

Witney Congregational Church

Issue 18

August &
September 2011

R CROSS A D S

Witney Congregational Church is a crossroads where we:

meet God in worship

meet one another in friendship

meet our community and world with the love of Jesus



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WHAT'S ON GUIDE

Witney Congregational Church offer a whole range of activities through which we seek to Worship, Work and Witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this community today.

Further information can be obtained from the Church Administrator, Minister, Church Secretary or the leaders of the particular activities who are listed at the back of this magazine.

WORSHIP

Daily Worship	9.30 am	Mon-Fri	Short time of Prayer and Reading
Noah's Ark Service	1.30 pm	Tuesday	For under 5's parents and carers
Saturday Praise	11.00 am	1 st Saturday of the month	
Sunday Services	10.30 am		
	6.00 pm		There is a crèche facility at both services

Communion is normally held twice during the month at the first Sunday evening and third Sunday morning services

PRAYER

The Church is open each morning for Prayer; also in the Garden Room on Sunday morning and evening prior to, and after, Worship - All welcome

STUDY & FELLOWSHIP

Thursday	2.30pm	2 nd Thursday of each month at different homes
Friday	10.00 am	Church

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Sunday	10.30 am	Crèche, Noah's Ark & The K.I.C.K. on Sundays
Monday	10.00 am	Noah's Ark - Infant Group for babies and pre-school children
Friday	6.00pm	www. - 1 st & 3 rd Friday of the month
	7.00 pm	Y4J - 1 st & 3 rd Friday of the month

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Tuesday	Monthly	Deacon's Meeting
	Bi-Monthly	Church Meeting
Thursday	10.00 am	Rest & Chat (Coffee/Tea available)
Saturday	10.30 am	Coffee Morning

SUNDAY LINK

Weekly bulletin for all Christians providing stimulating thought along with news and notices concerning our Church

WITNEY ECUMENICAL YOUTH TRUST (BASE 33)

4 Welch Way (Entrance - High Street) ☎ 01993 200682 (Office)

St ANDREW'S BOOKSHOP

☎ 01993 709429

Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday 09.00 am - 5.00 pm



Last month I commented on how time just seems to fly past and with the longer days how much more we all generally try to fit into the day! Children are now on their school summer break and therefore families will probably be thinking about taking a holiday.

The weather over the last week or so has been quite changeable, but when the sun does shine it has been quite warm and, to me at least, quite enjoyable. It is appreciated that not everyone can bear the heat of summer, but surely it must be preferable to rain or inclement weather. So let us hope that the next couple of months, wherever you may be, the weather will be such that you can relax, enjoy yourself and return refreshed.

So, turning now to the contents, here is just a glimpse of some of the articles that have been submitted; Pip Cartwright continues the series on the history of WCC; Marian Walker writes about her friend, Barbara; Amy Merone, Christian Aid Oxford co-ordinator, writes about visit to the West Bank and there is an article on all in the month of August to name but a few.

As always, many thanks to those who have contributed to this edition, but would also encourage anyone to consider submitting articles for the next edition by either:

- CD\Memory Stick
- E-mail: terrypowlesland@uwclub.net

or jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net

- Just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up.

ESSENTIAL NOTE: All contributions should be submitted ***NO LATER THAN the WEDNESDAY*** of the week in which the magazine will be published.

The next edition is due on 1st Sept

Your Editor

A note for your diary

Ordination of Rev Judi Holloway

Sunday 2nd October 4.00pm

All welcome

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Pastor's Papers

"I am weak. I feel I have nothing to say..." I confessed to the deacons as they gathered to pray with me on 26 June. Every Sunday we share in a time of stillness preparing for our corporate worship. I could have chosen to hide how I was feeling and simply ploughed on with the task in hand. The beauty was that I felt safe enough to be vulnerable. I knew that the people you have elected to serve the fellowship would be there for me. That morning I was surrounded in prayer.

One deacon laid hands on me and prayed. The Spirit had been prompting another deacon to share Psalm 46, "Be still and know that I am God." She led our congregation in a stilling prayer and I was set free to lead worship and speak from the heart. At the Congregational Federation training weekend the opening and closing worship on the Friday was led by two different people who had not consulted each other. Their worship featured this verse. A card given to me by someone on the diaconate has been sitting on my desk for a couple of months now. Guess what is written in it? "Be still and know that I am God." God was saying something to me. Another sent me an encouraging letter with a poem. Since that Sunday various church members have pulled me to the side and prayed for me.

Ministry has been quite challenging. First, our church faced major repairs to the coping stones and roof tiles. In the process of repair there was discovered more structural problems that will need to be addressed in the near future. Second, the welcome our congregation has extended

to the Muslim community to pray in our church lounge has stirred up negative responses from some Christian communities in the area. This has made my new role as Chair of Churches Together in Witney challenging to say the least. Add to this a financial crisis in Base 33 and difficulties with tenancies in our properties.

On that Sunday morning I was at my wits end. I experienced the reality that I was not alone. Prayers and words of encouragement since then and a brilliant Church Meeting leaves me in no doubt that I'm in a loving and supportive congregation. What a privilege to be ministered to in my weakness! What a blessing to know that we are one in Christ.

Though there have been and continue to be a number of challenges for us to meet in faith, it's right to give thanks to God for what he has been doing in our fellowship. The Word Cafe is an experience that has deepened our relationships and enabled us to share the Bible as it is worked out in our lives.

I have walked with people who are moving on in their journey of faith. What is clear to me is the way in which we are becoming increasingly open and honest about our lives. It is truthful to experience joy and peace as we live through hurt and pain. It is good that we have greater freedom to tell people how we really are rather than feeling we have to pretend.

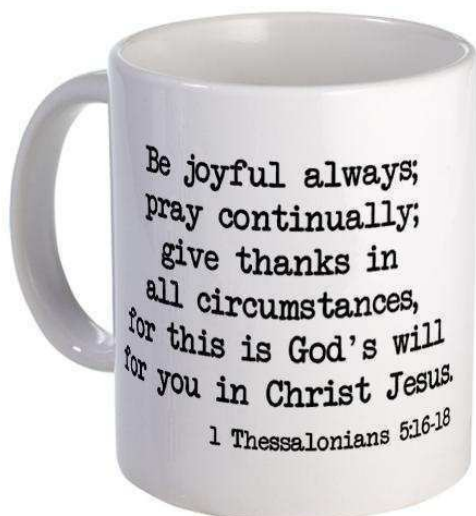
At the Church Meeting on 19 July, I read Exodus 14:1-14. The people of Israel were caught between an impassable sea in front of them and a terrifying military machine behind them. Their problems were acute. Their stress levels were high. In fact they questioned why on earth they had been

dragged out of Egypt to die in the desert. Weren't there enough graves in Egypt for them? Moses assured them. "Don't be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today...The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still."

As we come to our AGM and elect new deacons...as we appoint our secretary and treasurer...as we reflect on what has happened over the past year...as we contemplate the challenges ahead of us...let us know that it is the LORD who acts for us. It is for us to keep still...to pray...to wait on his leading and direction.

I trust that each one of you will have a restful summer and come into the autumn with an energy borne of the life of prayer. Whatever you do...wherever you go...whoever you see...pray. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Yours in Jesus Christ
Jason



The following article has been submitted by Marjorie Lee, and is entitled:

Farewell to Noah's Ark

Summer holidays are here; schools and colleges are enjoying a break until September; even activities at Church slow down a little

One of my usual times on our premises is Noah's Ark on Monday mornings. Rose Heaney and Jacqui Powlesland began this group when Sam was a baby. It has met a need and flourished for 16 years.

It is fascinating to see babies develop and grow into sturdy little characters exploring the toys and equipment, while parents and carers meet those in similar positions.

The point of this ramble is to say 'Thank You' for the cards and the flowers I was given on my final morning at Noah's Ark. Many people and children signed the cards and I'm trying to recall each name written - quite a lot to remember.

My special thanks go to the Noah's Ark team for their friendship and the sense of serving in this way. When the September session begins I will be thinking of you all and pray God's blessing as you care in His name





Daily Prayer Time:
Mon-Fri 9.30 am

Services

10.30 am & 6.00pm and will normally be led by Rev Jason Boyd unless advised below

Aug

6th 11.00am Saturday Praise
 7th am Rev Judi Holloway
 pm Rev Judi Holloway Joint Service at Congregational Church Communion
 14th am Morning Worship
 pm Joint Service at High St Methodist
 21st am Rosie Emmerson
 pm Rev Michael Gilyead
 28th am Karen Brusch Communion
 pm Joint Service at High St Methodist

Sept

3rd 11.00am Saturday Praise
 4th am Morning Worship
 pm Joint Service at Congregational Church Communion
 11th am tba
 pm Joint Service at High St Methodist Church
 18th am Revs Jason Boyd & Nigel Lindsay All-Age Worship Harvest Communion
 pm Joint Service at Congregational Church
 25th am Morning Worship
 pm Joint Service at High St Methodist Church

Oct

1st 11.00am Saturday Praise
 2nd am No morning service
 4.00pm Ordination of Rev Judi Holloway

The following events are given for your particular attention:

Aug

11th Fellowship Group 2.30pm 7 Riverside Gardens
 13th Prayer Chain meeting 9.15am

Sept

1st The People's Bible national tour - Witney
 3rd Saturday Praise being joined by Rev Nigel Lindsay and some of the congregation from Dundonald church Wimbledon
 6th Deacons meeting 7.30pm
 8th Fellowship Group 2.30pm 6 Swinbrook Court
 10th Prayer Chain meeting 9.15am
 Ride & Stride
 20th Church AGM 7.30pm

ROTAS

WELCOMING TEAM

Aug	07	Nanna Blackman & Joan Currie
	14	Jill & Robert McBride
	21	Sharon Watson & Theo Howells
	28	Irene St Clair & Val Obriain
Sept	04	Nanna Blackman & Iris Lindsay
	11	Pat & Ben Smith
	18	Beryl & Pip Cartwright
	25	Susan Wass & Joan Currie
Oct	02	Ordination at 4.00pm



COMMUNION

Aug	07 pm	Sharon Watson	
		Preparation	Iris Lindsay
	28 am	Jacqui Powlesland & Sharon Watson	
		Preparation	Rita Hayes
Sept	04 pm	Nanna Blackman	
		Preparation	Iris Lindsay
	18 am	Judi Holloway & Jacqui Powlesland	
		Nanna Blackman & Chris Esapa	
		Preparation	Beryl Cartwright (Harvest)



FLOWERS

Aug	07	Alison Hazell
	14	Jacqui Powlesland
	21	Joan Currie
	28	Judi Holloway
Sept	04	Beryl Cartwright
	11	Val Obriain
	18	Harvest
	25	Jill McBride
Oct	02	Ordination



COFFEE

Aug	07	Marjorie Lee, Iris Lindsay & Judith Bungey
	14	Jill & Robert McBride
	21	Peter Gamston & Gwen Mee
	28	Susan Wass & Irene St Clair
Sept	04	Linda McCormac & Sharon Watson
	11	Marjorie Lee, Iris Lindsay & Judith Bungey
	18	Jill & Robert McBride
	25	Peter Gamston & Gwen Mee
Oct	02	No morning service



REST & CHAT

Aug	04	Marjorie Lee
	11	Pat Smith
	18	Iris Lindsay & Joan Currie
	25	Jill & Robert McBride
Sept	01	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair
	08	Marjorie Lee
	15	Pat Smith
	22	Iris Lindsay & Joan Currie
	29	Jill & Robert McBride
Oct	06	Jean Stanley, Marina Bowerman & Irene St Clair



Every effort has been made on the rota list to meet individual circumstances. However, please change with someone else if the dates are not convenient for you - Thanks

The following article has been submitted by Rev Barbara Bridges, and is entitled:

Exploring Moreton-in-Marsh

Quite a few people from Area churches enjoyed having a short walk around Moreton in Marsh during our Area Assembly this year. Now is your opportunity to explore it properly.

On Monday August 29th (bank holiday) we are holding a treasure hunt. For £3 per team (number unspecified) you can enjoy a walk around our pleasant Cotswold town trying to solve some clues. There is also a picture quiz of Moreton for those who prefer a less strenuous option.

We will be selling refreshments including a barbecue at lunch time. All are welcome from 10am to 3pm. No need to book though an indication of numbers would help us in planning.

I look forward to seeing people from your church



In the year of the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible, we aim to reconnect the British public with the Bible.

***The People's Bible* is a national tour which will produce a unique, hand-written edition of the Bible.**

At venues across the country, people will be able to write a pair of verses to join the occasion and make their mark in history.

It will be coming to Witney on:
Thursday 1st September 2011
Location yet to be confirmed



News around the world

The following information has been taken from CWM Website dated 29th July, so is up to date at the editing of this month's magazine

Indian churches join Dalit rights hunger strike

More than a thousand Christians in New Delhi have begun a joint hunger strike to demand an end to discrimination against Christian Dalits across India. Major churches and their leaders have joined the protest which launched at the beginning of the week and culminated in a march to parliament on 28 July, Anto Akkara reported for ENInews.

"This strike is the expression of hunger for justice, hunger for equality and hunger for the human dignity of Christian Dalits," said Rev Roger Gaikwad, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in India. Rev Gaikwad said that at the launch of the strike, four bishops and several Christian leaders joined Catholic archbishop Vincent Concessao of Delhi, where hundreds of people sang hymns in different languages and shouted slogans. Half a dozen more bishops were reported to have joined nearly one thousand Christians in the strike on the second day.

More than 10,000 Christians including several bishops and church officials from across the country are expected to reach New Delhi for the concluding march to parliament on 28 July.

In a statement, the National Council of Dalit Christians said the government was withholding justice from Christians despite the fact several government commissions endorse their cause.

"We want the government to act on our decades-old demand," said Fr G Cosmon Arokiaraj, executive secretary of the Dalit commission of the Catholic Church, who helped organise the strike. "The discrimination against us amounts to denial of the freedom of religion and equality guaranteed by the constitution," said Arokiaraj, who is also a Dalit.

Dalit, which means "trampled upon," refers to lower castes treated as untouchables in Indian society. Most eke out a living with menial jobs in rural areas while living in segregation from upper castes.

Christian Dalits seek the "scheduled caste" recognition from the government accorded to other religions, such as Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists, that would allow them better access to education and jobs. Two-thirds of India's 27 million Christians are Dalits.

UK petition urges religious freedom in N Korea

An interim petition calling for religious freedom in North Korea has notched up more than 20,000 signatures from concerned Christians in the UK.

Persecution watchdog, Release International, presented the petition to the North Korean embassy in London last week. It demands that the country grant freedom of worship to Christians, who face regular harassment by the authorities and can be arrested or

imprisoned for even owning a Bible, Christian Today reported.

Recent reports by human rights organisations accuse North Korea of putting up to 180,000 people into forced labour.

There are reports that Christians are among the inmates facing torture, starvation and execution in political prison camps.

Release International is working to support North Korean Christians who have fled their country by providing safe houses, pastoral support and health care.

"Those who've got away describe these camps as 'hell on Earth'," said Andy Dipper, from the charity. "In this land where a form of emperor worship is practised, Christians can be detained, brutally tortured and removed from society. Some risk being shot by border guards as they try to flee the country to avoid persecution and oppression." Release International is still collecting signatures and will present the final petition to the North Korean embassy at the end of its campaign. They are appealing to more Christians to sign the petition.

Mr Dipper added: "Around 20,000 people have already stood with persecuted North Koreans by signing the petition calling for freedom. It's not too late to take your stand."

European churches express solidarity with Norway

CWM member churches across Europe have added their voice to pledges of solidarity and prayers for the people of

Norway following the massacre of 76 victims by a right-wing extremist.

The Union of Welsh Independents (UWI) said thousands of chapels across Wales have gathered to pray for the victims and their families after news of the attacks was announced on 22 July.

"Living in a small Protestant country ourselves, we sympathise deeply with them in their shock and sorrow," said UWI Christian Citizenship Department chair, Elenid Jones. "It was horrific. For Anders Behring Breivik to be labeled a 'Christian Fundamentalist' is quite unbelievable. Whatever he calls himself, he quite clearly is not a Christian. It shows how dangerous religious extremism of all kinds can be."

UWI leaders have sent a message of condolence and support to the head of the Church of Norway, King Harald V.

The shootings, and a bomb attack on government buildings in Norway's capital, Oslo, carried out by Anders Behring Breivik on 22 July, claimed the lives of at least 76 people. AP reported that in a message to member-churches, the director-general of Norway's ecumenical Christian Council, Else Steen, described the massacre as an "unimaginable tragedy" and urged churches to offer themselves as "places of care, participation and prayer for those affected."

The Pope deplored the "grave terrorist acts" in a Rome address on 25 July, and said he would pray "that all Norwegians will be spiritually united in a determined resolve to reject the ways of hatred and conflict, and to work together fearlessly in shaping a future of mutual respect, solidarity and freedom for coming generations."

The Norwegian general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Olav Fykse Tveit, said many of his shocked countrymen were "seeking churches for support and answers," and accused the gunman of "blasphemy" for citing Christianity as a justification for his acts of mass murder, ENInews reported.

"It's important to say to all Muslims wherever they are, in Europe or elsewhere in the world, that these actions in no way can express our Christian faith and our Christian values," Tveit said this week. "As Christians, we need to be aware of this, how our faith and our religion can be abused. This event shows how important it is that we continue this work more than ever."

The country is set to remember victims killed a week after the attacks on Friday 29 July. Some of the victims funerals will be held and major buildings in the capital are set to fly their flags at half mast.

Norway is a Protestant country, with 80 per cent of the population of 4.8 million belonging to the established Lutheran church.

Korea: Christians worship in places of suffering

A collective of Korean Christians committed to holding acts of worship at places of hardship and suffering has held its 100th service in Seoul's Central District, the Hankyoreh reported. Candlechurch marked its 100th "field service" gathering near Daehan Gate at Deoksu Palace in Seoul's Central District, the site of a sit-in protest by

workers fired from manufacturing company, JEI.

Candlechurch's origins lie in the 2008 candlelight vigil demonstrations against the importation of US beef. At that time, Christians set up a tent church at Seoul Plaza, the "candle church," where they held out against the government's suppression of the demonstrations. After the church was torn down, the members agreed on a plan to visit "places of lamentation and hardship" to hold services.

Their aim is to "visit places of suffering to hold services" rather than summoning people to a church for services.

Candlechurch services take place every Thursday. Their goal is to carry on the tradition of the Thursday prayer meetings held at Jongno's Christian Center by Christians, who played a leading role in the democratisation movement of the 1970s and 1980s.

In its inaugural declaration, Candlechurch said, "Worship is the most powerful resistance."

"There are some people who view our services as assemblies, but it is the services that are shared with those who are suffering that conform most closely to the teachings of Jesus Christ and constitute the most powerful form of political resistance by Christians," said Rev Choi Heon-guk, general affairs director for Living with Jesus, who is handling administrative duties for the organisation.





Congregational Federation

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Federation Mailing

(for Churches, Areas Secretaries, Personal Members, Contacts and Associates)

Summer 2011

Friends,

This is the second quarter's mailing of 2011 and contains information for you and our churches about the latest news and developments within the Congregational Federation.

I have been conscious for some time about trying to minimise the cost and environmental effect of distributing so much in the way of paper copies, whilst at the same time ensuring that you have all the information you need and desire.

Mailings from now on will be somewhat different. Below you will find reference to a range of matters and where you can find the information (either enclosed, under separate cover, or on our website) If for any reason you do not have access to the internet, then no problem just give us a call and we will send copies of whatever you need.

I will also distribute this information via email assuming we have your details, do remember please update us with any changes you make in this regard.



The Congregationalist

The all new edition is now ready and on its way to you – sent under separate cover (cheaper postage than including with this) Editor David Kinchin hopes you like it, more than that hopes more will subscribe to it. As an introductory offer each church has been sent an additional three free copies (4 in total) to encourage new subscriptions. To ensure you keep getting yours do complete the subscription form. Please note that Associates, Personal Members and each Church will continue to receive a single copy as part of their membership. **All others please subscribe!**

You can also read more from the articles in extra portions of the magazine on line at www.congregational.org.uk/congregationalist

Federation Branding

We want your feedback – The Council of the Federation desires to introduce a new branding of the CF which includes a new logo. A separate sheet is enclosed for churches and individuals to let Council know what you think. They will be making a final decision when they meet in November – so returning this by the end of September would be helpful. You can also download the return on line also at www.congregational.org.uk/branding

May Assembly

Thanks to the North West Midlands Area for hosting a great day – See report and reactions via the social network twitter at www.congregational.org.uk/mayassemblytwitter Also you can read about the progress of the flames of the Spirit as they are passed from church to church at www.congregational.org.uk/flames

Training for all

Interested in learning more about your faith - Visit www.congregational.org.uk/training and [/foundation](http://www.congregational.org.uk/foundation) to find opportunities for learning about your faith, or developing your discipleship or ministry. You can download a prospectus and application forms. Apply by June 15th for the Foundation Course; e-mail rose.heaney@congregational.org.uk or call to find out MORE.



CF-XTRA

Launch was fantastic and so encouraging at May Assembly

- The new national youth provision for those aged 10 to 29 years. It is led by a core team elected by youth participants from every Federation area. The team are working on providing regional events for young people and two national events for next year! Information is on their own section of the website and on the Youth & Children's pages www.congregational.org.uk/cfxtra

President's House Party

Illuminating weekend on offer - Brian Grist invites you to a relaxing weekend of fun and fellowship in the wonderful surroundings of the Dalmeny Hotel Lytham St Annes from October 7th to 9th. Brian writes *"I am absolutely delighted to invite you to join us on the Presidents House party this year. It promises to be a great weekend. The hotel is very good, fabulous value, great environment, and warm fellowship. Included is a trip through the famous Blackpool illuminations nearby, plus at least one big surprise! It also promises to be a great spiritual encounter and social gathering for the family of God. Book now...see you there."*

Details and booking form on website at www.congregational.org.uk/houseparty

Churches and Legislation

Latest news always available – supported by the Churches Legislation Advisory Service latest current issues at www.congregational.org.uk/legislation

Well done, great effort

Onè Respé appeal target reached – read the final update of our three year commitment supporting Christian Aid work in the Dominican Republic – over £30,000 has been raised. Our attention now shifts to Nicaragua and all churches have been supplied with starter packs – more on line at www.congregational.org.uk/target and www.congregational.org.uk/nicaragua

Mission matters

Is this what you are looking for? – CF Mission Development Officer Judith Mbaabu constantly updates information on the website with all sorts of resources available to churches to better engage in mission. Some of the latest ones include Back to Church Sunday; Community Project Awards; Growing Disciples; Inclusive Church; Malawi Partnership; More than Gold. Take a look for these and much more at www.congregational.org.uk/mission

I do hope you will be able to make use of some of these current resources. Remember, no internet – no problem! Just give us a call for more information on any of the matters referred to and we will be delighted to send it to you.

Be assured of my prayers and support for you and your fellowship.

Every blessing

Michael Heaney
General Secretary

The following article, written by Amy Merone (regional co-ordinator in the Oxford Christian Aid office), has been submitted by Pip Cartwright, and is entitled:

Reflections from the West Bank

The soldier at the checkpoint asks me what I think about Hebron, one of the occupied cities in the West Bank where I am staying. I can hardly put into words what I feel. 'What do *you* think about Hebron?' I ask him. 'I think it's a test for humanity,' he replies. He can't be older than 23 and yet he is serving as an Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldier in one of the most volatile places in the occupied Palestinian territory. 'Will you remain in the army?' I ask him. 'No. I want to leave and travel. Perhaps I'll go to France. There are things that I wish that I could say, but I can't.'

There's an unspoken understanding between us. The young soldier is one of approximately 1,500 serving in the Old City of Hebron, which is under Israeli military control. Once a busy Palestinian market city, it's now more like a ghost town. Walk around in the evening and apart from passing the odd person eager to get home, the only people you are likely to see are the soldiers patrolling the streets and stationed in watch towers dotted throughout the city.

Hebron, site of the Tomb of the Patriarchs, is a Palestinian city that is also home to Israeli settlements, which, illegal under international law, were established in 1968 following the Six-Day War when Israel captured and occupied the West Bank and Gaza. The presence of the settlers means that for

Palestinians, much of the Old City of Hebron is now restricted by checkpoints, road blocks and road closures.

Shatha and Sunduz are best friends. They live with their families in Tel Rumeida, the most heavily restricted part of Hebron and home to settlers. Living with Shatha and her family during my stay in Hebron, I experienced what life is like living under occupation. The family home is next to a settlement; there is barbed wire everywhere and soldiers with guns are positioned close to their home. For Shatha and Sunduz, even walking to school is an intimidating experience.

Shatha and Sunduz have been supported by Christian Aid partner, B'TSelem. The Israeli organisation, which works to monitor and prevent human rights abuses and educate Israeli decision-makers, the Israeli public and the international community about human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory, has given video cameras to young Palestinians in the West Bank to record violence committed against them.

The project has been a way of empowering young people who witness human rights abuses on a daily basis, experience restrictions on their movements and limitations on their lives. The footage gathered has been used by B'TSelem to campaign and raise public awareness of the injustices in the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as being used as evidence in court.

For Shatha, the support of B'TSelem and the video distribution project has helped to empower her: 'One day B'TSelem came and gave us video cameras to try and stop the violence. It has made our lives more bearable. Now if

I am filming the soldiers are more careful. They sometimes run away.'

Having worked in the Middle East region since the 1950s, Christian Aid now works with more than twenty Israeli and Palestinian partner organisations to protect human rights, provide access to services and resources, and to build a peace based on justice for all.

For the Israeli organisation Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), this means taking mobile clinics into West Bank towns and villages that are cut off from healthcare. Early one Saturday during my time in IOPT I joined the group of volunteers as they travelled from Jerusalem to a village outside Nablus. It was immediately apparent that one of the purposes of the organisation is to create dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. The clinics only go into the West Bank if there are both Israeli and Palestinian volunteers onboard and if everybody is allowed to enter.

I chatted to two young Israeli men onboard and asked them what they did and how long they had been volunteering with PHR. Studying medicine at university in Jerusalem, it was their first time going into the West Bank not as IDF soldiers. Why did they want to volunteer? I asked them. 'To see things from a different perspective.'

Poverty has been one of the most significant impacts of the occupation. More than 67% of the Palestinian population now lives below the poverty line. For Adnan, one of the men I spoke to in the village we visited with PHR, this has had a devastating effect on him and his community. 'It is very hard to live here. There is no work. There are too many problems that come to us. You can't feel good here, so don't ask me about my life because it is too dark.'

It's a feeling that Sabra, an Arab-Israeli nurse who volunteers with PHR, shares. I ask her as we leave the village what the most common health problems that people experience are. 'Heart and leg problems, mostly, but perhaps more than doctors they need to share their stories. They need to tell.' I remember as I write this, the words of an Israeli volunteer with PHR talking about going into West Bank towns and villages. 'We're coming in peace with our hand outstretched.' In a conflict that has become as polarised as this one, PHR is testament to the need for Israelis and Palestinians to meet and talk to one another.

One of the most important lessons that I learnt during my time in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory was the importance of listening to the people I met; both Israelis and Palestinians, and being prepared to see things from a different perspective. Before I left for IOPT, I made the decision not to talk to IDF soldiers; mainly out of fear. But were it not for my conversation with the young soldier at the checkpoint in Hebron, then I might not have come to understand that this is a conflict that brutalises and oppresses everybody.

I still think about the conversation that I had with him. I wonder what he would have told me if he could. 'Hebron is a test for humanity', he had said. It seems to me that he was right, but that more than that, the conflict in the whole of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory is a test for humanity.

The following article has been submitted by Pip Cartwright, and is entitled:

History of Witney Congregational Church: 1985

Since moving from the old Church along the High Street in 1970 there was never a dull moment, especially for the Minister and Deacons.

In October 1984, owing to problems with the 'new' Ducklington Lane Manse, the Deacons decided to look for another Manse. In July 1985 this property was sold and the Church purchased a modern detached house at 67 Pensclose for approximately £60,000. From studying some Church accounts an additional £11,500 had to be found and thus I conclude the Ducklington property must have been sold for approximately £48,500.

At this time there was correspondence with the Congregational Federation regarding our 'lost' Trust Deeds and the financing of our new Manse. As regards the Trust Deeds, this was not an issue as the Minister, the Church's Solicitor and the Charity Commission all had copies. It appears that the Rev. Bob Henry was coincidentally selling his house, near Bicester, and had offered a loan to the Church to cover the extra cost. I believe the Congregational Federation advised against it and in the end other means were considered. In addition repairs to the roof and guttering and legal and professional fees were to cost nearly £7,000.

The Midland Bank enabled the Church to borrow a further £20,000 on

the understanding that the Gateway (International) Supermarket site rent was to be favourably reviewed in December. Thus our loan rose to £88,000. Before the rent review, the interest paid per annum was £12,000 and we were only able to repay £9,400. Thus, the loan account was increasing. Since 1971 the Gateway site was only paying £4,500 rent per annum. As I have explained in previous episodes, the Church was under the impression that the rent was to be reviewed after 7 years, only to be told that our advisors at the former Congregational Union had made an agreement for the rent to be revised only after 14 years. When I relate that the revised rent was increased to £17,000 per annum you can see how much revenue the Church lost over the years. With rent from the Citizens Advice Bureau our revenue had increased to about £20,000

With our increased membership, giving increased by 25%, however the Church was not happy to be burdened with so much debt, so it was passed by Church Trustees, Deacons and members that the sale of the Gateway site be considered.

In March we welcomed several new members who were to be influential, viz John and Maureen Hardcastle (and 3 children), Ernie and Sheila Gascoigne (with 2 children) and Dr Richard and Mary Paradine.

The Upper two Rooms were joined and made into one larger, longer room, which was used by the Church for Sunday School parties, YPF, Harvest Suppers, Concerts and other social events. Later on it was to be used for Evening Services.

The Church 'Newsletter' was a team effort. Daphne Turner was the

typist/stencil maker, whilst Ann Henry was the collator and in charge of postal distribution. The Witt family (Jim and Mary) organised the general distribution and collectors of the subscriptions.

Mr John Wilcox (General Secretary of the Congregational Federation) visited Witney and suggested that it was ill-advised for the Church Secretary (Mr Philip Turner) also to be a Trustee in case of conflict of interest. As a result Mr Philip Turner relinquished his position as Church Secretary on March 31st 1985 but would remain a Deacon and because of his experience in Estate Agency he would continue with his responsibility dealing with Pensclose and with our other properties.

If I remember correctly Mr Cliff Puleston was persuaded to become a temporary Church Secretary and remained so until the September 1986 AGM. In May Mrs Enid Griffin resigned as 'organist' and Church Member. She was the last of the Lee family who were staunch Congregationalists for over 60 years. We were fortunate to have four organists - Doreen Richards, Jackie Goodbury, Mary Witt and Judi Keates who were willing to continue.

In June the Church Outing led 40 of us to Hampton Court which included a boat trip down the Thames. Mrs Kathleen Collis, our longest serving and much loved Sunday School Teacher retired in August. She was responsible for the nurture and loving care of the youngest in our Church for over 30 years. She was a real pillar of our Church.

During August the Rev. Bob Henry attended the International Congregational Meetings in the USA.

One of our young people, Andy Lord, who was studying Theology at Westminster College and training for the Ministry became our Student Pastor for the month.

Mr Philip and Mrs Daphne Turner resigned their membership in September 1985. For some time they had been living at Adderbury, near Banbury, and had been travelling backwards and forwards from there, to worship in Witney and carry out their duties to the Church. Apart from being a Trustee, Sunday School Teacher and Youth Leader, he was our Church Secretary during the important years when we became established at 33 High Street. He was a major force in purchasing our Church site and in dealing with all the problems we had with our properties and the eventual purchase of the Manse in Pensclose. Daphne was a Junior Church Teacher, a member of the Fabric Committee, the Catering Committee and Editor and typist of our Magazine. They, and their family, gave many years of committed service to the Lord's work in the Church.

The year ended on a sad note with the death of Mrs Dorothy Sellman, mother of Daphne Turner, Peter Sellman and Rita Hayes and wife of Albert Sellman, who had been the Church Secretary for 20 years.



PRAAYER LETTER No 148

Communication

Throughout history man has found ways of communicating with each other. It is a natural desire to be in touch. Nowadays in the electronic era communications from anywhere in the world can be instant.

Are you pleased when you receive a letter, e-mail, text, telephone call or news from someone on Face book? Some of these methods of communicating take longer than others but all take effort in starting the process. If you are on the receiving end do you make an effort to respond or do you delay or even forget?

However, people want to communicate their views or feelings to **someone**, either relative, friend, acquaintance, known or unknown broadcaster or official. Is the communication one of joy or happiness as with congratulations on a success or one of sadness and comfort as in a bereavement, or perhaps frustration or anger in complaining when something goes wrong?

Recently I met up with friends who were at College with me. Some I only communicate with at Christmas, others more often and one frequently but the excitement and feeling of being together, talking and listening to each other has a positive effect on one's well being. We all needed to make the effort, some driving long distances, to spend the day together.

Sometimes we put off a phone call, e-mail, or meeting up with family and friends. How often do we communicate with God? Is it hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, annually? Sometimes we put off a time to meet with God. There may be times when we need others to intercede for us but God always wants to hear from us and speak to us. Are we ready to talk and listen to Him? This we can do through what we call 'prayer'.

The Psalms are full of David's communications with God, sharing his anger and frustration at man and God, but also giving his joy, praise and thanks to God.

Two Psalms, Psalm 37 and Psalm 146 are worth reading and are particularly relevant in the present situation of the Norwegian killings, famine in the Horn of Africa, scandal and corruption relating to the Press Saga in our own country.

'Rejoice in the Lord always. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'

Philippians 4:4-6

Every Blessing
Beryl

Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Beryl Cartwright (703717)

The following has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

The Transfiguration

It was a time when Jesus' ministry was popular, when people were seeking him out. But on this day, he made time to take Peter, James and John, his closest disciples, up a high mountain. In the fourth century, Cyrillic of Jerusalem identified it as Mount Tabor (and there is a great church up there today), but others believe it more likely to have been one of the three spurs of Mount Hermon, which rises to about 9,000 feet, and overlooks Caesarea Philippi.

High up on the mountain, Jesus was suddenly transfigured before his friends. His face began to shine as the sun, his garments became white and dazzling. Elijah and Moses, of all people, suddenly appeared, and talked with him. A bright cloud overshadowed the disciples.



Peter was staggered, but, enthusiast that he was - immediately suggested building three tabernacles on that holy place, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for

Elijah. But God's 'tabernacling', God's dwelling with mankind, does not any longer depend upon building a shrine. It depends on the presence of Jesus, instead. And so a cloud covered them, and a voice spoke out of the cloud, saying that Jesus was his beloved son, whom the disciple should 'hear'. God's dwelling with mankind depends upon our *listening* to Jesus.

Then, just as suddenly, it is all over. What did it mean? *Why Moses and Elijah?* Well, these two men represent the Law and the Prophets of the Old Covenant, or Old Testament. But now they are handing on the baton, if you like: for both the Law and the Prophets found their true and final fulfilment in Jesus, the Messiah.

Why on top of a mountain? In Exodus we read that Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the sacred covenant from Yahweh in the form of the Ten Commandments. Now Jesus goes up and is told about the 'sealing' of the New Covenant, or New Testament of God with man, which will be accomplished by his coming death in Jerusalem.

That day made a lifelong impact on the disciples. Peter mentions it in his second letter, 2 Peter 1:16 - 19 - invariably the reading for this day.

The Eastern Churches have long held the Transfiguration as a feast as important as Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension and Pentecost. But it took a long time for the West to observe the Transfiguration. The feast starts appearing from the 11th and 12th centuries, and the Prayer Book included it among the calendar dates, but there was no liturgical provision for it until the 19th century.

Thank You

Please accept our heartfelt thanks for remembering us in our grief. As you know although Mommy was no spring chicken, and she had her share of afflictions, her passing is very deeply felt especially because she and I shared a very close relationship.

I do appreciate the kind words, the phone calls, texts, e-mails, facebook messages and everyone who signed the card we received. It was heartening in the midst of the funeral preparations to read such genuine descriptions of her in your messages.

She was truly a phenomenal woman who we miss dearly. May God continue to bless you folks at Witney

Karen & Norman Francis



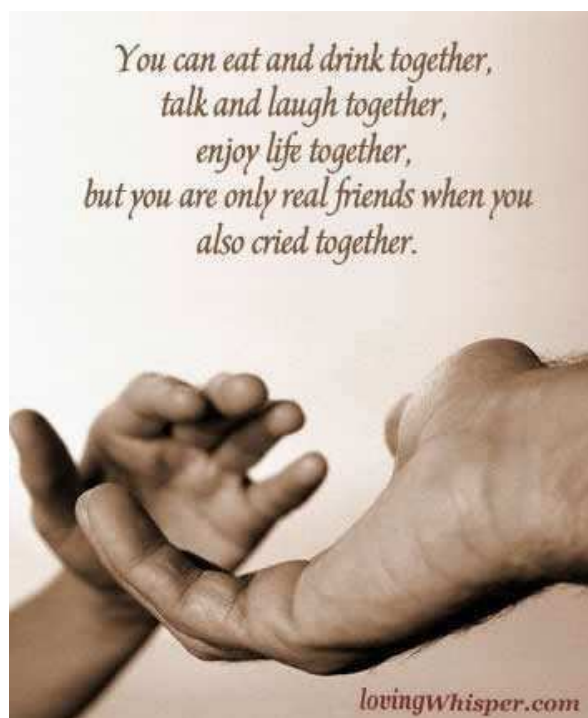
Ride & Stride

Saturday 10th September

Ride + Stride helps to preserve both church buildings and the unique landscape that we all take for granted. Churches are steeped in history and intrigue and for millennia have been centres of culture, arts and learning. Taking part in Ride + Stride allows you to explore the countryside and discover more about these extraordinary buildings. Encourage your friends and family to join you on a fun day out and raise money for your local church and the County Trust that supports it!



Aug	04	Andrew Watson
	13	Melissa Gudem
Sep	01	Theo Howells
	02	Jill McBride
		Claire Woodward
	09	Judith Bungey
	13	Michael Watson
	17	Richard Osei
	28	John Garrett



Children can't read a clock face

Almost a quarter of children aged 10 to 12 cannot read an analogue clock face. They tell the time from their mobile phones. This change in culture has led to a huge fall in the number of people buying children's watches and sales have slumped by 37.5 per cent within the past year alone.

The following article has been submitted by Benjamin Esapa, and is entitled:

Camping Trip

On Friday 15th July, Y4J had a Camping trip in the church garden.



First, we had a barbecue with the members of www. before they went home.

The tents had already been pitched up earlier, so we played games such as "Chinese whispers" and "I went to the supermarket." We also played a story game when people sat in a circle and the first person had to say the opening sentence of a story. The story was continued around the circle until it was ended.

Afterwards, we sang camp fire songs- a bit too loudly as the man living upstairs was quite angry with us. So we brushed our teeth, got changed and went into our tents.



Unsurprisingly, I was woken by Jason's snoring and the rain hammering on the tents at 6 o'clock in the morning. I had nothing to do so I read the book that I had brought with me. When everyone had woken up, we went inside the church to have breakfast because it was too wet to eat outside. Afterwards, we cleaned up for coffee morning and returned home.

Overall, it was an extremely enjoyable experience and given the opportunity, I would gladly participate again.

The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump magazine, and is entitled:

Maximilian Kolbe - Christian witness amidst 20th century suffering

Some people's lives seem to epitomise the suffering of millions, but also to shine with a Christian response to it. One such person was Maximilian Kolbe, 1894 - 1941, a Franciscan priest of Poland, and publisher extraordinary.

Maximilian was born at Zdunska Wola, near Lodz, where his parents, devout Christians, worked in a cottage weaving industry. Like thousands of others at the time, the family and their village was ground into poverty by Russian exploitation. In 1910 Maximilian entered the Franciscan Order, and studied at Rome. After his ordination in 1919, Maximilian returned to Poland, where he was sent to teach church history in a seminary. But a new factor had entered his life: he was diagnosed with tuberculosis.

Living in post-war Poland was difficult enough, but with tuberculosis as well - most people would have quietly withered away. Not Maximilian Kolbe. Instead, the tuberculosis gave Maximilian a sense of urgency - a sense of the brief transitoriness of this life. He knew his time was slipping away.

Instead of teaching history, he determined to do something to help the Christians living in Poland now, in the tatters of Europe after the First World War. And so he founded a magazine for Christian readers in Cracow, who badly needed effective apologetics to help them hold to their faith in a chaotic

world.

Soon, the obsolete printing presses (which were operated by Maximilian's fellow priests and lay brothers) were working overtime - the magazine's circulation had leapt to 45,000. Then the printing presses were moved to a town near Warsaw, Niepokalanow, where Maximilian now founded a Franciscan community which combined prayer with cheerfulness and poverty with modern technology: daily as well as weekly newspapers were soon produced. The community grew and grew, until by the late 1930s it numbered 762 friars.

Then in 1939 the Germans invaded Poland. Maximilian sent most of his friars home, to protect them from what was to come. He turned the monastery into a refugee camp for 3,000 Poles and 1,500 Jews. And the presses continued: taking a patriotic, independent line, critical of the Third Reich.

Kolbe was arrested by the Gestapo along with four friars. They were taken to Auschwitz in May 1941. Their names were exchanged for tattooed numbers; and they were sent to brutal forced labour.

But Maximilian Kolbe continued his priestly ministry. He heard confessions in unlikely places, and smuggled in bread and wine for the Eucharist. His sympathy and compassion for those even more unfortunate than himself was outstanding.

Then came the final scene in his hard life. At the end of July, 1941, several men escaped from his bunker at the camp. The Gestapo, in revenge, came to select several more men from the same bunker who were to be starved to death. A man, Francis Gajowniczek, was chosen. As he cried in despair, Kolbe

stepped forward. "I am a Catholic priest. I wish to die for that man. I am old; he has a wife and children." The officer in charge shrugged his shoulders - and obliged.

So Maximilian went to the death chamber of Cell 18, and set about preparing the others to die with dignity by prayers, psalms, and the example of Christ's Passion. Two weeks later only four were left alive: Maximilian alone was fully conscious. He was injected with phenol and died on 14 August, aged 47.

He was beatified by Paul VI in 1971. In 1982 he was canonised by Pope John Paul II, formerly Archbishop of Cracow, the diocese which contains Auschwitz. Present at the ceremony that day was Francis Gajowniczek, the man whose life Maximilian Kolbe had saved.

The following article has been submitted by Beryl Cartwright, and is entitled:

Letter/card writing to persecuted Christians

Do you enjoy writing letters or making cards? Our Christian brothers and sisters in many countries are being persecuted because of their faith. They need prayer and words of encouragement to endure the dangers of everyday life; this we can do by sending letters or cards.

If you are interested and would like to participate in this activity please see me. I hope to initiate this venture sometime in September.

The following article, written by Canon David Winter, has been extracted from Parish Pump magazine, and is entitled:

The Way I See It -as the Duke of Edinburgh turns 90....

This summer the Duke of Edinburgh reached his ninetieth birthday. Those of us who can remember the tall, fair-headed naval officer who married Princess Elizabeth in 1947 have become used to his figure walking just behind the Queen on royal occasions over the last 64 years, often raising a laugh as he follows her along a line of well-wishers with a few well-chosen (or occasionally not quite so well chosen) remarks. His has been a remarkable life and his continuing energy and individuality as the Prince Consort have been remarkable. It's hard to believe that he is ninety.

Yet the truth is, we are becoming increasingly aware that more and more people around us are reaching that once rare milestone. I remember being taken as a child to see a great-aunt who had just had her ninetieth birthday. We were ushered into the room to be confronted with a frail figure, mouth open, pale eyes almost invisible - a kind of living wax-work. Today among our friends, neighbours and fellow church members there will probably be many ninety year olds - and even centurions- who are far from being wax-works. People may not yet match Methuselah in the Bible, who (it is claimed) reached 969 years, but we are on average living longer, and that prolonged life more often retains a degree of good health and activity.

Yet we live in a world which worships youth! The reason the Bible lists all those legendary men of old in Genesis

(chapter 5) is that old age was seen as the mark of wisdom, something to be valued and revered. The leaders of Israel, and the leaders of the early churches, were called 'elders', because it was inconceivable that younger men could do it. None of that 'too old at fifty' in those days!

It's an observable fact that congregations in our churches are, on the whole, well above the national average age. That probably doesn't matter too much, so long as they are constantly fed with the rising age-groups. As one shrewd observer commented to me, 'It's quite natural to mug up for finals!' St Paul told Timothy not to let the people among whom he ministered 'despise his youth' (he was well over thirty at the time). We now need the balancing advice. Let no one despise the elderly! We're not just hanging around. Like Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, we'll faithfully do our bit until we topple off the perch.

The following article, author unknown, has been submitted by Maureen Miles, and is entitled:

GRANDMA'S PEARL OF WISDOM

I've travelled paths you've yet to walk
Learned lessons old and new
And now this wisdom of my life
I'm blessed to share with you

Let kindness spread like sunshine
Embrace those who are sad
Respect their dignity, give them joy
And leave them feeling glad

Forgive those who might hurt you

And though you have your pride
Listen closely to their viewpoint
Try to see the other side

Walk softly when you're angry
Try not to take offence
Invoke your sense of humour
Laughter's power is immense!

Express what you are feeling
Your beliefs you should uphold
Don't shy away from what is right
Be courageous and be bold

Keep hope right in your pocket
It will guide you day by day
Take it out when it is needed
When it's near, you'll find a way

Remember friends and family
Of which you are a precious part
Love deeply and love truly
Give freely from your heart

The world is far from perfect
There's conflict and there's strife
But you still can make a difference
By how you live your life

And so I'm very blessed to know
The wonders you will do
Because you are my granddaughter
And I believe in you.

Thank You

I would like to thank everyone who was at Church on the morning that David and I renewed our vows on our 40th Wedding Anniversary. It was a lovely occasion with our daughter, son in law and grandchildren in attendance. Special thanks to Jason for doing the honours.

Susan

The following article has been submitted by Marian Walker, and is entitled:

MY FRIEND, BARBARA

My Friend Barbara grew up in Tanzania (it was Tanganyika then - before it joined up with Zanzibar). Her family moved there from England in 1952 when her father found a job there - Barbara was only 7½. She and her brother had to go to a boarding school in a remote area of central Tanganyika as it was the only school for European children. She boarded at this school until 1958 when the school closed.



In 2008 on the 60th Anniversary of the founding of their school in Kongwa, Barbara, her brother and a small group of aging ex-Kongwa pupils returned to the school (now Mnyakongo Primary School). Few of them had been back to Tanzania since they were teenagers there ... 50 years ago! Those happy few could not anticipate the impact the journey back would make upon them.

What they found on that very moving journey brought home to them the plight of this new little school built on some of their school's foundations. Mnyakongo Primary School is in a remote and economically depressed region; it had no electricity and rudimentary educational facilities. They all made a pact to assist the education of the children in whatever way they could and this is how the Mnyakongo School Project was founded.

If you look around the website, www.kongwaconnected.org, you will see the achievements so far and their dreams for the future. The overall aim of the project at the school is to help them help themselves to a better future. Every penny donated to Mnyakongo School Project directly benefits the children of the school. They know this because they take it there. They do not take a cut or a fee. This is their pledge.

I met Barbara when I lived in South Africa and eventually we all came back to the UK to live. I am very proud of my friend, Barbara, she works tirelessly for the school on top of being a very busy mother and grandmother. Her resourcefulness is amazing. One day I am going to make the trip with her, the only thing that puts me off is all the injections one has to have before being able to travel!

The following article has been extracted from Church News Service, and is entitled:

ALL IN THE MONTH OF AUGUST

300 years ago 1711: first horse race meeting at Ascot took place, initiated by Queen Anne.

150 years ago 1861: Britain annexed Lagos, Nigeria, making it a crown colony and halting the slave trade.

100 years ago 1911: British members of Parliament voted to receive salaries for the first time.

100 years ago 1911: E F Schumacher, German-born British economist and statistician, coined the term 'small is beautiful'.

90 years ago 1921: Gene Roddenberry, American screenwriter and creator of Star Trek, was born.

80 years ago 1931: Nobel Prize-winning German physicist Albert Einstein urged all scientists to refuse to do military work.

80 years ago 1931: British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald resigned following the rejection of emergency cuts in spending during the economic crisis. With the labour government in deadlock, King George V instructed MacDonald to form a new National Government - a coalition with the Conservatives and Liberals.

75 years ago 1936: the XI Olympic Games opened in Berlin, Germany. It was the last Olympics for 12 years, due to World War II.

70 years ago 1941: Britain and the USA issued the Atlantic Charter, a joint declaration that laid out the aims and goals of the Allied powers during and after World War II.

65 years ago 1946: Keith Moon, British rock drummer (The Who) was born.

50 years ago 1961: East Germany sealed off the border between East and West Berlin. Construction of the Berlin Wall began on 15th August.

40 years ago 1971: British sailor Chay Blyth became the first person to sail non-stop around the world in the 'wrong' direction (i.e. westward), against all the prevailing winds and currents.

40 years ago 1971: Northern Ireland introduced internment - the power to detain suspected terrorists indefinitely without trial.

30 years ago 1981: IBM launched the Personal Computer (PC).

25 years ago 1986: Henry Moore, British sculptor, died.

20 years ago 1991: the first ever website (info.cern.ch) went live. The web's inventor, Tim Berners-Lee, also posted a description of the World Wide Web project on the alt.hypertext newsgroup.

20 years ago 1991: British journalist John McCarthy was released by Islamic Jihad in Lebanon after being held hostage for more than five years.

15 years ago 1996: Osama bin Laden issued a fatwa entitled 'A Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places'.

15 years ago 1996: Prince Charles and Princess Diana were divorced. Princess Diana was now to be known as Diana, Princess of Wales.

10 years ago 2001: US President George W Bush received a daily briefing warning that Osama bin Laden was determined to strike in the USA (six weeks before the September 11th terrorist attack on New York).