah, the Psalms, 1 Corinthians and the letter to the Hebrews. Knowing these stories will enrich reading those too.
- The book of Numbers also helps the reader to understand, for instance, the enmity between God's people and the Moabites and Midianites, which gives a good background to e.g. the book of Ruth.
- It is full of real messy people and their feelings, *and* God and God's feelings. The stories contained in this book give us insight into the characters of both humanity and God.

Chris

## **Parish Administrator Volunteer Roles**

### **Can you help?**

The Church would like to recruit volunteers to help with running the Parish Office.

Commitment: approx. 6 hours per week  
(3 hours, ie one morning or afternoon a week, to be in the Parish Office)

One role to include responsibility for publications, communication and social media

For further details, please contact James Shakespeare

## The Glasgow Climate Change Conference (aka COP 26):

### What is it, and what does it mean for us?

*A climate emergency.*

Climate change has been very much in the news over the past year or so. Unprecedented wildfires in the Arctic, Australia and California, flooding across the UK and Europe, violent storms in Asia, and a freak “deep freeze” in Texas are all signs of what we can expect from a changing climate in the decades to come.

Most at risk are poorer communities who live in geographically vulnerable zones or depend on subsistence farming, such as in rural Africa, low-lying coastal settlements, and small island states.

Later this year, the UK will be hosting a major UN-sponsored conference in Glasgow aimed at deciding on the next steps to tackle this looming “climate emergency”. Postponed from last year because of Covid-19, the Glasgow Climate Conference (or COP 26, the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties) as it is formally known, will now take place 1-12 November 2021.

What does this mean for the fight against climate change? And what does it mean for St John’s?

There have been claims in the news (by US Secretary of State John Kerry, for example), that the Glasgow Conference is the “last chance to save the world”. That’s not true. The international community has been working on climate change for over 30 years, resulting in the adoption of three treaties, in 1992 (Framework Convention), 1997 (Kyoto Protocol) and 2015 (Paris Agreement). The Glasgow Conference is just the latest in a long line of annual negotiating sessions where governments take stock of progress, debate how best to implement targets, and sometimes adopt new commitments.

*Boosting emission targets.*

While it is not “last chance saloon” in Glasgow, the Conference is the most important since the landmark Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015. This is because, according to the terms of the Paris Agreement, governments are due to review, and hopefully boost, their national targets for reducing their emissions

of greenhouse gases (such as carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels and methane from agriculture). At the moment, emission targets declared under the Paris Agreement fall far short of what is needed to achieve the treaty's goal of limiting global warming to 2°C above pre-industrial levels (they add up to more like 3 or 3.5 °C).

The hope is that countries will come to the table in Glasgow with more ambitious targets. The signals are quite mixed right now – the EU has already declared a target of net zero emissions by 2050, while Japan, China and the US are all expected to follow suit (China by 2060), probably making their pledges by Earth Day (22 April), when the US will host a preparatory summit. But other major players like Australia, Saudi Arabia, Russia and India are much more reluctant.

#### *Carbon markets and engaging the private sector.*

The Glasgow Conference also needs to finalise the rulebook to fully implement the Paris Agreement, including updated rules for reporting emissions and regulations for a new

carbon market (this would allow trading in 'credits' earned by cutting emissions). Diplomats have failed to finalise these points at the last two annual conferences, so a successful outcome is urgently needed in Glasgow.

There are many other issues on the agenda while the UK government, as the Conference President, wants to prioritise forging partnerships with the private sector in high emitting sectors, such as road transport and cement.

#### *Expectations.*

So, what can we expect in Glasgow? Climate change conferences are typically heated affairs, with political grandstanding and late-night wranglings par for the course. The placement of commas and choice of words can acquire huge significance. Deal-making is typically left until the eleventh hour (reminiscent of the Brexit talks).

Expect fireworks from Saudi Arabia (major oil exporter), Russia (typically climate sceptic), China (now the world's largest emitter) and India (defending its determination to prioritize poverty alleviation). The

US will return to the world stage under new President Joe Biden, who has put together an ambitious domestic climate programme, but still faces scepticism at home and mistrust internationally. And the UK will be there not only as the Conference President, but also for the first time outside the EU, which negotiates as a block.

There remains, of course, a big question mark over the format of the Conference, which, in normal circumstances, would play host to thousands of individuals from around the world. The UK Presidency has promised an in-person event, but it may well be slimmed down considerably, and blended with virtual sessions because of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic that may restrict international travel and large gatherings.

*St John's.*

What does this mean for St John's? Climate change is a problem that concerns us all, as children of God's creation and citizens of the world. Living in a rich country such as the UK, we bear a special responsibility to act. Our wealth was, after all,

based primarily on coal (the most carbon intensive fuel) and cutting down our native forests, which we are now asking developing countries to avoid.

As an advanced economy, we also have the technological and financial means at our disposal to take on a leadership role. To some extent, we are already world leaders, with a pioneering Climate Change Act in place, a target to achieve net zero by 2050, and emissions from our electricity plummeting over the past 30 years as we have switched from coal, to gas, to renewables (our emissions per person have halved since 1990).

But there is so much more to do. The run-up to the Glasgow Conference provides us with the perfect opportunity to reflect on how we can all make changes, as individuals, families and a Church, to tread more lightly on the planet.

Dr Joanna Depledge

*Research Fellow, Cambridge Centre for Environment, Energy and Natural Resource Governance (C-EENRG), former UN Climate Change secretariat staff member.*



## The May Magnificat

May is Mary's month, and I  
Muse at that and wonder why:  
Her feasts follow reason,  
Dated due to season—

Candlemas, Lady Day;  
But the Lady Month, May,  
Why fasten that upon her,  
With a feasting in her honour?

Is it only its being brighter  
Than the most are must delight her?  
Is it opportunist  
And flowers finds soonest?

Ask of her, the mighty mother:  
Her reply puts this other  
Question: What is Spring?—  
Growth in every thing—

Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,  
Grass and greenworld all together;  
Star-eyed strawberry-breasted  
Throstle above her nested

Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin  
Forms and warms the life within;  
And bird and blossom swell  
In sod or sheath or shell.

All things rising, all things sizing  
Mary sees, sympathising  
With that world of good,  
Nature's motherhood.

Their magnifying of each its kind  
With delight calls to mind  
How she did in her stored  
Magnify the Lord.

Well but there was more than this:  
Spring's universal bliss  
Much, had much to say  
To offering Mary May.

When drop-of-blood-and-foam-  
dapple  
Bloom lights the orchard-apple  
And thicket and thorp are merry  
With silver-surfed cherry

And azuring-over greybell makes  
Wood banks and brakes wash wet  
like lakes  
And magic cuckoocall  
Caps, clears, and clinches all—

This ecstasy all through mothering  
earth  
Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's birth  
To remember and exultation  
In God who was her salvation.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

(In the Roman Catholic Church, the  
month of May is dedicated to Mary.)

[Continued from p 2]

Lecture 1

*'Solidarity: Figuring out World Christianity and the Pandemic'*

**Prof. Joanildo Burity**

Lead Researcher and Professor at the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation and the Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil

**Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021, 4-6 pm** British Summer Time (BST), Online

Lecture 2

*'Engagement: Figuring out Christian Mission in Societies'*

**Dr. R. David Muir**

Head of Whitelands College, and Senior Lecturer, School of Humanities, University of Roehampton, UK

**Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021, 4-6 pm** British Summer Time (BST), Online

Lecture 3

*'Science: Figuring out World Christianity and Nature'*

**Prof. Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ**

Professor of Physics, Philosophy and Religion at the Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, India

**Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021, 4-6 pm** British Summer Time (BST), Online

Lecture 4

*'Ecumenism: Figuring out Interconnecting Christianities'*

**Rev. Dr. Susan Durber**

Moderator, Faith and Order, World Council of Churches

**Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 4-6 pm** BST, Westminster College or Online (TBC)

Followed by a reception for the launch of a new publication, *From Henry Martyn to Global Christianity: The Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide*.

Lecture 5

*'Reconciliation: Figuring out World Christianity amidst Conflicts'*

**Dr. Irini Thabet**

Assistant Professor, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt, and Member of the Egyptian Senate

**Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021, 4-6 pm** GMT, Online



## Easter Term Seminars

Our seminar programme is held in conjunction with the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge. Seminar recordings can be found on our Youtube channel.

*'Fraternal Communion and the Missionary Identity of the Church'*

**Prof. Sandra Mazzolini**, Professor of Ecclesiology and Dean of Faculty of Missiology, Pontifical Urbaniana University, Rome

**Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021, 4-5.30 pm** British Summer Time (BST), Online:

*'Interfaith Cooperation in Medieval Times'*

**Prof. Ulrich Berner**, Professor Emeritus, Religious Studies, University of Bayreuth, Germany

**Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021, 4-5.30 pm** British Summer Time (BST), Online:

**To register, please email: [centre@cccw.cam.ac.uk](mailto:centre@cccw.cam.ac.uk)**

## Upcoming CCCW Publications

As part of our Silver Jubilee celebrations, we are publishing two volumes: one reflecting on CCCW's history and future direction, and one world Christianity and mission today.

*From Henry Martyn to Global Christianity:  
The Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide*

By Ian Randall, Graham Kings, Muthuraj Swamy

This book offers a brief history of the Centre – beginning with the missionary work of Henry Martyn and his impact on generations of young Christians who went to different parts of the world as missionaries. The founding of the Henry Martyn Trust in 1881 was seen as a strategic way to continue to carry out Martyn's work, particularly to influence the University of Cambridge students to get involved in world mission. This book also captures the significant transitions in Christian mission



and world Christianity during the last few decades and the way that these have shaped the Centre's vision, direction and work. Towards the end, some of the future directions are reflected upon by the current director.

***Connecting Christianities: World Christianity and Mission in the 21st Century***

Edited by Muthuraj Swamy and Jenny Leith

Written by leading scholars and practitioners, who have shaped the work of the Cambridge Centre for Christianity worldwide and whose work has been shaped by themes focused at the Centre, twenty-five essays in this volume focus on different aspects of Christian mission and the connections within these. Many expressions in Christianity which need to be connected in ecumenical relations, building openness and harmonious relationships between Christianity and different religious traditions, and Christian public engagement in society – these are some of the main themes in this volume. Reflecting the diversity of the fields of world Christianity and mission studies, this volume is aimed as a resource for scholars, students, and mission practitioners in both the Global North and South.

**Director**

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