

# Witney Congregational Church

## 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*



# 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
Saturday Praise	11.00 am	1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month	
Sunday Services	10.30 am		
	6.00 pm	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month	

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

## PRAYER

The Church is open each morning for Prayer

## STUDY & FELLOWSHIP

Tuesday	12.15pm	Lite Bite piece of the Word (1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month)
Thursday	7.30pm	Bible Study (see Sunday Link)

## 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

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

Sunday	Bi-Monthly	Church Meeting
Tuesday	Monthly	Deacon's Meeting
Thursday	10.00am	Thursday Coffee Morning
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 774402

## St ANDREW'S BOOKSHOP

Opening Hours: Monday – Saturday ☎ 01993 709429  
09.00 am – 5.00 pm

## CHURCH WEBSITE

For further information, please visit our website:

[www.witneycongregational.org.uk](http://www.witneycongregational.org.uk)



### Daily Prayer Time:

Mon-Fri 9.30 am

### Services

10.30 am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month and will normally be led by Rev Dr Jason Boyd unless advised below

#### Oct

1 <sup>st</sup>	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Evening Worship	Communion
7 <sup>th</sup>		Saturday Praise	11.00am
8 <sup>th</sup>	am	Morning Worship	
15 <sup>th</sup>	am	Morning Worship	Communion
22 <sup>nd</sup>	am	Karen Brusch	
29 <sup>th</sup>	am	Morning Worship	
29 <sup>th</sup>	pm	Madley Park Residential Home	3.00pm

#### Nov

4 <sup>th</sup>		Saturday Praise	11.00am
5 <sup>th</sup>	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Evening Worship	Communion
12 <sup>th</sup>	am	Morning Worship	9.45am
		Service at War Memorial	11.00am
		Civic Service at St Mary's church	11.30am
19 <sup>th</sup>	am	Morning Worship	Communion
26 <sup>th</sup>	am	Café Church	

#### Dec

2 <sup>nd</sup>		Saturday Praise	11.00am
3 <sup>rd</sup>	am	Morning Worship	

The following events are given for your particular attention:

#### Oct

3 <sup>rd</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
5 <sup>th</sup>	God of Surprises Bible Study	7.30pm
12 <sup>th</sup>	God of Surprises Bible Study	7.30pm
14 <sup>th</sup>	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am

#### Nov

2 <sup>nd</sup>	God of Surprises Bible Study	7.30pm
6 <sup>th</sup>	Thy Kingdom Come Planning Meeting	7.30pm
7 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
9 <sup>th</sup>	God of Surprises Bible Study	7.30pm
11 <sup>th</sup>	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am
16 <sup>th</sup>	God of Surprises Bible Study	7.30pm
23 <sup>rd</sup>	God of Surprises Bible Study	7.30pm
25 <sup>th</sup>	Creative Church	10.00am
26 <sup>th</sup>	Church Meeting	12.00pm
30 <sup>th</sup>	God of Surprises Bible Study	7.30pm

<b>Dec</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup>	Christian Aid Concert	7.30pm
2 <sup>nd</sup>	WICS Christmas Concert	7.30pm
3 <sup>rd</sup>	WICS Christmas Concert	6.30pm
5 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacons Meeting	7.30pm
7 <sup>th</sup>	God of Surprises Bible Study	7.30pm

## ROTAS

### WELCOMING TEAM

<b>Oct</b>	01	Beryl Cartwright & Lesley Barter
	08	Beryl & Pip Cartwright
	15	Lesley Barter & Irene St Clair
	22	Cecily Lau & Nanna Blackman
	29	Viviane Boyd & Jo Matthews
<b>Nov</b>	05	Viviane Boyd & Joan Currie
	12	Lesley Barter & Irene St Clair
	19	Judi Holloway
	26	Beryl Cartwright & Lesley Barter
<b>Dec</b>	03	Cecily Lau & Lesley Barter



### COMMUNION

<b>Oct</b>	01 pm	Beryl Cartwright	
		Preparation	Beryl Cartwright
	15 am	Cecily Lau & Beryl Cartwright	
		Lesley Barter & Viviane Boyd	
		Preparation	Cecily Lau
<b>Nov</b>	05 pm	Viviane Boyd	
		Preparation	Viviane Boyd
	19 am	Lesley Barter & Judi Holloway	
		Cecily Lau & Norline Martin	
		Preparation	Lesley Barter



### FLOWERS

<b>Oct</b>	01	Joan Currie
	08	Rita Hayes
	15	Val Obriain
	22	Beryl Cartwright
	29	Judi Holloway
<b>Nov</b>	05	Jacqui Powlesland
	12	Sonya Boyd
	19	Joan Currie
	26	Rita Hayes
<b>Dec</b>	03	Val Obriain



## SUNDAY COFFEE

<b>Oct</b>	01	Susan Wass & Judith Bungey
	08	Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley
	15	Claire Woodward & Susan Wass
	22	Sue Birdseye & Irene St Clair
<b>Nov</b>	29	Susan Wass & Judith Bungey
	5	Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley
	12	Claire Woodward & Susan Wass
	19	Sue Birdseye & Irene St Clair
	26	Café Church
<b>Dec</b>	03	Viviane Boyd & Hilary Pratley



## THURSDAY COFFEE

<b>Oct</b>	05	Beryl Cartwright
	12	Hilary Pratley
	19	Beryl Cartwright
	26	Hilary Pratley
<b>Nov</b>	02	Beryl Cartwright
	09	Hilary Pratley
	16	Beryl Cartwright
	23	Hilary Pratley
	30	Beryl Cartwright
<b>Dec</b>	07	Hilary Pratley



We would be extremely grateful for other people to joint the Thursday Coffee Rota

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

<b>Oct</b>	01	Naomi Boyd
	02	Gillian Warson
	08	Rita Hayes
	10	Susan Wass
	13	Luke Lau
	15	Chris Esapa
	17	Anthony Hathaway
	26	Karen Brusch Andy Thomas



<b>Nov</b>	11	Anneke Schunselaar
	17	Elaine Gundem
	18	AJ Hathaway
	19	Nanna Blackman
	22	Lincoln Squire (St Clair)
	26	Ellie Rose Esapa Elaine Kinchin Hilary Pratley
	27	Jeremy Boyd
	29	Marina Bowerman

**Dec** 04 Charlotte Hayes

## Accident

As my five-year-old son and I were heading to McDonald's one day, we passed a car accident. Usually when we see something terrible like that, we say a prayer for whoever might be hurt, so I pointed and said to my son, "We should pray." From the back seat I heard his earnest voice: "Dear God, please don't let those cars block the entrance to McDonald's."

## Pastor's Paper

"Where are you going for your holidays?" many asked me. "We're having a staycation this year." A holiday at home is a simple pleasure. In Scotland, our family could never have imagined this luxury because we lived in a manse next door to the church.

Though a welcome change, our staycation was not entirely by choice. Viviane's redundancy in April necessitated a tightening of the belt. It was an answer to prayer when Viviane received a temporary contract with Oxford University Press. She has since been successful in securing a full time position as a business administrator with OUP. Circumstances meant that she could not take a holiday. Also, Naomi and Sonya were working hard. So all in all, a staycation appeared to be a way of making the most of our time as a family.

"Why are you telling us all this, Jason?" I am sharing this because those three weeks were a gift. I was blest to be able to fully attend to being a dad. I was able to be there for the children without any interruption. It began with an attempt to put up the tent in the garden, only to discover that the garden was too small. The positive in this was inspecting the fabric and seeing that the tent was in good condition. Then there was illness followed by university excursions in Scotland. In the midst of it all, I managed to read *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The staycation was an opportunity to receive the gift of simply being at home.

Frances Young (2014), in her book *Arthur's Call*, wrote that "...you go on pilgrimage to find God at home, in the sacrament of the present moment, in the struggles as well as the smiles." She writes powerfully of her experience of being an academic and a mother of a child with profound

disability. Her wise words are on a stick-it note on my study window.

The gift of a 'staycation' is to be reminded that God is in the everyday of life. God is not somewhere else. God is not in the past or in the future. God is not in a different place from where we are. God is at home in this present moment.

Is it this idea that was behind the theme "Simpler and Deeper" identified by Suzanne Nockels as we explored LEAF (Listening, Engaging and Acting in Faith)? In the work that we did with Suzanne it became clear that we are an active church up for any challenge. We've got bags of energy to make ideas a reality. Our initial learning programme looked very busy indeed. Is "Simpler and Deeper" a call for us to find God in the sacrament of the present moment? Is it a call for us to be still and listen to what God is saying to us? Is it a call to Sabbath – a time of rest when we allow our congregational life to lie fallow in order to rejuvenate and burst into fresh life?

Because of changes with the Congregational Federation, Suzanne is no longer able to see through the LEAF programme. The good news is that I have met with Johnny O'Hanlon who is a mission support worker. He is keen to support us in continuing our journey exploring the theme "Simpler and Deeper".

This coincides with a conversation I had with Chris Bond, Pastor of Hope Community Church in Bristol. This is a young, vibrant church which began after the closure of Hope Congregational Church. Chris and his leadership team have been praying about ways to partner with other churches to share their experiences and to learn from other fellowships. He and I talked about the possibility of linking our congregations.

I don't know where all of this is leading. For the moment, there is a conversation that has to be arranged between Johnny, Chris and me. I could envisage that Johnny might facilitate a day in which the Hope leadership team might meet with our team of deacons to share, to pray, and to dream dreams.

I don't know precisely what "Simpler and Deeper" means for us as a church. I am sure that it is something to do with attending to our relationship with Jesus Christ. "Simpler and Deeper" has to do with our individual and corporate life of prayer. It is only in prayer as we seek God with our whole being that every moment of life becomes a sacred moment.

In Matthew 13: 44-46, Jesus tells two parables about the kingdom of heaven. The first is of someone who sold everything he had to buy a field which has treasure hidden in it. The second, is of a person who discovers a priceless pearl and who sells all to buy it.

I would like to invite you to join me in a treasure hunt, to go "Simpler and Deeper". Over the next few weeks through into 2018, I will be offering the opportunity to encounter the *God of Surprises*. This journey will be based on the book with this title and written by Gerard Hughes. Beginning on Thursday, 5 October, at 7:30 pm, we will join in prayer and reading the Bible as we search for the treasure of grace that God has given to each one of us. The dates for all the sessions are:

5, 12 October

2, 9, 16, 23, 30 November

7, 14 December

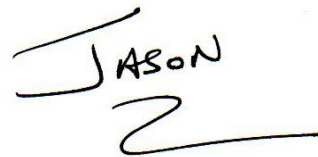
4, 11, 18 January

I have ordered six copies of the book and will order more if necessary. This series will demand commitment to read the book and to complete the exercises. It will also mean a daily commitment to prayer.

Please come to the first session to see if it is for you.

Lord, as leaves colour and fall leaving bare branches in the long wait for spring, so strip us back and make us ready for new growth. Open our eyes to your presence in this moment so that we may revel in your holiness and serve you for the sake of your glory. We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Shalom

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JASON" with a stylized flourish underneath.

The following article, submitted by Susan Wass, was taken from Florence Smith's book of poems and prayers, and is entitled:

### **Why must ...**

Why must we go to school today? said Simon to his mum

I'd rather play with all my toys then lie down in the sun

Why must I go to work today? Said Harry to his mum

I've finished school and need more time to have a little fun

We work to pay for food and shelter to keep our families safe and warm

We give them individual love and hope they will be free from harm

Why must I go to church today? Said Andy to his mum

I get so bored with all that talk and feel so tired and glum

We go to church to thank our God and praise him for eternal love

That we may see and hear and sing his blessings shared with heaven above

So give yourself complete to God with assurance which feels good

We receive so many privileges that giving thanks is what we should



# PRAYER LETTER

## No 181

### Celebrations

Why do we celebrate? To make us feel happy. To say thank you for something special that has happened.

What do we celebrate? Certain public occasions/events, family birthdays, anniversaries, achievements

When do we celebrate? Annually, significant years, e.g. 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday, silver, ruby, golden, diamond wedding anniversaries

How do we celebrate? Have a party, 'a get together', to eat a special meal or feast, visit a special place, have a holiday

The Jewish and Christian Faiths have their Festivals at certain times every year based on Biblical evidence. As Christians we celebrate Christmas when Jesus was born, Easter Sunday when Jesus rose from the dead and Pentecost when the Disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit.

In secular society we celebrate certain events and anniversaries or remembering certain people who have achieved something for themselves or for society or their own community.

We know that when Jesus was 12 years old he travelled with his parents from Nazareth to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of the Passover celebrating God delivering the Jews from Pharaoh and slavery hundreds of years before. This was and still is today a tremendous celebratory occasion. This journey to Jerusalem was a very significant occasion for Jesus because at the age of 12 boys began preparing to take their places in the religious community the following year.

We know that Jesus was invited to a wedding feast with his mother and his friends where he performed his first miracle. Wedding celebrations at that time went on for a week! There must have been much merriment, dancing, singing and drinking as the wine had run out! To fail in proper hospitality was a serious offence in their culture so no wonder Jesus' mother asked him to do something so the party could continue. This is where Jesus told the servants to fill the jars with water and take it to the master of the banquet so he could taste the water which had now turned into the finest wine. This 'first sign' of Jesus revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him. We assume the merriment continued.

Some of the Psalms are full of joys of celebration praising God for his greatness. Read Psalm 150  
Where God should be praised? In his sanctuary, in the mighty heavens and the universe.

Why should God be praised? For his acts of power in creation and redemption.

How should God be praised? With the whole orchestra, wind, string and percussion instruments with dancing too.

Who should praise God? Everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Pip and I have been blessed this year by attending Finn and Sam's wedding, our daughter's silver wedding, my sister's golden wedding, David and Elaine's ruby wedding, two grandchildren's 18<sup>th</sup> Birthdays and our Grandson's graduation, all very joyous occasions celebrating the achievements of those we love. We thank God for these events that give opportunity to rejoice with family and friends. We have also been blessed by celebrating the lives of Iris Lindsay, Jean Howell and Ken and Marjorie Lee and their Christian witness to our fellowship and community.

Each day should be a time to celebrate, giving thanks to God for a new day and new opportunities. Thanking God for the 'small things' we can celebrate.

Every Blessing

Beryl

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



## Bible Study

In this edition, and with permission from Ken & Marjorie Lee's family, and in memoriam to Rev Ken Lee, a series of Bible Studies, written by Ken and first submitted back in 1999, will be re-produced and is entitled:

### MEANDERING IN MARK

*"Meander" means "To wander deviously or aimlessly". Perchance this is not too accurate a description of these studies; it is hoped that they are not too devious nor totally aimless. However, the term "meander" is used to indicate an approach which takes its time, stops as needful to let a thought, an idea, an insight develop - all with the purpose of seeing what the Lord has to say to his people. May He speak, and to Him be the glory.*

#### 1. Mark 1:1-8

Shortest of the four Biblical Gospel accounts of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, first to be written - so the scholars say - "Mark" presents us with many interesting challenges as we meander through the author's pages. Who is the author? No one knows for sure. Tradition points to the Apostle Peter's "son" of whom he speaks in I Peter 5:13. Sometimes this Mark is identified with John Mark referred to in Acts 12:12 & 25 and in Acts 15:37-39, or else with the Mark referred to in several of the New Testament letters. It may be that all the "Marks" referred to in the New Testament are one and the same person, or it may be that they are quite distinct people, none of whom had anything to do with writing the Gospel account. Perhaps it does not greatly matter who the writer is, or even when he wrote his account: surely what does matter is what he had to say to those for whom he wrote, and what he, through

the guidance of the Holy Spirit, yet has to say to us today.

Mark writes about Good News, or Gospel.

Right at the beginning of his work he insists that his message is one of good news. But for whom is it "good news"? Does not whether news is good or not depend a great deal upon who you are and what change that news may make in your life? Obviously for Mark, that which he was writing was "good news" for he wrote as one who accepted that Jesus Christ is Lord. But for those who do not accept the Lordship of Christ, could there be the possibility that the news Mark had to tell might not be good? Surely this is something to be borne in mind as we explore that which he wrote, the possibility that not everyone will find this news to be "good". For Mark the news is good, for it is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

What a wealth of meaning there is contained in those few words. The good news is not concerning any Jesus; it is concerning a particular Jesus, one who is Christ. There were many Jesus's in Mark's day, and there have been many since, but there was and is only One Jesus Christ. It is this to which Mark testifies that this Jesus, of whom he writes, is the Christ, the long awaited Redeemer of God's people, the Messiah. It is Mark's belief that this is a fact which, for him, makes the news which he has to share, Good News. And it is because they are convinced that this Jesus is Christ that those who follow him, those who accept him as Lord, are known as Christians, not as Jesus-People. That name of Christian was first given to the followers of this Way at Antioch - given not by themselves, but by unbelievers who heard them proclaim the Christ. Mark's writing is about Christ, Christ whom he also proclaims as Son of God.

"Son of God" - what an intriguing title! Just what can it mean? Perchance it is used as in II Samuel 7:14 where Nathan the prophet is told to say, in God's Name, to David, "I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me." This is usage which the Psalmist takes up in Psalm 2:7b where he speaks of the Lord saying to him, "You are my son; today I have begotten you." Maybe however Mark uses this as an individualisation of the word to the people of Israel given in Hosea 11:1; "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Or it could be so much more, it could be an expression of the identity of being between father and son, such that it was held that when a man died, his life, his very being continued in that of his son. If the meaning be something like this, then Mark claims for this Jesus Christ the very identity in nature and being of God himself.

All this so far from the first verse, and as yet we have not looked at the opening words; "The beginning of". What is this "beginning"? Could Mark be referring to all that which he writes, the whole of his Gospel? I find that a very challenging thought, for if the whole of what he writes is but the beginning, there is much more to follow of this Good News of Jesus Christ. And indeed there is! For this Good News has gone on and on for nigh on 2000 years and is to be found breaking out again and again in the life and witness of Christians throughout the ages right down to our day. You and I are called to be part of the "continuing" of the Good News of Jesus Christ. What a challenge and what a privilege!

We could however see this word "beginning" as referring to the coming of John the Baptist which Mark records in the verses which follow. The beginning of the Good News came with a call to

repentance and the promise of the forgiveness of sins. People responded to this - lots and lots of them. They came to John confessing their sins and symbolically washing them away in the River Jordan. John spoke and looked like one of the old-time prophets from back in the days, "the good old days", when God actually seemed to be around and doing things. Their ancestors had told these people of how it used to be, so much more wonderful than now, back in those days of the great prophets like Elijah or Jeremiah - people who spoke with power and did strange symbolic actions, who confronted kings and rulers and told them just what God demanded should be done.

Nothing like that had happened for years and years and years - but now, with John, it looked as though the good old days might be coming again. John, however, does not look back to the glories of the past, nor does he claim much power or authority for himself. John presents a forward looking challenge, a challenge to be prepared for the mightier One who is coming, who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Something new is in the offing; something or rather someone who is going to change the world for ever. John proclaims this as a new beginning.

And yet, this beginning goes back, back into the prophets who had proclaimed the need to prepare the "Way of the Lord". Mark makes the second and third verse of his writing a compilation from the prophets Malachi and Deutero-Isaiah with a reminder from Exodus 23:20 of the promise of the Lord to lead his people into the new land, the Promised Land. Surely here Mark is testifying that the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ is rooted in the age-old care of God for his people, for all humanity. The beginning is and always has been in the eternal purposes of God who continues throughout the ages to lead his people on

to that which is his good will for them. Now Mark sees this purpose of God developing in greater richness in the life and being of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

When was "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"? In one sense the beginning was long ago in God's preparation and care in building up a people to whom and among whom Jesus Christ could come to dwell. In second sense the beginning came anew with the coming of Jesus Christ as a man among fellow humans; while in yet a third sense the beginning comes anew today for you and for me as we turn to our God, the God we meet in Jesus Christ and in whom we can begin anew. Can there be a more important beginning than this, to confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord"? This is to know that the news, which Mark declares, is Good News.



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

## **God's Story-teller**

I can always remember the date of St Luke's Day (18<sup>th</sup> October) because my younger son was born that day, and so we gave him 'Luke' as his middle name. In any case, I admit he is my favourite of the four Evangelists. I think that's largely because, as a writer, I admire his outstanding skills, but I also warm to the glorious inclusivity of his gospel. Luke has more women in his story (many more), and they're not just doing the cooking. He

has more Gentiles, more sinners, more outcasts from society.

His picture of Jesus is emphatically universal. Matthew's Gospel starts with Abraham, the father of Israel. Luke's story begins with Adam, the father of the entire human race (3:18). Luke is also a master story-teller. I don't believe there is a better story better told in the whole of world literature than his account of the so-called 'Prodigal Son' (Luke 16:11-17). Some years ago, I was asked to provide a 'reflection' for a conference of chaplains at Young Offenders' Institutions. I duly turned up with a prepared presentation, only to find (which no one had told me) that the chaplains weren't all Christian. There were one Jewish and two Muslim chaplains, and my prepared piece would be inappropriate. With no time to prepare an alternative, I decided to go in at the deep end. I simply read them that story. When I finished, I invited any reactions. A Muslim chaplain was first to speak. 'That is a very beautiful and moving story', he said, 'I've never heard it before.' There then followed a wonderful discussion, rooted in the biblical story, about sin and forgiveness, family complications, accepting offenders despite their past and, of course, the role of God as a 'Father' whose heart's desire is that we come to Him. It was an hour I shall never forget, and I drove home thanking God, and blessed St Luke, too.

## **Too late**

When I asked my friend if she was planning to attend church, she just shook her head. "I haven't gone in a long time," she said. "Besides, it's too late for me. I've probably already broken all seven commandments."

## **In Memory of**

**KEN LEE**

**20/10/28 – 23/07/17**

Dear Friends

Many of you know that Ken Lee is now buried in a natural burial site surrounded by oaks, beech and sycamores. Jason led our worship at the graveside and later at the Thanksgiving Service

This was a glorious time of remembrance and appreciation, wonderfully led by Jason. There was so much to thank God for and the family were amazed at the number of people who attended, and who, in Ken's words 'made a joyful noise unto the Lord'

We thank everyone who attended, or who has written or spoken their thoughts to us

Marjorie & Frances Lee

**MARJORIE LEE**

**01/06/29 – 05/09/17**

Since the above entry was written Marjorie has also died, joining Ken and the many friends who have gone before them to what to us are the mysteries of eternity. Her body is now laid alongside Ken's in the natural burial ground and many of you will have joined her family on 22<sup>nd</sup> September in celebrating her life.

Ken and Marjorie's family would like to express their thanks to the church for all the love and care you have given to our parents over the years and the fellowship you have shared with them. You have truly been their Christian family.

**Congratulations** to Finn Obriain & Sam Burgum on their Wedding – 9<sup>th</sup> September



Thank you so much to everyone for all their support over the years; we had a wonderful day and hope everyone who came along enjoyed it as much as we did

A special thank you to Jason, Judi and Terry for all their hard work

Finn & Sam

The following is the first in a series of 5 Sermons submitted Rev Dr Jason Boyd:

## **1. Holiness in Exile**

1 Peter 1:17-23

Exile is not a choice. People are moved from the place called home and made to live in a place that does not belong to them. Unfamiliar surroundings, a strange language, alien customs, and unusual food disorient. Add to this that the exile is easily identified as being a minority.

Being an exile is not like being a traveller who sets out to discover new lands and exotic ways. Being an exile is not like those who sell up and move to an exotic country to take up work or engage in education. Being an exile is not setting out on an adventure.

This letter is written to exiles. We do not know who the first hearers of this letter were, except that they were scattered all over what is now modern day Turkey. It is likely that it was written both to Jews and non-Jews who followed Jesus Christ and proclaimed his resurrection. Because they believed in the risen Jesus Christ they were suffering. They were a minority scattered by persecution. They were on the run from those who wanted to destroy this sect.

Can you imagine what it is like for those Syrian families who have come to live in Witney? In a short space of time, the prosperity and stability of Syria was torn apart by violence. In a search for safety people were forced into exile making costly and dangerous journeys. Learning a language, finding a job, and being able to establish friendships in a strange country must be overwhelming. There will be homesickness for the familiarity of the old way of life, the familiar streets, shops and networks of family and friends. There will be grief over all that has been lost. These

families will have close bonds because they are exiles having found asylum.

The exiles who received this letter were encouraged to enjoy the close family ties that they have as children of God the Father. Though they were in a minority; though they were suffering for their faith in Jesus Christ; they were being reminded that they had been given a new birth into the family of God. The God whom they call Father is the same God who raised Jesus from the dead. This God has given them a living hope because they have been born through the word of God. This is not a human conception through the joining of a sperm and an egg. This is a divine conception through the word of God that endures.

The exiles are the family of God brought into being by grace. The word of God spoken through the prophets long ago was of grace. This salvation did not come onto the scene by surprise. It is rooted in the prophets who searched out the scriptures with the help of the Spirit of Christ within them (1:10-11). The prophets peered into the future and glimpsed the coming sufferings and glory of Christ. The prophets and preachers of the good news have done so by the heaven sent Holy Spirit, revealing things that angels wish they could lay their eyes upon. The salvation announced as good news demands a life of holiness. We are called to be holy as God who calls us is holy.

This call to holiness is rooted in the reality that we call him Father. If we address him as Father then we are to know that he is the impartial judge of peoples' deeds. By calling him Father we are entering into a special relationship with this righteous judge and, as such, every action of our lives arises out of reverent fear. The recipients of this letter are being called to

holy fear in the time of their exile. They are to live exemplary lives as aliens. The writer recalls how they were ransomed – bought back and set free from their captivity to the futile ways of their ancestors. Was the writer thinking of the futility of the Law of Moses? Or was he thinking of the idolatry and philosophies of the non-Jewish converts to Jesus Christ? Perhaps he had both in mind.

Whatever the 'futile ways inherited from your ancestors' they had been set free through God the Father giving Christ as a ransom. In the ancient world, slaves and captives could be set free through a payment of money. The ransom God gave was not paid in silver or gold but with the precious life blood of Christ who was like the unblemished, perfect lamb. Christ was chosen to set us free from our slavery and captivity to sin before the very beginning of the creation of the world. This unseen plan was not made plain until the end of the ages. The end of the ages was, for one who wrote this letter and those who received it, was their 'now'. They saw themselves as living in the end times.

It is through this destined Christ from before the very beginning of the creation that we have come to trust in God. What kind of God do we trust in? He is the God who raised Christ from the dead and gave him glory. It is through this same Christ who was raised from the dead by God that we now fix our faith and hope on God. Do we trust in God? Is our faith and hope in God alone?

The first hearers of this letter have purified themselves through obedience to the truth. Obedience to the truth is demonstrated in genuine love for sisters and brothers. They are urged to deepen that love from the heart. They have been born anew – born again – not from mortal

human sperm but from an undying seed, the living and enduring word of God.

In our own time, how does this letter to exiles speak to us? What does it mean for us to call God Father? What does it mean for us to trust in God who raised Jesus from the dead? What difference does grace make to our lives and how is it possible to be holy as God is holy?

The key is to realise that holiness in this letter is not adherence to a set of rules and regulations. First and foremost, holiness is a response to grace. Those who have received salvation through grace live their lives differently. Receiving God's grace brings us into relationship with the one we call Father. The one we call Father is the one who raised Jesus from the dead. The one we call Father paid for our freedom with the perfect, unblemished blood of Jesus. He gave the best he had to set us free. This is a freedom to live our lives in reverent fear of the one who is holy and who calls us to be holy.

What is holiness? Holiness is love: to love one another genuinely; to love one another without regard for class distinctions; to love one another deeply and intensely. Holiness begins with our new birth through the word of God and flourishes as we trust in God with our whole being.

What does this lifestyle of holiness – of mutual love – look like? For Cleopas the other disciple, it meant welcoming a stranger into their conversation and into their home. It meant inviting the stranger to break bread and in the breaking of bread to have their eyes opened to the risen Jesus.

For the early church wider society took notice of the followers of Jesus because they ate together and shared everything in common. They looked after one another in a way that was eye catching

and left people wondering what was going on. Society looked at the early church and saw love in action.

Do people see us loving one another? Do we eat together? Do we look out for one another's needs? Do people see that we are holy people – a loving folk? How does our mutual loving make a difference to our community – to our street, our town, our country? How does our mutual loving affect the way we see the stranger – the foreigner – the alien? How does our mutual loving affect our purchases – our vote – our behaviour with family and friends?

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

## **THE WAY I SEE IT:**

### **Well, why *Do* the Nations?**

'Why do the nations so furiously rage together?' we used to sing from Psalm 2. We've just had a summer of international discontent, war-like words shouted across the oceans, accompanied by blood-curdling threats of fire and fury 'such as the world has never seen'. So the question is eternally relevant: Why *do* nations threaten, rage and conspire? What is it in human nature that makes people who would actually prefer to live in peace act in warlike ways? The psalm, having posed the question, offers us an answer, but it is in the context of Israel 3000 years ago rather than the present world. The nations were conspiring against God's chosen nation, so watch out!

The truth is that fear of 'the other' usually lies behind national anger and threats. We do not trust those strange people over there, so we will conspire or rage to stop their supposed threat to us. Fear and ignorance generally lie behind international disputes, just as they often do in domestic or personal ones. Reverence for God ('fear' of him) is the psalmist's answer, and probably those who truly believe that 'our times are in his hand' will find it easier to replace fear and anger with prayer and trust.

That's not a diplomatic or political answer to a real military threat, of course. But perhaps understanding other people's fears may help us to find a solution to our own.

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The following article has been written, and submitted, by Lesley Barter, and is entitled:

## **Finding Time**

My daughter was taking part in a public speaking competition recently and one of the challenges was to speak for five minutes on a subject picked from a short list with very short preparation time. Her choice was 'I don't have time for this' – a subject which resonated immediately with me.

Each new day presents me with its own 'To Do' list and it always appears to be a race against time to fit it all in. The temptation is to tackle the easier or smaller challenges first. This has the advantage of making you feel better about having achieved something, even if it means that the 'Too Difficult' tasks are the ones that get re-cycled for another time!. Daughter number two helped me with this problem when she told me to view the tasks as stones, small and large,

which had to be fitted into a bucket. Instead of filling my bucket with the little ones first, thereby leaving too little room for the large ones, it is better to put in the big ones and fit the small ones round the edge! This logic is undeniable, but tough to act upon!!

I was reminded about 'I don't have time for this' in the context of a daily prayer time. I go through phases of building it into my daily routine when life is a little less hectic, or when I am on holiday, but when the pressure is on, it gets pushed down the list of priorities. In fact, this is the very time when it should rise to the top of the list. And I know that. Half an hour of reflection, a bible text and prayer so often only surface when I get into bed at night, and even if I manage to stay awake, I am not in the right place mentally. Those days when I 'Greet the Day with God' and prepare myself quietly for whatever life is going to throw at me are the days when I achieve most and feel most at peace. God is present with us whether or not we are aware of it – but if we ignored the presence of any other loving friend we would be missing the benefit of their support. Leave Him out of your life and the only one to lose out is you. We know all this, but we get distracted.

My daughter ended her presentation with this thought and it certainly focuses the attention: when we say 'I don't have time for this' what we are really saying is 'This is not important to me'. We can't say that about prayer if we are to call ourselves Christians.



The following article has been submitted by Elaine Kinchin, and is entitled:

## Recycling

I'm sure many of us came away from our Cafe church service on Sunday 3rd September determined to do *something* or *more* than we already do. One of my main questions is: what *exactly* can I recycle? Many food packaging containers tell us what to do with them when the food has gone. This is helpful if they say: widely recycled. But some read: see local recycling or not yet able to be recycled. So I went on our local council website <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/residents/bins-recycling/a-z-of-waste-and-recycling/> to find out some facts about those objects in the 'grey area'

Things that **MUST** go into your grey, household rubbish bin:

Crisp packets, feathers, frozen food bags, glow sticks, J cloths, paint (mixed in its tin with sand), photographs and negatives, make-up and baby wipes, razor blades, Pringles tubes, rubber gloves, tissue paper, paper or card with glitter on, tissue paper, polystyrene, sweet wrappers, CD, DVD and video cases, drinking straws, smoke alarms.

If you have a compost bin or heap in your garden, these items can either go into your compost or your grey bin: hair, tissues, lint from the tumble drier, string (unless nylon), the contents of your vacuum cleaner bag.

Labels do **NOT** need to be removed from cans or glass jars. It used to be just plastic bottles that could be recycled. Now West Oxon take "flyaway plastic" too. This means:

carrier bags, polythene, small clear food packaging, bubble wrap and cling film. These should be placed in a plastic bag (carrier bag or similar) in your black recycling box.



Three things I found surprising: small quantities of kitchen towel CAN be placed in your food compost box. Mobile phones can be put into your black kerbside box (from October your blue-lidded wheelie bin). Shoes can also be recycled rather than dumped!

One last warning: all unused medicines and tablets should be taken to a pharmacy for proper disposal - do not flush them down the loo nor put in the rubbish bin.

### **REDUCE REUSE RECYCLE**

As we discussed on September 3rd: recycling is the third word in the original slogan. First we should reduce what we buy - especially food that we will waste. 3 for 2 or bogof - buy one get one free, is NOT a bargain if you are just going to throw it away a few days later. Then we should reuse - we were almost unanimous in using our own bags at supermarkets. We perhaps need to remember them when we shop elsewhere too! But other things can be reused: clothes and books and household items to charity shops. Reuse does not just mean by us. And recycling is the last resort.

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The following article submitted by Susan Wass, was taken from Florence Smith's book of poems and prayers, and is entitled:

### **Looking at life**

Our eyes have seen so many things  
surrounding us each day  
Happy laughing children excitedly at play  
A tiny village garden, well-filled with  
various flowers  
Which loving hands have tended, where  
folk can sit for hours

To remind us of bygone days when life  
was still serene  
Or sigh a little with regret of things which  
might have been

Our eyes have seen the freshness of dew  
upon the grass  
The wonder of a new-born foal as through  
the gate we pass  
Into golden cornfields which blend with  
azure sky  
Enjoying every moment, not asking how  
or why  
Listening to the silence as birds fly high  
above  
Freed from any bondage in expression of  
God's love

But we did not see the stable, or hear the  
Angels joy  
Or looked upon the mother as she cradled  
her small boy  
We never saw the anguish or listened to  
her plea  
As her loving son was crucified and died  
on Calvary  
It started with a babe so small that joyful  
Christmas day  
Perhaps we should remember when we  
kneel tonight to pray

### **Sticks**

Long ago when men cursed and beat the  
ground with sticks, it was called witchcraft  
- Today, its called golf.

### **The glass**

To the optimist, the glass is half full. To  
the pessimist, the glass is half empty. To  
the engineer, the glass is twice as big as it  
needs to be.