

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

MINISTER

Rev Dr Jason Boyd

ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Rev Judi Holloway

WORSHIP

Daily Worship	9.30am	Mon-Fri	Short time of Prayer and Reading
Saturday Praise	11.00am	1 st & 3 rd	Saturday of the month
Sunday Services	10.30am		
	6.00pm	1 st	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	Light Bite Piece of the Word (1 st Tuesday of each month)
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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

Tuesday	7.30pm	Monthly Deacon's Meeting
Thursday	10.00 am	Weekly Coffee Morning
Saturday	10.00 am	Weekly Coffee Morning
Sunday	12.00 noon	Bi-Monthly Church Meeting

SUNDAY LINK

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

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

MAGAZINE EDITOR

Terry Powlesland

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Further information can be obtained from the Church Office: 01993 709 992



Doesn't time fly as this is the 3rd Edition for this year, and as you read this Summer Edition the schools have just finished half-term; which means that holiday time is nearly with us again, and, even though some cannot bear the heat, the increasing good weather has to be encouraging for most of us. Whatever your circumstances, hopefully it will be a chance for most people to take a break of some kind. Additionally, for those who are interested in sport, especially tennis and cricket, as Wimbledon & the World Cup will soon be upon us.

Just a note - As this is a 3-monthly edition, and you are on any of the Rotas, you will need to make a note in your diary when you are on!!

I still feel it is an important publication for Church life, and is produced to impart God's glory via various articles, and to give notification of Church activities, concerns and news. However, please remember that the magazine belongs to YOU, and without YOUR contributions there would be no magazine!

So, on that note, I now turn to this month's contents: Pip Cartwright continues in the short history to our Church, which was first published in this magazine in 2006; Lesley Barter tells us what she has learnt; Judi Holloway pictorially shows us the recent Story Telling; Canon David Winter writes about Whitsun; there is an article on Colonel Sanders (Kentucky Fried Chicken) and there is the continuation of Ken Lee's Bible Study, to name but a few

Many thanks for those who have contributed for this edition, but would encourage anyone to consider submitting article(s) for the next edition by either:

E-mail:

terrypowlesland@uwclub.net

jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net

or, just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up

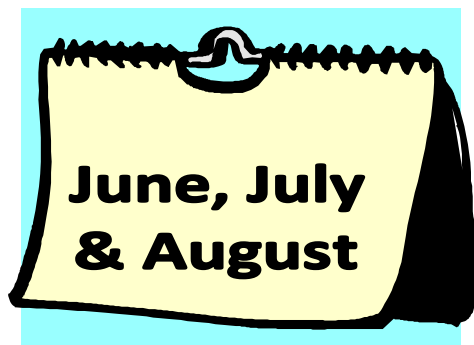
The next 3-monthly Autumn edition, covering September, October & November, is due on **Sunday 1st September**

Your Editor



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19. Pusey House & Col Sanders



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

June

2 nd	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
	pm	CTiW Thy Kingdom Come Worship	Rev Judi Holloway
8 th		Creative Church	10.00 – 12.00
		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
9 th	am	Cafe Church	
15 th		Saturday Praise – Reflective	11.00am
16 th	am	Morning Worship	Communion
23 rd	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
30 th	am	Morning Worship	
		Madley Park Residential Home	3.00pm

July

6 th		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
7 th	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Evening Worship	Communion
14 th	am	Morning Worship	
20 th		Saturday Praise – Reflective	11.00am
21 st	am	Morning Worship	Communion
28 th	am	Morning Worship	

Aug

3 rd		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
4 th	am	Morning Worship	
	pm	Evening Worship	Communion
11 th	am	Morning Worship	
17 th		Saturday Praise – Reflective	11.00am
18 th	am	Morning Worship	Communion
25 th	am	Morning Worship	

Sept

1 st	am	tba	
	pm	tba	Communion
7 th		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am

The following events are given for your particular attention:

May

30th – 8th June Thy Kingdom Come – Experience Pentecost stations - See Flier

June

3 rd	CTiW AGM	7.30pm	St Mary's Church Green
4 th	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm	
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm	
6 th	Movie Evening – A room with a view	6.30pm	
15 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am	

22 nd	Witney Book Circle	10.45am
	WICS Concert – Only Believe	7.30pm
23 rd	WICS Concert – Only Believe	6.30pm
28 th	Christian Aid Concert	7.00pm
July		
2 nd	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
13 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am
	Jason's Leaving Event	3.00pm
27 th	Witney Book Circle	10.45am
28 th	Church meeting	12.00pm
Aug		
6 th	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
10 th	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am
25 th	Jason's Farewell Lunch	After morning Service
Sept		
3 rd	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm

Rotas

WELCOMING TEAM

June	02	Lesley
	09	Lesley & Susan
	16	Viviane & Irene
	23	Viviane & Nanna
	30	Beryl & Joan
July	07	Beryl & Pat B
	14	Lesley
	21	Lesley & Susan
	28	Viviane & Naomi
Aug	04	Viviane & Sonya
	11	Lesley & Nanna
	18	Lesley & Joan
	25	Beryl & Irene
Sept	01	Beryl & Pat B



COMMUNION

June	16 am	Viviane & Lesley	
		Judi & Beryl	
		Preparation	Rita
July	07 pm	Beryl	
		Preparation	Beryl
	21 am	Lesley & Beryl	
Aug		Judi & Viviane	
		Preparation	Irene
	04 pm	Viviane	
		Preparation	Viviane
	18 am	Lesley & Viviane	
		Cecily	
		Preparation	Rita



Sept	01 pm	Beryl Preparation	Beryl
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FLOWERS

June	02	Beryl
	09	Jacqui
	16	Joan
	23	Rita
	30	Pat
July	07	Judi
	14	Val
	21	Beryl
	28	Jacqui
Aug	04	Joan
	11	Rita
	18	Pat
	25	Judi
Sept	01	Val
	08	Beryl



SUNDAY COFFEE

June	02	Sue, Hilary & Judith
	09	Cafe Church
	16	Pat S & Pat B
	23	Susan & Viviane
	30	Sue & Claire
July	07	Viviane & Hilary
	14	Pat S & Pat B
	21	Susan, Sue & Judith
	28	Viviane & Claire
Aug	04	Sue & Hilary
	11	Pat S, Viviane & Judith
	18	Susan & Sue
	25	Church Lunch
Sept	01	Sue & Hilary



THURSDAY COFFEE

June	06	Hilary
	13	Pat S
	20	Beryl
	27	Hilary
July	04	Pat S
	11	Beryl
	18	Hilary
	25	Pat S
Aug	01	Beryl
	08	Pat B
	15	Hilary
	22	Beryl
Sept	29	Pat S
	05	Hilary



Reserve – Pat B

We would be extremely grateful for other people to join

SOUND SYSTEM

June	02	Terry
	09	Jonathan
	16	Terry
	23	Jonathan and/or Baz
July	07	Terry
	14	Nanna
	21	Viviane
	28	Cecily
Aug	04	Terry
	11	Cecily
	18	Terry
	25	Nanna
Sept	01	Terry
	08	Cecily



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

June	07	Matthew
	14	Norline
	16	Sandi
	19	Jonathan
	24	Janet
	26	Viviane
		Barbara
		Val
	28	Maureen
	30	Jacqui
Aug	02	Janet
	06	Declan



July	05	Bob
	25	Harry
		Oscar
	26	John B
		Jennie
	28	Michael
Sept	30	Irene
	31	Jason
	01	Theo
	02	Claire
		Gail



Money collected £239.00 of which £189.00 is gift aided

Pastor's Paper

Several false starts have been made in writing my final letter to you. My reluctance arises from deep dread of saying goodbye and following God's lead into the unknown. In the knowledge that I have to commit words to the page, I have searched for inspiration and finally found clues in my filing cabinet and a conversation I had today.

The conversation began with the question, 'What does "pastor" mean?' Pastor is Latin for 'shepherd'. My preference for 'pastor' is rooted in the Canadian Protestant culture that the minister of a church is addressed as 'pastor' rather than 'reverend' or 'minister'. Some may even refer to the pastor as 'parson'. The church-owned house that the pastor lived in was called the Parsonage rather than the Manse.

Soon after I began my ministry in the UK it became clear that the word 'pastor' was somehow a second class designation compared to 'minister' (particularly in Scotland). The perception was that a pastor was not as theologically trained as a minister. Nonetheless, if I had to choose between reverend, minister or pastor, I would choose pastor, even though I've had to compromise for cultural considerations.

This conversation about the meaning of pastor takes us to my filing cabinet. I open the bottom drawer in search of the file that contains the service sheets of my ordination and induction services. Flicking through the dividers I found traces of history reminding me of 25 years of pastoral ministry: Heaton Mersey in Stockport, Cumnock and Witney. I was taken back even further in time to the 4 years I spent in my student pastorate. I opened the envelope and it contained hand written notes from my flock. As I read each one the memories flooded back. I thought of all the people who have loved me, prayed for me, and encouraged and supported me. I have been utterly privileged to serve and, over time, to learn to be served.

One of the cards in that envelope was from my family after I graduated from Bible College and was preparing to come to Manchester. My mom always gets the cards and the words are carefully

chosen. Now that I am a parent and realising the bittersweet joy of a nest that is emptying, these words chosen by Mom mean more than ever:

A Graduate's Prayer

Lord, thank you for this special time to celebrate the ending of one of life's chapters and the beginning of another. Guide my steps carefully and guard my heart that I might see your wisdom and your hand in every situation. Help me see you first above all other desires. Take my light and multiply it that others may see your face and embrace your love too.

God has been generous in his grace. And oh how I long for him to deepen my desire and love for him more and more. I know that my love is small and I am deeply aware that I am flawed. Surprisingly, God by his grace manages to use me in spite of me.

Pope Francis offered words for 'Thy Kingdom Come'. He said that we need to pray, 'Come Holy Spirit.' He spoke of how the human heart grows smaller and smaller. Our only hope is to pray for the Holy Spirit to come for it is the Spirit that opens up our hearts with the generous, giving, grace of God.

There is one hymn that is common to my ordination and inductions. I did not realise this until I looked through the service sheets. It is a prayer for the Holy Spirit to come:

O Breath of life, come sweeping through us,
Revive thy Church with life and power;
O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,
And fit thy Church to meet this hour.

O Wind of God, come bend us, break us,
Till humbly we confess our need;
Then in thy tenderness remake us,
Revive, restore; for this we plead.

O Breath of love, come breathe within us,
Renewing thought and will and heart:
Come, Love of Christ, afresh to win us,
Revive thy Church in every part.

Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
While harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,
Equip thy Church to spread the light.

Without the help of the Holy Spirit, being a pastor of a congregation is not possible and without the Holy Spirit a congregation cannot be effective in her mission. At my ordination in 1997, I was asked by the General Secretary, Graham Adams, 'Jesus challenged his disciples to leave self behind, to take up their cross, and to follow after him. Are you determined to walk this path even though you do not know where it leads?' My response was 'I am.' Now, if I had it to do it over again, I would change my reply and add, 'With God's help, I am.'

At the end of the summer we will pack up our belongings and move to Cheltenham where I will become the pastor of the congregation there. It is going to be hard to go but I know that God is leading me on to take this congregation forward in its journey.

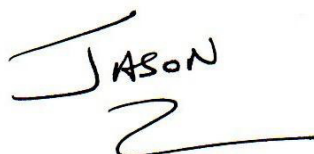
I would like to thank you for 10½ years of partnership. On that wintry night in December 2008, when we turned into Pensclose, our family was enveloped in the warmth of your love. There are so many wonderful memories of BBQs and camping in the church garden; of rambles and Church Away Weekends; of pancake breakfasts and Harvest Lunches; of Beetle Drives and Christian Aid Quizzes; of Lyfe Groups and Lite Bite Lunches; of many pastoral visits; lots of laughter and many tears; of falling out and falling back in; and most of all our worship together. We have celebrated and wept together at weddings and funerals. I am proud of your risk-taking as we welcomed the Muslim community and the continuing opportunity for relationship building.

There is also the enormous achievement of collaborating together in exploring preaching through the Word Café. 'The Naked Preacher' tells the story of a moment in the life of this church that is, even now, inspiring church leaders and their congregations.

Even as I write this piece, we are in the middle of an Arts Exhibition. The church has been busy all week with art on display and music and crafts being made. There has been coffee and cake (and tea too!) and a lot of listening and laughter. There is so much that it is impossible to recount it all. Thank you and thanks be to God!

So my final words to you. Hold fast to Jesus Christ. Pray 'Come, Holy Spirit! Come!' Listen to what God is saying. Be immersed in the scripture. Listen to one another carefully. Be tolerant. Be more than tolerant: be generous. My prayer is that you will be open and attentive and ready to receive the pastoral ministry that God has already prepared for you.

Shalom

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

Induction to the ministry of Highbury Congregational Church

It would be a delight if you would be able to join with me and the family at the beginning of this pastorate

Worship led by
Rev'd Dr. Janet Wootton

Induction to the pastorate led by
Mrs. Yvonne Campbell, General Secretary

Preacher
Rev'd Dr. Graham Adams

Sending out and benediction led by
Rev'd Dr. Richard Cleaves

2:30 pm
Saturday
21 September 2019
at
Highbury Congregational Church,
Priory Walk, Cheltenham

Tea will follow the service



PRAYER LETTER No 190

Roots and Growth

A spring tulip bulb planted in the autumn contains all the food it needs in order to eventually sprout and bloom in the spring. It may take up to 8 months to eventually flower after planting. Traditionally bulbs are planted in soil, compost or bulb fibre in the ground or in pots or different types of containers. The bulbs are left in a cool dark place i.e., shed or garage or ground. Whichever place is chosen the **bulb/s have to be placed deep in the ground or pot not just below the surface** so the roots can spread and anchor the bulb for later growth.

The bulbs then wait for months until the right weather conditions enable them to start shooting. The bulbs now need light and warmth to continue its growth. First the leaves appear providing the bulb with protection and more food via photosynthesis. Then the bud of the flower emerges growing taller and taller eventually opening up and flowering displaying a beautiful sight and giving joy to many.

Sitting in the garden on a warm day in late April it was a delightful sight to see different coloured flowering tulips in pots and in the ground and it made me think of our Christian Faith and growth.

Are we secure in our roots of our Christian Faith?

Do we need to make sure our roots are on a firm foundation?

What is our Christian Food to keep us growing and reaching for the Light? Is it Church Services and Fellowship on Sundays? Is it prayer, corporate or individual? Is it reading the Bible regularly? Is it being open to teaching and advice from other Christians of whatever denomination.

We need all of these for our Christian Growth and Faith Journey. When the tulip flower fades and the petals fall, the leaves remain taking in the sunlight to replenish the bulb with food the bulb needs for its dormant stage before flowering the following year.

What is it that replenishes us when God uses us for His purposes? God still needs effective Christians. We may be at different stages of resting, reflecting, waiting, or working God's purposes out but whatever stage we are at, individually or corporately we need to be open to the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire and encourage us in our journey as a Church Fellowship.

The different sizes and coloured tulips reminded me that we are all different but can give joy to all in different ways if we use our gifts and talents that God has given us for His purposes.

Every Blessing,
Beryl

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

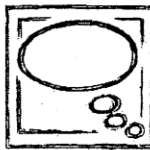
The following article has been submitted by Beryl Cartwright, and is entitled:

May 30 The coming of the Spirit



When the day of Pentecost had come, [Jesus' followers] were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Acts 2.1-4



No one expected God to do something quite like this! In the Old Testament, God blessed individual people with the Spirit of God to equip them for particular tasks at particular times. But the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost (originally a kind of Jewish harvest festival) was unprecedented, and had an impact on all those who followed Jesus. It has subsequently changed for ever the way Christians experience God.

Even Luke, who researched and wrote this account, seems to be struggling for words to describe what was seen and heard. And for those to whom it was happening, all the words they knew in their own languages were inadequate. They could only be sure of three things:

- the Holy Spirit was responsible;
- it brought them together as Christians;
- they found themselves concerned with places in the world they had never visited.



Pentecost is the third great festival of the Christian faith. It's the only one of the Christian festivals that hasn't been hijacked off us! There's no tat in the shops and there's no overpackaged chocolate. So forget Christmas and Easter – Pentecost is the day for Christians to be glad. So (whether this year's Pentecost is past or yet to come) declare today as your own alternative Pentecost, and celebrate. Give yourself a treat! Do something spontaneous and wonderful. Do something childish. Do something so splendid for someone you love that they wonder what on Earth has come over you. And why not, because the Spirit of God is unpredictable and refuses to be restrained when love, joy and peace are let loose.



*Be not lax in celebrating;
Be not lazy in the festive service of God;
Be ablaze with enthusiasm.
Let us be an alive, burning offering before the altar of God!*

Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)

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

What I have learnt

It always strikes me as strange to sit on an aeroplane for the best part of two days only to emerge at the other end to a country that looks very much like a sunny version of the UK. Everyone speaks English, they drive on the same side of the road and they even have a similar sense of humour. We have a number of other things in common with Australia too: we share similar problems in our schools and in our churches.

My daughter has married into a family of teachers and educationalists. Familiar territory for her! It means that conversation when I visit often turns to the struggle for inclusion in the classroom – especially in remote locations with a predominantly Aboriginal population, or to the difficulties with discipline in deprived areas. Common ground indeed.

But what of the spiritual aspects of life? Holidays are an opportunity to visit other churches and to talk to people about the way they are tackling the increasing secularisation of life in First World countries. While I was travelling, I found myself amongst a variety of denominations, from Roman Catholic through Anglican to the Uniting Church, which is most akin to our own Congregational Church. Looking around the congregations I recognised a similar demographic. Small numbers, predominantly elderly, with very few, if any, children amongst them. Young families were significantly absent and teenagers only present when the service was for a school. The after-church coffee chats revealed that there is generally more interest in mid-week devotional activities, like home groups and bible

study. Christianity appears to be an activity for retirement if we are to go by the evidence that I witnessed. I must, however, point out that I didn't attend any overtly evangelical churches and if the trend here is replicated, this is where the young people are to be found.

There was one exception to this trend, however. My daughter lives in an area where there are a number of Greek Orthodox Churches, and very beautiful they are too. Each Sunday and sometimes on evenings during the week, the pavement outside is thronged with people of all ages, smartly dressed and queuing to get inside for worship. There is clearly a vibrant Christian life both amongst immigrants and in the homeland. It is the glue that holds the community together. This is the lesson that I have brought home. We should pay heed to it as we go forward into a new phase of life at Witney Cong.

So let us build on the excellent work of Noah's Ark, the Book Circle, Muslim inclusion etc etc. We could have a Poetry Group, a Knitting Group or a Music Group. Perhaps you have a talent or a skill that you could share, as Andrew has done with tailoring. We shouldn't mind if the groups are small....they help us to connect and to make our church a focal point for taking our faith out into the community. It isn't about preaching the gospel on street corners as our forebears did. We need a plan for today's life, so please give some serious thought to what you can do to make it happen.

Oh, but one last concession....Adelaide has some of the best beaches in the world and that's something you WON'T find in Oxfordshire!! The TV is rubbish, though!

The following article has been submitted by Judi Holloway, and is entitled: **Story Telling**
Once a month Saturday coffee morning hosts story telling. Come and join us from 11.00am on
the first Saturday of the month—All are welcome



Children enjoying story time while parents enjoy their coffee and cake
(photos taken with permission)

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.

10. Mark 4:1-20

Abruptly Mark changes the scene from within a house to beside the sea, out in the open air. No indication is given as to whether this change of scene occurred on the same day or after a longer interval of time. Mark simply depicts a change of scene and with it a change in the number of people present. The crowd in and around the house is expanded to or replaced by a very large crowd beside the sea. Mark paints the picture of the throng so pressing in upon Jesus that he needs to distance himself from them by getting into a boat. Mark does not say whether the boat remained beached, simply providing Jesus with a seat so that, in rabbinical fashion, he could teach while seated; or whether the boat was pushed out a little from the shore, so enabling a larger number of the crowd to have direct vision of Jesus. Such things do not concern Mark; having set the scene for this stage in his story of Jesus he now concentrates upon Jesus's method of teaching and its content.

The method of teaching is by parables, a

method already used by Jesus in his encounter with the scribes from Jerusalem. Mark says that Jesus "began to teach them many things in parables". From these "many things" Mark picks out one particular parable for detailed consideration. We call it "The Parable of the Sower". Superficially it is a very simple tale of an everyday event in the experience of those gathered along the seashore. A sower goes out sowing seed. Jesus's listeners would have immediately pictured a man with a seed bag slung over one shoulder, supporting it in position with one hand as he dipped the other hand into the seed and then cast handful after handful forth over the land as he walked across the field. The scene was so familiar. As the man scattered the seed it fell on all sorts of ground - some fell on the hard trodden pathway where, almost before the sower had passed along, the birds swooped down upon it in thankfulness for easy food. Other seed landed on ground where the rock outcrop was just below the surface: Jesus's listeners knew just what would happen to that - it would grow quickly but be rapidly scorched by the midday sun and yield no harvest. Yet other seed settled down into ground already occupied by weeds, or by their seeds in abundance, and, although it would grow, it had little chance of producing a worthwhile crop. But most of the seed - at least we trust it was most of the seed, though it might not have been - fell upon good prepared soil and was able to grow to yield an harvest, an harvest, which in Jesus's telling of the story, ranged from good (thirtyfold) to excellent (sixtyfold) to almost unbelievable (hundredfold).

Such was the parable, a simple little everyday story of a countryman at his daily work! So those people by the side of the sea could have thought of it, as can we - and yet Jesus seems to demand that people look closer at the story for he precedes its telling with the imperative command "Listen!" and concludes with the

exhortation "Let anyone with ears to hear listen." What is there behind this story to which Jesus wanted them and us to listen? How are people meant to look at this story, to seek deeper meaning within it? It seems obvious that this is what Jesus wants of his listeners - that they should think deeply and learn from the story of the ways of God. The story is easy to remember; this seems to be the basic reason for this way of teaching, but the meaning requires individual thought and application to each person's situation at any particular time. Mark breaks off his narrative of what was happening by the seashore to introduce a short section on the understanding of parables and in particular of the parable of the sower.

Mark interpolates this new scene of Jesus alone with "those who were around him along with the twelve". The picture here is of an inner circle of disciples more numerous than twelve, possibly the group of men and women who were previously met with Jesus in his "home". They ask Jesus about the parables: we note the plural form, they are not just questioning about one parable. The answer which Jesus gives is difficult to understand and, at first, may seem to contradict the purpose of his call to all to listen and to believe the Good News. So much so is this that many people have expressed the opinion that what Mark records here as the original words of Jesus are really the teaching of the Early Church. The problem is in the words: "To you has been given the secret (or mystery) of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything comes in parables." This is then followed up with a modified form of Isaiah 6:9-10 which would appear to say that those "outside" are doomed to fail to understand and therefore will not be forgiven. Where in this is there the Gospel, the Good News? Does this not tend towards the Gnostic heresy of salvation only to those admitted to the "secret knowledge"? Are these, who in this scene

Mark depicts as being a select group, the only ones who are to find forgiveness and salvation? If so, why did Jesus even bother to teach the large crowds? Surely his message is not just for a few to understand and have their lives changed?

Perhaps the key to the dilemma is to be found in the setting of the words from Isaiah 6 where, in a time of great uncertainty for the people of Israel, the prophet has his vision of God, hears God's call and responds: "Here am I; send me." The prophet was seeking a way forward; he believed that God still had a Word for his people even in the dark days of that time. It was because he had this willingness to listen for and to God and, when challenged by God, was prepared to go for Him that then brought to the prophet a measure of understanding. Everything was not going to change for the better in a hurry. The message which Isaiah received was a bleak one and yet it finished with an enigmatic note of hope which might be translated "The stump is a holy seed." If there is listening, if there is a seeking, then, however much what has grown gets cut down, there always remains a seed, a seed from which new life can come. The understanding, the following, the growth may not be now, but surely it will come in God's good time. Perchance what Jesus is saying to the small group gathered around him is that with parables, with all his teaching, the listener may not get the full meaning, the meaning which will help and change their life now - but - if the will remains to listen and to listen again, then the time will surely come when there is that blessed moment of understanding, of vision, of enlightenment. "For you," Jesus seems to say to that small group, "some of that enlightenment comes now for I am going to explain one meaning which you might find in the parable of the sower." Jesus also seems to be saying to them: "If you don't understand this parable, how will you understand other parables?" Is it perhaps

too much to read into this passage a question posed by Jesus: "How will you understand my life, my being, who I am?"

Mark now goes on to record an interpretation of the parable as though it came from the lips of Jesus. Again there are people who doubt as to whether Jesus actually gave this interpretation, as to whether he ever interpreted his stories. Certainly traditional Jewish rabbinical teaching was by stories and if a pupil asked a rabbi the meaning of a story, the rabbi would reply by telling yet another story. The process was designed to make people think for themselves, to come to their own understanding, to grow into a first-hand faith rather than take over a second-hand faith from someone else, however good that faith might seem. It seems unlikely that Mark was present at this time in Jesus's ministry either in the large crowd or in the small group around Jesus; Mark simply reports in good faith this interpretation as being given by Jesus.

In the interpretation, the seed is the word and the ground, or soil, is made up of those who hear the word. Just who the sower is is not specified. It is usually assumed that the sower is Jesus, or God Himself, but this is not stated in the interpretation; to make the assumption is actually to make a further interpretation than that recorded as given by Jesus. The fact that Satan is identified with the birds of the air who eat the seed scattered on the pathway does give credence to the assumption that the word, the seed, is the Word of God. This does, however, raise the additional thought that just as the birds are feed and nourished by the seed which they pick from the pathway, so too Satan is nourished by the Word of God. Here is not the place to follow up this line of thought although it might well fit with the picture given in the Book of Job where the Satan is one of the servants of God.

The interpretation continues with the

picture of growth in poor soil being unsustainable in time of trouble when there is no depth of soil. Again we can ask the question as to whether the soil can be at fault for its lack of depth; surely the farmer should have broken up the underlying rock, have ploughed more deeply and worked in suitable fertiliser! Perhaps here we might read into the story a warning about preparing the ground before we sow seed, for maybe each one of us is the sower of the parable and then a possible meaning of the parable for us is about preparation of the soil, about care as to where we sow the seed. Already in thinking about the interpretation recorded by Mark, further possible interpretations are coming to the fore. Surely this is why Jesus spoke in parables for there is always more light and truth to break forth from God's Word.

Not that there was much light for the seed sown in the weed patch, among the thorns, thorns interpreted as the cares of the world, the lure of wealth and the desire for other things which choke the growth from the seed of the word. Is the soil at fault for this, or is it lack of care by the farmer for his ground? That question is not addressed by the parable nor by the given interpretation.

Perhaps if we see ourselves as the farmer, the sower, then we could see the parable as containing a warning for us as to what values we allow to dominate in our society, in our lives; the seed cannot come to give a harvest if too many other things are in the way, things which could be rooted out before the seed is sown.

However, the final note of the story is the joyful one of the coming of an harvest, an harvest which ranges from the good to the almost unbelievable. Despite all the failure of the farmer to plough deeper, to root out weeds, to keep his seed clear of pathways, there is still some good soil in which the seed takes root and flourishes so that it comes to yield an harvest; the effort does bring a reward, the sowing was worth doing.

Surely this is the main thrust of this parable, that faithful effort always brings an harvest whatever difficulties and disappointments may happen between the sowing and harvest time. Are there not also other lessons to be learned from this parable, other interpretations than that which Mark records? Could there be something here, for example, which speaks to our modern fixation upon efficiency, upon getting one hundred percent return for every enterprise? Should we perhaps remember that there has to be a place for the birds of the air who need their food - and maybe some to the weeds are needful to give the beauty of butterflies! Where too would we be without the rocky outcrop on which to build, and with which to build, a firm foundation? Should we not also remember that, however good the soil, not all of it produces an hundredfold yield and so learn to be thankful for all the good harvest even when it is less than others obtain or we ourselves had reason to expect?

Jesus told the parable, a parable which raise many questions. As we begin to think more deeply on some of them, we once again come to the question which Mark continues to pose throughout his Gospel: Who is this man who so speaks and acts? Is he indeed the Christ? Or just a teller of memorable but largely meaningless stories? The answer we give will help us find meaning in the stories, while the stories help point us towards the answer.



Thank you!

I would like to say a big thank you for the Theatre vouchers and lovely card which I was presented with at the Easter Service to mark 20 years of Service as Church Administrator at Witney Congregational Church.

I was not expecting this and consequently did not express my appreciation as much as

I wanted to. It was much appreciated and I wanted to take this opportunity of saying so.

I really enjoy working in the office and meeting the Church fellowship and other users of the building.

Once again, thank you all so much.

Best wishes Sue

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

Sri Lanka Easter church bombings

More than 250 people were killed following Easter service bomb attacks against churches in Sri Lanka. "The scale of the horror takes our breath away," says Release International.

"But terrorism can never overcome the central truth of the Gospel – Christ is risen. Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka and wherever Christians face violence around the world."

Around 2m Christians live in the Buddhist-majority nation where Christians from Buddhist and Hindu backgrounds face discrimination for their faith.

The growth of Christianity in Sri Lanka since 1980 has met with violent opposition from Buddhist extremists. Persecution has intensified since 2012, coinciding with a rise in Buddhist nationalism.

Militants have burned churches and attacked Christians. In many cases, violent mobs have been led by Buddhist monks. Christians say local government officials and police do little to prevent the attacks – and are sometimes complicit in them.

Anti-Christian violence has abated somewhat since 2015, when President Maithripala Sirisena came to power, pledging to uphold religious freedoms guaranteed in the constitution.

The following article, written & submitted by Pip Cartwright, is a continuation from the last edition, and is entitled:

The Growth of WCC (1800 - 1852)

The Rev. Thomas Taylor (formerly of Shipton upon Stour, Bourton on the Water) became the Minister in 1806. It is from his pen that the earliest written record of Witney Congregational Church is to be found. His Church book entitled "A Regular Account of the Transactions of the Church of Christ meeting at Witney, in the County of Oxford in Congregational order from March 19th 1806" is lodged in the County Archives Office, Oxford. This, with the Minute Books written by successive Ministers comprises of six volumes. The Rev. Taylor was a Baptist and the Church joined the Association of Baptist Congregational Church in 1807.

In 1812 the Rev. Taylor left and his place was taken in 1813 by Rev. James Higgs. His ministry lasted until 1824 whereupon a Mr Thomas Collett 'filled in' until the Rev. Nicholas Hellings (from Bodmin) began taking services in January 1826. It appears that at first the Rev. Higgs refused to surrender 'Taylor's Book', however, eventually the Rev. Hellings 'secured' it and continued the record. It is he, that not only recorded church events between 1826 to 1829, but also gathered information about the Church in the previous century from "aged persons in the congregation, whose parents were connected with the Church and people".

Although a man of poor health, his drive enlivened the life of the Church. It was during his ministry that the new Church was built. The existing Church in Marlborough Lane (formerly called Meeting House Lane) was built a century before in 1712. In 1826 W. Townsend Esq (of York Place, City Road, London) generously offered to build a Chapel at his own expense providing the Church found and bought a suitable site. Mr Townsend who was a native of Witney was probably a member of the Blanket Making

family. In the Spring of 1827 premises in the High Street were purchased for £700. The foundation stone was laid by Miss Townsend (sister of Mr Townsend) on March 4th 1828. Of the total cost of £2,000, Mr Townsend contributed £1,100.

The Opening Service was on October 1st 1828 and widely supported by 'Christian friends' from Oxford, Abingdon and Faringdon. That Church, the Manse next door and the garden and orchard remained in use until 1970. In 1828 the Rev. Hellings resigned due to ill health. Mr William Townsend, the benefactor of the Church, died March 10th 1832 and was buried in the vault under the Communion Table.

Following the Rev. Hellings came Rev. Richard Taylor (1830 to 1834). Like the previous Ministers he was trained at Hackney College. In 1832 the Congregational Union of England and Wales was founded of which Oxford County Union was part.

In September 1834 the Church entered its most prosperous period, with the ordination of the Rev. Robert Tozer. A man of "gentle and saintly character" he was respected in the town and by his fellow Ministers. What we may now term as 'Church planting' took place. Chapels were erected at Brize Norton, Lew and Leafield in addition to the Chapel at Crawley which was established 40 years earlier. These 'stations' were maintained until the 1870!, when they were abandoned due to lack of support from a declining 'parent' Witney Church.

As an example of strict discipline exercised by the Churches at that time the Rev. Tozer recorded "Mr 'B' was suspended by ye Church for one Sabbath for attending ye theatre". Other records (1837) show his concern for evangelism and adding 'numbers'. He writes, "I regret to see so few added this past year. For many months this year I have devoted Monday as a day of humiliation (partial abstinence from food) and especial prayer for myself, family and Church". He records his

troubles with choir and deacons. In 1838 he records "Mr 'M' died. I trust he is safe in Christ. He was sometimes much tired with the infirmities of age and has also to contend with instability of temper".

In September 1852, Rev. Tozer resigned through his own ill health and died 3 years later (September 9th 1855) at the age of 65, still preaching to his beloved 'village stations'.

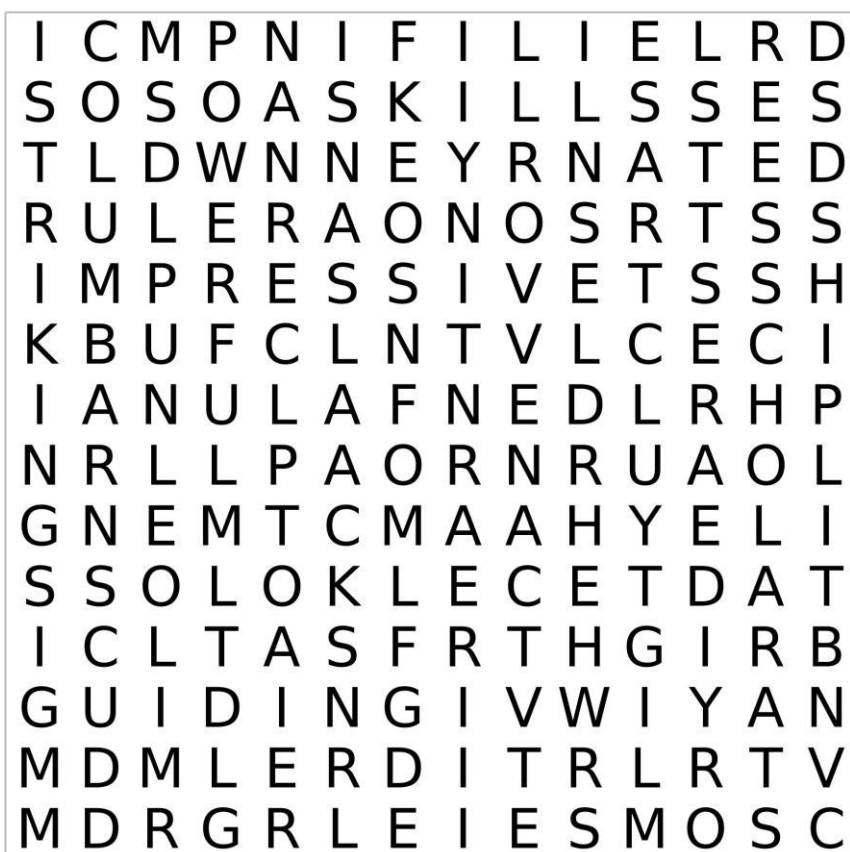
Two tablets facing the congregation were erected to Robert Tozer and his wife in the High Street Church. On his wife's tablet, who died on 24th January 1837 (aged 51), it reads, "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him. Reader! Hast thou committed Thy soul to Jesus?"

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

Wordsearch - St Columba

This month the Church remembers the Irish monk who first brought Christianity to Britain in around 565. He was St Columba, and he left Ireland with 12 companions to settle on Iona, a tiny island off Mull, in the Western Highlands. Iona had been given to him for a monastery by the ruler of the Irish Dalriada

Church; Columba; First; Ireland; Companions; Settle; Iona; Tiny; island; mull; monastery; tall; striking; powerful; impressive; skills; scholar; poet; ruler; fearless; converted; dearest; star; bright; flame; guiding



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

9th June:

Not a Ghost but a Gift

We used to call it Whitsun - White Sunday because long ago children marched to church in white on that day. No processions nowadays and we've even changed its name. It's now 'Pentecost', which is more accurate but needs explaining.

This year Whitsun/Pentecost is on Sunday June 9th. Pentecost marks a vital event in Christian history. It is a celebrated 50 days after Easter. On the year Jesus was crucified (which took place at the Passover), the remnant of His followers, just 120 of them, were together in an upper room in Jerusalem. They were afraid to show their faces in case the authorities arrested them. But on the day of Passover they had an amazing collective experience.

They described it in terms of wind and fire, a great surge of spiritual energy and confidence. Afraid no longer they burst out on to the streets where crowds were gathering for the festival, led by Peter they began to tell them about Jesus and His resurrection. As they did so, although many of the people in the crowd were foreigners who spoke other languages, everyone heard them in their own tongue. Peter told them that what they were seeing was the fulfilment of an old prophecy when God would pour out His Spirit on the human race, men and women, young and old.

As a result of His words and the extraordinary spectacle, 3000 people believed and were baptized in the name of Jesus. They were the nucleus of what in 100 years would be a Church that would turn history upside down. For Christians Pentecost is in effect the birthday of the Church.

I realise many people find the whole idea of the Holy Spirit mysterious and elusive. It wasn't helped by the earlier title 'Holy Ghost'. The spirit is not spiritually a 'ghost' but a precious gift.

The following article, written by Tony Horsfall, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

Holidays can be 'holy days'

No doubt you are beginning to look forward to your summer holidays. Just think about it – sun, sea and sand, time to relax and unwind, no deadlines to meet, no responsibilities to shoulder . . . ah, bliss!

We are fortunate to live at a time when workers are encouraged to take time off from work for the sake of their well-being. Most employees are given 4-6 weeks paid holiday each year, plus Bank Holidays. What a blessing that is, and a far cry from the day when the only time workers had off was on church Feast days – the original holy days.

This year, rather than go on holiday and forget God, we might use our time away to become even more aware of God's presence in our lives. Here's how:

(1) Thank God for recreation. Whatever helps you relax and wind-down is a gift from God to be received with thankfulness and enjoyed to the full.

(2) Take extra time to sleep and adopt a slower pace. This is how you will recharge your batteries and be refreshed.

(3) Make space for the relationships that matter to you, especially your family and friends. Enjoy each other's company, talk and laugh together, enjoy unhurried meals.

(4) Notice God in the world around you. Let the beauty of God's creation fill your soul with wonder. Linger and look deeply at everything you see.

(5) Take a good book with you that will nourish your inner life; listen to music that will help you relax. Breathe deeply and walk slowly, there's no need to rush.

Psalm 23:2 comes to mind: 'He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul.'

Happy Holidays!

The following article written by Anna James, Librarian & Archivist, Pusey House, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

Enjoy a visit to Pusey House, Oxford

If you are visiting Oxford this summer, it is well worth making time to visit Pusey House, a library that specialises in the works of the Church Fathers, Anglican Church History, and Catholic theology.

Pusey House was named after Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882), who was Professor of Hebrew and Canon of Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. For 40 years he was figurehead of the Oxford Movement, which triggered the Catholic revival in Church of England parishes in the mid-19th century.

When Edward Pusey died, it was agreed that he deserved a permanent memorial in the city in which he had lived and worked for more than six decades.

Although not a classic bibliophile, Dr Pusey was a judicious collector of books, spending money only on works which he could not access elsewhere within Oxford. This means that many of his books are unavailable elsewhere in the University, and in some cases, even in the UK.

His friends decided to maintain his personal library and to buy a building to put them in,

with priests to care for the books and to provide 'spiritual counsel' to students and Fellows of all colleges. The idea was not without critics: one magazine claimed that opening yet another library on the doorstep of the Bodleian was only likely to 'benefit the architect and the bookseller'. (*Truth* 23/11/1882) Despite the naysayers, the plan went ahead to create 'a home of sacred learning and a rallying point of the Christian faith... to arrest the further decay of faith in Oxford.' (*H.P. Liddon*, 1882)

In the early days, any sound books on theology were purchased – in 1882 Oxford University did not have a theology faculty library. But over time the collection has been honed to focus on works by the Church Fathers, Anglican Church history, and distinctively Catholic theology. Pusey House is also home to an important archive of papers of Anglo-Catholic church people and societies, and the papers of many societies of Anglican monks and nuns.

The Library is open for free to any who are interested in the collections, and visits to the library can (in term-time) be bookended with Morning Prayer, Mass, and Evensong, and punctuated with a pause for the Angelus at noon to provide a balanced diet of spiritual and intellectual nourishment.

For more details:

<http://www.puseyhouse.org.uk/library>

Pusey House Library is open 50 weeks every year, Monday-Friday, 9.30-5.25.

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

The man behind Kentucky Fried Chicken

Hundreds of thousands of us will have a meal this summer courtesy of Colonel Sanders – his chicken is indeed finger lickin'

good. But did you know that Colonel Sanders was named Harland Sanders, born in Indiana in 1890, and became a Christian.

When Harland was only five, his father died, so his mother ran the farm and raised the four children – and took the children to church each week. She taught them: “Always tell the truth, don’t cheat, and be kind to each other.” She also taught Harland to cook.

By the age of 12 Harland was a farm hand, and in the rough and tumble years that followed his jobs included: locomotive fireman, railroad section hand, insurance salesman, a petrol station operator and finally – a restaurateur. Harland was a born enthusiast and grabbed every opportunity as it came along. But even he never dreamed that running a local Shell petrol station would be the start of something big.

For most of Harland’s petrol customers were truckers, and most of them were hungry. So, one day Harland dragged out an old table and began to cook food. The truckers ate – and ate! From this a large restaurant grew. But heartache was never far behind – his son died, his wife left, and his business went under during the Great Depression.

Finally, aged 65 and struggling to survive on social security, Harland wondered what he could do. He knew his old customers had loved his chicken. But this time he added a mix of 11 herbs and spices. They became the secret recipe that is still used to day. Kentucky Fried Chicken had arrived. He then persuaded a local restaurant to offer it to their customers. They loved it, and Colonel Saunders’ Kentucky Fried Chicken was on its way to fame.

By 1935 his picture with the white moustache, goatee and cane were famous. (The white suit came later). By 1963 there were 2000 franchised restaurants and

Kentucky Fried Chicken was the largest fast-food franchise in the country.

In the meantime, Colonel Sanders became a Christian. He’d had an off-on relationship with God for years, but one night he dropped into a Christian tabernacle meeting and was deeply moved. He went on to ask Jesus to forgive his sins, and to come into his life.

He wrote later to a friend: “I pray to God almighty that you will also commit your life to Jesus. If you will, no matter what hard times you may go through, He’ll help you through.” Harland Colonel Sanders died in December 1980. He was 90 years old.



With Trinity Sunday in mind:

How can God be One and Three at the same time? Perhaps the Father is like the sun in the sky – dazzling in majesty and glory, whose light, Jesus Christ, illumines all mankind; and whose invisible warmth, the Holy Spirit, brings us to life. Sun, light and warmth – eternally the same, but eternally different - *Anon*