

The Parish Voice



James writes...

A reflection for Lent and Holy Week: descent & ascent - a life-giving wilderness



‘And the Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for 40 days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him.’ (Mark 1. 12-13)

There is something deeply counter-cultural about the quest for Christian holiness:

- We are invited here to empty ourselves, in order to be filled.
- We are invited here to embrace obedience – to deny ourselves – in order to discover true freedom.
- We are invited to journey into the wilderness of Lent, which involves letting go of our desire for instant gratification, in order to rediscover a

deeper spiritual abundance.

And in prayer we are invited to acknowledge our limitations, in order to be filled with a life and a grace which we did not know before - all through the healing medicine of the gospel.

And this surprising dynamic – which the world can never comprehend – of descent and ascent, of dying and rising, to use the language of Good Friday and Easter, is part our readings throughout Lent. In them we find the wisdom that to find life and salvation we need, at some level, to let go, to empty ourselves and journey into the depths, if we are to be raised up - with Christ- to new and eternal life. In them we find echoed the conviction that to find our life, we need to lose it, and to truly find life in Christ, we need (at some level) to renounce the world – with all its alluring temptations. Not as an end in itself, but as a way to a deeper and more abundant human life, in all its fullness.

As St Paul writes, *“whatever gains I had these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”*

And to the Galatians, he expresses the paradox of finding true life in Christ, discovering – through his death and resurrection – both the means of salvation and the blueprint for Christian holiness: *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me... And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

But we know, in practice, just how hard it can be to discover – for ourselves – the truth of what the Gospel is saying: that to find life we must be prepared to lose it. And that to really enjoy abundance – the fullness of creation and all that God longs to give us – we must be willing, from time to time, to venture out into the wilderness. For the world doesn't think like that, and, left to our own devices, neither do we, because in the world's eyes, the only way is 'up' – the way of ascent (of power and self-fulfilment and acquisitiveness), without the apparently negative path of descent, of humility and loss of control and self-surrender.

And yet something in us tells us, deep down, that there's got to be more to life than this [this endless drive for power and control and self-improvement; this endless cycle of tit for tat]. That there is, perhaps (after

all) a dimension – a space – that only God can fill. And if this is truly beyond ourselves, then we're going to need to rely on grace alone to get us there. A grace, paradoxically, which comes through weakness and letting go.

In *Mark 1. 9-15*, we find mapped out this dramatic journey of ascent and descent, of finding life through losing it, of embracing the wilderness in order to be refreshed by the fullness of the Spirit. And as is typical in Mark's Gospel, the language and the pace could not be more dramatic. At one moment Jesus is on the mountain top (metaphorically speaking, surrounded by light and hope, as he is baptised by John in the river Jordan), the voice declaring that he is God's Beloved...

But then immediately the Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil, with wild beasts (representing inner demons) surrounding him. It's hardly the honeymoon period one might have expected! Like the Israelites, having been dramatically liberated from Egypt in Exodus, it's into the wilderness that he must go. And it's here, in the wilderness – the desert of repentance – that Jesus discovers who he really is, his core identity, and he's enabled to lived from that centre. There Jesus, in a way that we could never do, rejects the temptation to shortcut *his* road to glory.

And then, and only then, having descended into the wilderness, Jesus emerges once more, into the clear light of day; proclaiming: *"The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news."*

We all need, from time to time, to recapture the good news, which the world so much needs to hear; in all its lostness and suffering and blindness; that the kingdom of God is near and that we all need to repent and believe in the Gospel. But we also need -in Lent- to remember that to restore life we must also embrace the wilderness. We must be prepared to descend, in order to ascend. We must be prepared to let go, to be empty, for a time, in order to be re-filled. We need to examine our hearts, and open a space for God – in prayer and silence and searching, to truly grow. We need to let go of our own compulsions and self-love, in order to re-discover a much greater love, as well as the love of our neighbour.

So I invite you, this Lent, to clear a space to pray in depth and to listen to God; in order that the discipline and the sacrifice of Lent may bring to birth new life, a renewed and more abundant and joyful life. A life not isolated

from everything else you are and do, but a living wellspring, drawing water, giving life and refreshing the whole. Following Christ afresh, looking beyond ourselves and deepening our quest for Christian holiness: a holiness that comes not through our own superior strength or wisdom, but through being open to the transforming presence of God in our lives.

Words of John Wesley, a prayer for Lent:

Lord, let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours; so be it.

Amen.

St John's Book Group

starting this year and open to all

We are launching a Book Group which aims to meet a few times a year and to be a fun gathering open to anyone. Each time we'll discuss a different book – a novel, a biography, or whatever takes our fancy! Miles and Alison Baillie are organising it, and they will be listening out for your ideas, particularly on what books to choose for future meetings.

For our first ever meeting, we have chosen *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. We will limit numbers to give everyone who comes a chance to contribute, so please let us know if you want to join. If you haven't read the book, you've got plenty of time.

Email Miles at the address below. Whether or not you can make it this time, please also let us know if you are interested in future meetings, and what kind of books you would like to share.

Time & place: Wilkinson Room, 7:30pm Friday
25th March. Contact: miles.r.baillie@gmail.com.

Sunday Services and Holy Days at St John's
March and April 2021
including Lent, Holy Week and Easter

Ash Wednesday, 2nd March

10.00am Holy Communion with imposition of ashes

7.30pm Holy Communion, sang by the Charter Choir, with ashing

Sunday 6th March, 1st of Lent

10.00am All Age Worship

6.00pm Parish Communion

Sunday 13th March, 2nd of Lent

10.00am Parish Communion

6.00pm Evensong

Sunday 20th March, 3rd of Lent

10.00am Parish Communion, visiting preacher, Ultan McCabe, CMS

6.00pm Evensong

Sunday 27th March, Mothering Sunday

10.00am Parish Communion

6.00pm Evensong

Sunday 3rd April, 5th of Lent

10.00am All Age

6.00pm Parish Communion

Palm Sunday, 10th April

9.45am Palm Procession

10.00am Parish Communion, with Dramatised Gospel

6.00pm Evensong

Monday in Holy Week, 11th April

7.30pm Stations of the Cross

Tuesday in Holy Week, 12th April

7.30pm Compline

Wednesday in Holy Week, 13th April

7.30pm Compline

Maundy Thursday, 14th April

7.30pm Holy Communion, with Foot-washing, Stripping of the altars, and Vigil of the watch

Good Friday, 15th April

2.00pm Hour from the Cross

Holy Saturday, 16th April

9.00pm Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday, 17th April

8.00am Holy Communion

10.00am All Age Easter Communion

6.00pm Festival Easter Worship

Regular Weekday Worship and Activities

Mondays	9am	Morning Prayer in Church
	10am	Toddle Along in St John's Centre (term-time)
	7.30pm	Online Home Group
Tuesdays	9am	Morning Prayer via Zoom
	10.15am	Home Group at St John's Centre
	6.30pm	Homerton College Charter Choir Evensong (University term)
Wednesdays	9am	Morning Prayer in Church
	10am	Holy Communion in Church
	7.30pm	Online Home Group (fortnightly)
	9pm	Compline via Zoom
Thursdays	9am	Morning Prayer via Zoom
	10.15am	Home Group at Gray Room
	6.30pm	St John's Choir practice, Trebles
	7.30pm	St John's Choir practice, Adults
Fridays	1.30pm	Parents' Fellowship Group at St John's



Knit and Natter

Social knitting with a cuppa and a chat

Whether you're a knitter, or prefer craft of other sorts, you are warmly welcome to join us at St John's.

We are a very informal group of people who meet once a week to work on our knitting and crocheting, accompanied by a cup of tea and a good old natter, you might even like to help knit the squares that we make into blankets for charity.

Wednesdays 2-4pm, Drop in. Young or old everyone is more than welcome to join us, knitting or not!

For more information, contact the church office on 01223 241316 or stjecambridge@gmail.com

Children's Church



Our Children's Church is back up and running after the Christmas break. We meet every 2nd & 4th Sunday of the month during the morning service for crafts, stories, games, and fun!

Any children from 4 years old and up are more than welcome.
Children younger are welcome with parents.

For any further information please contact the church office or email the team at pioneerstjohns@gmail.com

Parents Group

We have a new group running for parents who may find it difficult getting to church on a Sunday or just challenging to connect spiritually to the service due to little ones needing your attention.

We meet every Friday afternoon 1:30-2:30pm for tea, biscuits, a gospel reading and chat. If you have little ones with you they are welcome too. We have a play area for them and someone to be with them while you talk and explore the gospel.

This is a really relaxed group where we can talk about anything we are finding challenging, spiritually, or practically, with parenting or anything that life throws at us!

If you would like to join our friendly group just drop us a line at pioneerstjohns@gmail.com or just drop in.





The Homerton Singers

Just in case you are reading about The Homerton Singers for the first time, The Homerton Singers, conducted by 'Dr Douglas Coombes MBE is a non- auditioned choir made up of Homerton College students and staff and members of the general public, as a part of the College's out-reach programme. Rehearsals are held on Monday evenings from 7.30 to 9.15 pm, during term, in the Mary Allen Auditorium, beside the Porters' Lodge, by the main entrance to the College.

It is not too late to join the choir and you can be assured of a warm welcome, just come along and join in.

The current repertoire is extremely eclectic as you may judge for yourself from the following:

The music includes a popular Neapolitan song, a classic 19th century American song, two American spirituals, which have become classics from an award-winning film, one of opera's most famous choruses, a wedding song from Zimbabwe, an English 17th century lullaby and a modern ballad that has already become a classic.

To find out more, come along to a rehearsal on Monday at 7.30pm, to enjoy the music, the singing, the fun and the company.

Douglas Coombes

Homerton College Charter Choir

On Wednesday 2nd March the choir will be singing for the Parish Ash Wednesday Eucharist Service at 7.30pm. The music includes Byrd's Four-Voice Mass.

The final Choral Evensong of term is on Tuesday 15th March, at 6.30pm with music by the Scottish composer Kenneth Leighton.

Our first Choral Evensong next term will be on Tuesday 3 May.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Trish Maude



A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO POVERTY

A look back to 2021. Despite the trials and tribulations of 2020 and 2021, we managed to keep the Traidcraft stall up and running most months. Holding the stall outside during uncertain weather proved a challenge but not an *insurmountable* one. On one occasion we managed to wipe rain spots off goods which had to be rushed indoors at the onset of an unexpected shower and on another occasion we ensured that the chocolate was displayed on a shaded table but hadn't accounted for the fact that what was in the shade one minute would be in full sun an hour later.

Many thanks to all who supported us during this time. It's thanks to you that our turnover didn't drop dramatically and that we ended the year with a profit, enabling us to make our annual donation to Traidcraft Exchange.

Start of a new Traidcraft year at St John's. On 6 February, together with the welcome return of coffee after the service, our Traidcraft Stall made its first appearance of the year. Many customers were delighted to discover ample supplies of a delicious and popular new line: Italian nougat. It was all

snapped up but there will be more next month – with and without chocolate. Another new introduction is Meru jam from rural Kenya, - we stock mango and hibiscus - produced by a women's cooperative who also make tasty sauces.



Meru Herbs is dedicated to fair trade principles. Up to 100 local women are employed to prepare fruit and herbs and make small batches of amazing sauces and jams, all free from fertilisers and chemicals. They have a clear mission: to

empower women, alleviate poverty and raise living standards. They tell us 'Bottling the identity, vitality and taste of the country of origin, you'll almost feel as if you're there with every mouthful. Whether you spread the jams on your toast in the morning, or cook using their mouth-watering sauces, you can make a difference every mealtime, with Meru Herbs'.

Fairtrade Easter Eggs will be available on the March and April stalls and at the **Big Brew Coffee Morning on Wednesday 16 March**. Details of the Big Brew are given on page 23.

Katie Knapton

Tel: 212089

katieknapton@talktalk.net

New Caretaker Appointment

Rev James Shakespeare is pleased to announce the appointment of a new Caretaker at St John's.

Following the retirement of David Biggs, in October 2020, there has been a vacancy for the position of St John's Caretaker. During this period Michael Fincham offered himself as Acting Caretaker, fulfilling duties on an ad hoc basis, as and when required. Michael has now been fulfilling this role with dedication and commitment, for over fifteen months. After due consultation, I am now delighted to announce that St John's PCC has formally appointed Michael to the post of St John's Caretaker, in succession to David Biggs, from 1st February 2022. Michael will be working ten hours per week. This is excellent news for St John's, and for the facilitation of our St John's Centre activities, and we warmly congratulate Michael on his new role.

**A quote from the introduction to Isabelle Hamley's
'Embracing Justice'...**



‘Bringing injustice to light, recognizing and naming it matters; yet how to respond is more difficult, because of the huge complexity of local and global systems of relationships, politics and economic, which makes it almost impossible to address one aspect of injustice without a cascade of unintended consequences. Even if this complexity could be modelled and understood, and there was both the will and power to respond, it would not necessarily help solve either global or local inequalities, because different cultures, political values and social systems shape very different visions of what is just and fair. ‘Justice’ may be a common goal, but how ‘we’ as human beings, define justice is not something we hold in common. ...What is fair depends on where and how we live. Different visions of the common good, and what is acceptable in pursuing it, often collide and clash, and reduce the dreams of each group to whatever compromise they can all agree.

As Christians, we are no different. Our imagination of the common good, justice, rights and duties, is shaped partly by our Scriptures and tradition. It is also shaped, however, by the cultures and philosophies

that shape our lives, our politics and our belonging in time and place. We cannot stand outside all of these influences; what we can do however is examine them: lay our lives and our stories alongside the story of God and his people in Scripture, and seek to listen to the questions that Scripture asks of our lives, and that our lives ask of Scripture. We can listen to Christians from other times and places who may understand the Scriptures in different ways, and ask what they might teach us.'

The book follows these threads:

- Justice in the creation accounts
- Justice as liberation
- Justice as building healthy communities
- Justice as relationship
- Justice as the reconfiguring of power
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Come and join us on this exploration together during Lent.

We invite you to join one of our

Home Groups



Based on the Archbishop of Canterbury's Book for Lent ... written by The Revd Dr Isabelle Hamley.

'Embracing Justice' invites us to examine our own lives truthfully, to see the world more deeply and to pray – for the church and the world far and near – that 'justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream'. (Amos 5.24)

Each week we follow a different thread through the many stories of justice in the Bible to explore how God works with humanity to bring justice, wholeness and salvation to all. The weekly themes can also be explored in daily reflections from the Church of England.

As we begin to look towards Easter, how about joining others in this Lenten preparation? Whether you've been in a Home Group before or not, there is a very warm welcome awaiting you in the groups below. Please contact the group leader for one which suits you.

When	Time	Where/ How
Monday	7.30-8.45pm	[On Zoom]
Contact:	Rev Ceri Payne	ceri.payne@ntlworld.com
Tuesday	*10.30-11.30am	In St John's Community Room
Contact:	Jane Gardiner	jgardiner@pobox.com
Wednesday	7.30-8.45pm (fortnightly)	[On Zoom]
Contact:	Judith & Peter Heslam	peter.heslam@gmail.com
Thursday	*10.30-11.30am	In St John's Gray Room
Contact:	Kate Aylmer	kate@theaylmers.co.uk
* arrive by 10.15am if you would like coffee*		

For those not able to join a group, there are other ways to participate with either paper or digital resources - ask Kate A.

LENTEN GIVING 2022

We are all invited to donate to the two charities which our church is supporting during Lent. Traditionally we choose a local and an international charity which this year will be Emmaus Cambridge and The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust.



Emmaus will be a familiar name to many but do we know just what they do and how they do it? To answer this and many other questions Jamie Irons from Emmaus Cambridge, situated at Landbeach, will speak at St John's during the morning service on Sunday 27 February. He will join us for coffee after the service to chat and answer further questions. Supporting Emmaus underpins what many from St John's do to help homeless people particularly during the winter months.

The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust is named after the writer Gerald Durrell, who is also known for founding Jersey Zoo. The Trust exists to save species from extinction and the overarching role of the animal collection in Jersey and overseas is conservation. In the field, staff operate 50 projects in 18 countries around the world with work focussing on islands, where unique species are under pressure, and on animal groups suffering the worst declines, such as primates and amphibians. A diverse range of courses and workshops teaching conservation skills have been attended by over 4,000 individuals from

137 countries. Supporting this Trust underpins our focus on being an Eco-church, caring for God's world in our worship.

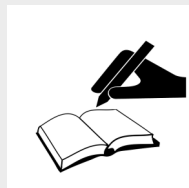


During Lent, leaflets about the two charities, together with donation and gift aid envelopes, will be available to take from the display in the lobby. Emmaus information etc will also be on display on 27 February.

From the Parish Register

30th November Funeral of Ron Huntsman

25th January: Funeral of Julie Curtis, at City Crematorium



Lobby Displays at St John the Evangelist, Hills Road 2022

It has been a pleasure to host artwork by Denise Schoenberg's class members during February.

We hope to continue attractive displays throughout the year. Perhaps you belong to a church group or a local community group and would like to use this space to engage, inspire and possibly to challenge us.

Do contact one of the following to discuss this further:

Kay Blayney, Clare Donovan and Erica Lowry personally or via email:

stjecambridge@gmail.com



Service of Thanksgiving for Ronald Huntsman

Address by Rev James Shakespeare, edited for St John's Parish Voice

Words from the Funeral liturgy, *'We look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.'*

And St Paul's Letter to the Romans, words associated with Advent: "Now it is time to awake out of sleep, for the night is far spent and the day is at hand. Now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light."

It is good to gather today, to give thanks for the life of Ron, a dearly beloved husband, father, grandfather, and friend to many; and we've heard from Mark & Simon's moving tributes to their father – that Ron was a man full of energy & vitality & creativity; a passionate technician and pioneer in wireless technology; a loving family man, a great story-teller, a love of music, and a devoted Christian (among many other things). Someone who achieved so much, as well as a courageous, warm hearted, kind and passionate human being...

It strikes me that Ron experienced so much of the world (in his 88 years), and indeed – as a TV broadcaster – of the highs and lows of humanity, that he had much to ponder about and reflect on, and therefore his own Christian faith was forged (to quote the Russian, Dostoyevsky) out of the cauldron of human suffering: not so much his own suffering, but what he glimpsed in others, including the plight of wartime Jewish people, through the lens of the Eichmann trial, which he would never forget.

And yet, despite everything he had seen – despite all the questions, the doubts, and the realities of suffering and evil - Ron developed a deep faith in God, and in the reality of Jesus Christ; the Christian conviction that (through the experience of Good Friday and Easter),

"Goodness is stronger than evil... light is stronger than darkness, life is stronger than death; victory is ours, through Him who loves us." (as Desmond Tutu once neatly summarised the Christian faith).

In other words, Ron came to believe - rooted in his own experience - that through the love of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, we can find meaning,

know forgiveness, and experience the healing and reconciling presence of God, and the enduring hope of eternal life. As Jesus says in John's Gospel, "I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly."

And how grateful I am for all that Ron shared with us, and gave to us, as a faithful and deeply engaged member of this Parish Church of St John's, and of our local civic community, over so many years.

There are many things that we could say about the wide ranging contribution that Ron has made to St John's, over so many years. Ron's contribution in serving his Lord was to befriend many and become a friend to many.

By the request of Rev Brian Jones, Ron designed and installed a much needed audio system (in the early 1990s), maintaining it and regularly updating the equipment as and when necessary. He also designed and made the tiny clip-on radio mikes. June remembers well Ron's weekly visits to test the system, before the Sunday services and any other important occasions when the sound system was needed. He threw himself into this wholeheartedly (as he did in everything). Ron only retired from overseeing our audio system in 2018. Ron always felt that God called him to use his gifts and knowledge in this way and always said that everyone had to hear the service clearly.

Ron did so much over the years to helping the church to maintain smooth running (for instance fitting the light bulbs in church, cutting the hedges and grass mowing to name but a few things). Ron was also a stalwart helper at '*Companions*'.

St John's was first and foremost Ron's spiritual home in which he served. Thank you Ron!

One of the great privileges of ordained ministry is to spend much time with parishioners and church members & friends at some of their highest and lowest moments in life; at times of suffering and reflection – at times when we ask, 'O God, why?' – as well as celebrating good & happy times. And, ultimately, helping people to prepare for a good & holy death, however difficult or unexpected this may be. For the one certainty is, that all of us, in the end, will walk this valley (as Psalm 23 puts it).

And it was, for me, a great privilege to spend time with Ron, over recent weeks and months, through his illness, listening, accompanying, praying,

and supporting Ron, alongside the family, nursing and medical staff, and others – to whom, I know, June is so grateful.

Ron, like all of us, had to face the ultimate challenges of sickness, suffering and dying. Ron knew deep down that he had real faith and trust in God to draw on, and that he had been blessed in so many ways – not least by his work and family. But Ron knew also that he was not perfect, that he sometimes made mistakes, and that (in the end), like all of us, he needed mercy and grace. And yet, rooted in his strong Northumbrian upbringing, Ron was remained resilient, courageous and kind-hearted, to the end... And what a blessing it was, as Mark has indicated, to visit the family, on All Saints day (1st November), to share Holy Communion, and to celebrate – with Ron & June, Mark & Simon – their 58th wedding anniversary, only days before Ron's final passing, at home.

Ron knew and loved the good thing of this world (family & friends, nature & travel, and the capacity human technology & ingenuity to bring about good things). He absolutely adored his family, and had many friends & colleagues. But, Ron also glimpsed that, in the end, 'we look not to the things that are seen, but the things that are unseen and eternal.' For he knew, deep down, in the end, that (as the Bible puts it) 'we brought nothing into the world, and we take nothing out' – save our souls, the memory of our good deeds, our familial ties, and our trust in the one who promises to prepare a place for us ('that where I am you may be also', as Jesus puts it to his disciples).

So as we give thanks for Ron, for his presence among us, for the light, fire and love that he shared with us, and for all his achievements, we look forward to that great day – in faith, and through the deep mystery of God's love – when we shall all be together again; a place where 'death shall be no more, mourning and crying and pain shall be no more; for the former things have passed away.'

And we also dare to commit ourselves, 'to use aright the time that is left to us on earth' (as the Prayer Book puts it), asking for grace – this Advent– to 'cast away the works of darkness, and put on whole the armour of light; that on the last day we may rise to the life immortal.' *Amen*

Other Dates for your Diary

March

4-5 March	Partnership for Missional Church Cluster
8 and 15 March	Charter Choir services (6.30pm)
13 March	Baptism (12.30pm)
13 March	Special Choral Evensong (6pm)
16 March	Big Brew Coffee Morning
18 March	Parish Walk
19 March	Musicals Concert with Roger Lilley and Jo Dodds
20 March	Visit of Ultan McCabe (10am)
20 March	Baptism (12.30pm)
26 March	Lent Quiet Day

April

7 April	Parish Walk
10 April	Palm Sunday evening service with Passiontide Music (6pm)
17 April	Easter Raffle
22 April	Marriage of Alexander Wilkinson and Rosie Peat (12.30pm)

May

7 and 8 May	Plant Sale
10-16 May	Christian Aid week
14 May	Concert of John Mead, Folk Band
19 May	Parish walk
22 May	APCM (11.30pm)
26 May	Ascension Day service (7.30pm)
3, 10, 17, 24 May	Charter Choir services

June

5 June 10am	Pentecost & Platinum Jubilee Service, Parish Lunch (10am)
18 June	Summer Fete

The Annual St John's Plant Sale



will take place on Saturday 7 May in the afternoon at 71 Holbrook Road and on Sunday 8 May at church after the 10 o'clock service.
Look out for more details in the e-news nearer the time.

**IN CELEBRATION OF FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT
YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR**

BIG BREW COFFEE MORNING

to be held in the Wilkinson Room on

Wednesday 16 March 2022 from 10.30 to 12 noon

Please put the date in your diaries and bring your friends to
join us for

Fair Trade refreshments and a chat. There will also be an
opportunity to buy a wide variety of goods from our stall and
to stock up with Easter eggs, cards and gifts. We had to
cancel our plans in 2021 and hope you will come and join us
this year.





Summer Biblical Study in Cambridge

The Programme of the Vacation Term for Biblical Study (VTBS)

Deepen your understanding of the Bible at the feet of national and international biblical scholars — without even leaving Cambridge.

[The Vacation Term for Biblical Study \(VTBS\)](#) is a summer school that has run for nearly 120 years, the last five of them at Westminster College, the URC ministerial training college in Maddingley Road, Cambridge.

The summer school runs over two weeks and offers a series of lectures from biblical specialists, complemented by language classes in Greek and Hebrew.

I found out about the VTBS in 2017, thanks to the [Tyndale House Greek New Testament](#) being published by Cambridge University Press, where I work. A conversation with the editor led to renewing my acquaintance with VTBS Trustee Professor Keith Elliott, who lectured me on the Synoptic Problem when I was at Leeds University in the 1980s.

He told me how the VTBS had started out at the beginning of the 20th century as a way of offering biblical scholarship to women — at a time when women's educational opportunities were more restricted than they are today. The event was held in the summer because that's when scholars were not teaching in their institutions.

Keith invited me to have a Cambridge Bibles stand at the 2018 event and display the Greek New Testament and our other Cambridge books and Bibles. I did so, and enjoyed meeting the summer school participants and lecturers. In between selling sessions I was able to attend a few of the lectures and a Greek class — my first one since I'd left Leeds 35 years before! I went again this year, this time with two colleagues, and I enjoyed refreshing my Greek grammar and reading some of John's Gospel in the original.

People attend from all over the country — a real mixture of folk from different backgrounds. Although most stay at the college, the summer school is also open to non-residents.

Next year's programme starts off with the inaugural lecture from Professor David Ford of Cambridge; other scholars are from the Universities of Stuttgart, Oxford, Sheffield and Liverpool. Language classes in Greek and Hebrew are held every morning at three levels: beginners, intermediate and advanced. Bursaries are offered for the biblical studies, especially for students and clergy.

If you'd like more information, see the VTBS website: <http://www.vtbs.org.uk/>, or have a chat with me.

Amanda Taylor

Mission Committee

After much discussion at our last committee meeting we voted to adopt as our newest Mission Partner the Great Lakes Outreach (GLO) charity, in Burundi. Thus our prayers and donations are concentrated on one of the poorest countries in the world, for we also support the Bethesda Project in Burundi.

Great Lakes Outreach was founded in 2003 by Simon Guillebaud MBE who until a few years ago lived and worked in Burundi with his wife and young children. He is now International Director of the project. Simon is related to Rosemary and Philippa Guillebaud, two sisters who will be remembered by many in the congregation. They were missionaries, who retired to Cambridge and worshipped at St John's, so the link continues.

To quote from the website, 'GLO identifies, equips and empowers the best local leaders of passion, integrity, gifting and vision for the transformation of Burundi, bottom-up and top-down. Its vision is to see Burundi transformed in Jesus' name. Its values reflect those modelled by Christ in the Gospels. It works with these visionary local leaders to transform Burundi through education, sport, business, healthcare and more, bringing hope to thousands of the most vulnerable.'

The Church Mission Society facilitated last year our support for Ultan McCabe, our other new Mission Partner. Ultan is now based in the UK where he works to help Christians in the Middle East and North Africa who are persecuted for their beliefs. His recent Link Letter can be read on the Mission notice board in the church lobby. On **Sunday 20 March** Ultan will visit us at St John's and will speak during the morning service about his work, a talk which promises to be fascinating. He will stay for coffee, offering an opportunity to chat and to answer questions. As is usual when our Mission Partners visit us, we shall offer a bring-and-share lunch and we extend a warm

invitation to you all to join us.

From the **Bethesda Project, Burundi**, we have just received a new illustrated report which you can read in full on the notice board. Please do look and see the work we as a church are supporting.

Their recent activities have been focussed on distributing soap during home visits to disabled people and their families to help them to fight covid; procuring a wheelchair for a young girl disabled since birth and abandoned by her father because of her disability; assisting a young woman injured in a motorbike accident to obtain a prosthetic leg; and seeking advocacy for disabled people. This is to ensure that they are aware of, and are given access to, their rights and that specialist organisations help them to find their voice as a group and work towards their personal development. A new group has been set up within Bethesda with the name **‘TUMERE NK’ABANDI’, ‘Be like others’**.

One of the remits of the committee is to nominate and recommend to the PCC the charities for our Lenten Appeal. Details of this year’s charities are given elsewhere in this issue.

Springing into Life: Garden News



The word paradise stems from the old Persian for walled enclosure. Readers will remember biblical references to paradise as a beautiful and verdant space. For many today a walled garden, either their own or someone else's, is a joy. It gives us intimacy, shelter, warmth and peace, and the plants enjoy it too. We are fortunate to have just this in the courtyard at St John's. Visitors and church members like to linger there, and all appreciate the hard work and horticultural knowledge of Clare Donovan who keeps it looking attractive through the seasons.

During the autumn of 2021 two Saturday work sessions achieved significant changes in the church grounds. We are particularly grateful to Angela Fincham, whose expertise and labour tamed many overgrown shrubs. Around the same time contractors pollarded the

five lime trees and pruned elsewhere, letting more light into the garden. The blighted box hedge has been removed and this area remains a work in progress. With remarkable speed the city council responded to a request from Katie Knapton, and undertook serious pruning of the overhanging trees in Blinco Grove.

Alan Copeman was another welcome recruit to the Garden Team. He offered the equipment and manpower needed to scarify the metre strips bordering our lawns, so allowing better embedding of the yellow rattle seed then sown. In the fullness of time this should weaken vigorous grasses and allow wild flowers to flourish. Don't though expect to enjoy for a season or three the waving seas of yellow that Monty Don found in the meadows on the Adriatic Coast! Patience is required. Meantime from February through to April, look out for snowdrops, daffodils and maybe cowslips and primroses too.

Gardens and green spaces have nurtured us in the last two years and will continue to do so. "Spring spells the renewal of the garden's cycle of life into death, followed by resurrection. Can anything in life be more beautiful than making such a mirror of the human condition". (Roy Strong - 2003) The biodiversity messages from COP 26 and more recently from The Green Planet television series, will remain centre stage and an inspiration. There will be work to do, but also enjoy your own garden if you have one, ours at St John's, and let's hope we can have others joining us for more outdoor events this year.

The Garden Team

