

# 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

Vacant

## ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Rev Judi Holloway

## WORSHIP

Daily Worship	9.30am	Mon-Fri	Short time of Prayer and Reading
Saturday Praise	11.00am	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Saturday of the month
Sunday Services	10.30am		
	6.00pm	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	Light Bite Piece of the Word (1 <sup>st</sup> 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](http://www.witneycongregational.org.uk)

## MAGAZINE EDITOR

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



As I wrote the last summer edition, schools were getting near to finishing for the summer break, and as I write this, it is now not too many days until they return to school. **Doesn't time fly**, and I hope, whatever your circumstances, you managed to take a break of some kind, and are refreshed to tackle whatever lies ahead for us

According to my diary, the clocks are due to change on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October, and for some this heralds long periods of darkness.

This edition takes cognisance that our Minister, Rev Dr Jason Boyd, took his last service with us on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> August and will soon be taking up Ministry in nearby Cheltenham. This means that the church will be in a period of interregnum and the membership will have to have responsibility for what happens during this period and the future; and, it may even mean using gifts that we never thought we had!!



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; Judi Holloway gives us the first of the Deacon's Letter; there is the continuation of Ken Lee's Bible Study; The poem – Just Talk to Me and Andrew Maclarty gives us the Creations of God – Wood, 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 2-monthly edition, covering December & January 2020, is due on **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December**

Your Editor

**BST ends on 27<sup>th</sup> October**



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- First time around the world



### Daily Prayer Time:

Mon-Fri 9.30 am

### Services

10.30 am weekly & 6.00pm on first Sunday of the month

### Sept

1 <sup>st</sup>	am	Dr Dave Adams	
	pm	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Communion
7 <sup>th</sup>		Creative Church	10.00 – 12.00
		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
8 <sup>th</sup>	am	Cafe Church – David Kinchin	
15 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	Communion
22 <sup>nd</sup>	am	Harvest – Songs of Praise	
28 <sup>th</sup>		Saturday Praise – Reflective	11.00am
29 <sup>th</sup>	am	James Elward	
		Madley Park Residential Home	3.00pm

### Oct

5 <sup>th</sup>		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
6 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Oliver Kinchin	
	pm	Rev Oliver Kinchin	Communion
13 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Andrew Williams Tarling	
20 <sup>th</sup>	am	Kathy Shaw	Communion
26 <sup>th</sup>		Saturday Praise – Reflective	11.00am
27 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	

### Nov

2 <sup>nd</sup>		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
3 <sup>rd</sup>	am	Rev Dr Janet Wootton	
	pm	Rev Dr Janet Wootton	Communion
10 <sup>th</sup>	am	Remembrance Sunday – David Kinchin	9.45am
17 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Nick Gleich	Communion
23 <sup>rd</sup>		Saturday Praise – Reflective	11.00am
24 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Suzanne Nockels	
30 <sup>th</sup>	am	Creative Church	10.00 – 12.00

### Dec

1 <sup>st</sup>	am	Cafe Church – Kathy Shaw	
	pm	Nanna Blackman	Communion
7 <sup>th</sup>		Saturday Praise – Story Telling	11.00am
8 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Roger Faulkner	

The following events are given for your particular attention:

### Sept

3 <sup>rd</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
13 <sup>th</sup>	Look What's On - Beetle Drive	6.00pm
14 <sup>th</sup>	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am
	Ride & Stride	10.00am – 6.00pm
18 <sup>th</sup>	Movie Evening – Breakfast at Tiffany's	6.30pm

21 <sup>st</sup>	Bring & Buy Book Sale	10.00 – 12.30pm
	The Witney Book Circle	10.45am
	Jason's Induction at Highbury CC	2.30pm
22 <sup>nd</sup>	Harvest Lunch	12.00pm
24 <sup>th</sup>	Church AGM	7.30pm
<b>Oct</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
12 <sup>th</sup>	Prayer Chain meeting	9.15am
19 <sup>th</sup>	The Witney Book Circle	10.45am
<b>Nov</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup>	Look What's On - Games Taster evening	6.00pm
5 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm
16 <sup>th</sup>	The Witney Book Circle	10.45am
24 <sup>th</sup>	Church meeting	12.00pm
<b>Dec</b>		
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Deacon's meeting	7.30pm

## Rotas

### WELCOMING TEAM

<b>Sept</b>	01	Beryl & Pat B
	08	Beryl & Susan
	15	Lesley & Nanna
	22	Lesley & Joan
	29	Beryl & Irene
<b>Oct</b>	06	Beryl & Pat B
	13	Lesley & Susan
	20	Lesley & Nanna
	27	Beryl & Joan
<b>Nov</b>	03	Beryl & Irene
	10	Lesley & Pat B
	17	Lesley & Susan
	24	Beryl & Nanna
<b>Dec</b>	01	Beryl & Joan



### COMMUNION

<b>Sept</b>	01 pm	Beryl	
		Preparation	Beryl
	15 am	Lesley & Beryl	
		tba	
		Preparation	tba
<b>Oct</b>	06 pm	Lesley	
		Preparation	Lesley
	20 am	Lesley & Judi	
		tba	
		Preparation	Rita
<b>Nov</b>	03 pm	Beryl	
		Preparation	Beryl
	17 am	Lesley & Beryl	
		David & tba	
		Preparation	Irene



Dec	01 pm	Lesley	
		Preparation	Lesley

## FLOWERS

Sept	08	Beryl
	15	Joan
	22	Rita
	29	Pat
Oct	06	Jacqui
	13	Judi
	20	Beryl
	27	Joan
Nov	03	Rita
	10	Pat
	17	Jacqui
	24	Judi
Dec	01	Beryl



## SUNDAY COFFEE

Sept	01	Sue & Hilary
	08	Cafe Church
	15	Pat S & Susan
	22	Harvest Lunch
	29	Pat B & Claire
Oct	06	Sue & Susan
	13	Hilary & Claire
	20	Pat S & Sue
	27	Pat B & Claire
Nov	03	Facilitator Lunch
	10	Remembrance
	17	Hilary & Claire
	24	Pat B & Pat S
Dec	01	Cafe Church
	08	Sue & Susan



## THURSDAY COFFEE

Sept	05	Beryl
	12	Pat S
	19	Hilary
	26	Beryl
	03	Pat S
Oct	10	Hilary
	17	Beryl
	24	Pat S
	31	Hilary
	07	Beryl
Nov	14	Hilary
	21	Beryl
	28	Pat S
	05	Hilary
Dec		Reserve – Pat B



We would be extremely grateful for other people to join

## SOUND SYSTEM

Sept	01	Terry
	08	Nanna
	15	Terry
	22	Nanna
	29	Terry
Oct	06	Terry
	13	Nanna
	20	Judi
	27	Terry
Nov	03	Terry
	10	Nanna
	17	Nanna
	24	Terry
Dec	01	Terry
	08	Nanna



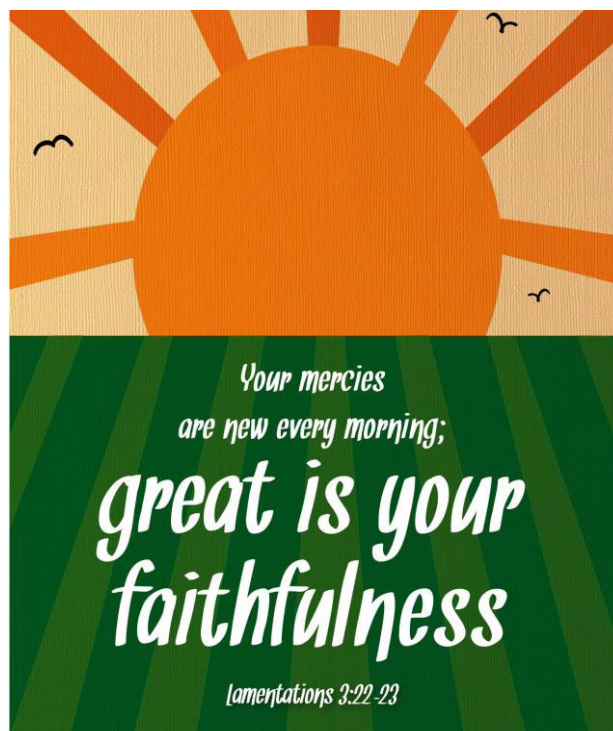
For ALL the Rotas, every effort has been made to meet individual circumstances.  
However, if the dates are not convenient for you, please change with someone else

Sept	01	Theo
	02	Claire
		Gail
	09	Judith
	28	John G
	29	Gordon



Nov	18	AJ
	19	Nanna
	26	Ellie Rose
		Elaine
		Hilary
	29	Marina

Oct	08	Rita
	10	Susan
	13	Luke
	15	Chris
	17	Anthony





## Deacon's Letter

At the time of writing, we are rapidly moving towards a time of change, a time of challenge and uncertainty and in the words of the book of Esther "a time such as this".

Jason will have moved on to a new ministry in Cheltenham after just over ten years with us. Our thoughts and prayers go with him, Viviane and the children.

As a Diaconate – small in number – we are very much aware of the need for us all, as a church, to work together as a team. We are in this together for a time such as this.

We do not know who will be our next Minister, nor do we know how long the process will take. One thing we can be assured of is that God is already preparing that person. He is also preparing us.

There is much to be done and firstly we need to know who we are as a church and what sort of Minister we need. To enable us to discover this, we need help. To this end we will be inviting a facilitator to meet with us after church one Sunday over lunch, where we can have an open space meeting and talk about who and what we are and who and what we would like to be. It is hoped that the facilitator will listen to us and tease out some pointers for us to discuss further to enable us then to work on a Minister's profile with a view to advertising the position of Minister.

There are already things in place to ensure that much of what is already happening in the church will continue to happen. In addition there will be times of corporate prayer, discussion groups and bible study, along with fun times to get together. These will be advertised when details have been finalised. As I have already mentioned, it is a time when we need to work together as a team and we

look forward to seeing where God is leading us to at a time such as this.

May God grant us wisdom as we move and work together to be the people He desires us to be.

God bless

Judi Holloway  
Associate Minister

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## Farewell Letter from Sonya Boyd to Witney Congregational Church

Dear Witney Congregational Church

You have all been a constant part of my life for 10 years now. It is difficult to think that this is goodbye.

Each one of you has participated in my life in various ways. Your enduring interest and care over my wellbeing has been an assuring foundation of support. The enquiries about exams and future careers; the general chats about everyday life provided me with the knowledge that there was always someone to talk with when I needed it.

Your support and encouragement towards my family has not gone unnoticed. For your persistent love I will always be grateful.

I am sorry I couldn't be here today. Life always seems to get in the way but know that I am here in Dundee thinking of you all on this day.

I pray that the Church continues to grow in God's love and that his grace will guide you through the interregnum and future ministries.

God bless you all.

Lots of love

Sonya xx





## Thank You

Viviane, Naomi, Sonya, Jeremy and I want to thank each and everyone of you for the farewell events on the 13 July and the 25 August. Thank you for the warm words and best wishes extended to us as we move on.

Thank you for the gifts. The Hosta is stunning, the embroidered quilt work gorgeous, and the children's gifts generous. The cake was wonderful too.

Thank you for your love and prayers over the last decade. We will pray for you as you seek the Lord in all things. God bless you.

Shalom  
Jason





## PRAYER LETTER No 191

### Future Plans Changes Worry

What do the above words conjure up for you excitement, fear, trepidation?

Our everyday life dictates planning for the future, whether it's where to live, where to go on holiday or even can you afford a holiday, what sort of employment you envisage for yourself, what to wear for the right occasion, what to eat and so on. Our lives and culture has changed so much even in the short time of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Where does God play a part in this? What is our part in God's plan? Lots of questions but does it get us anywhere?

We read familiar stories in the Bible where characters in the Old Testament like Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Ruth and Naomi and characters in the New Testament like Jesus' disciples and Paul, had their lives and those of others changed through a direct message from God or through a 'messenger' and subsequent obedience to God. With others it is an inner feeling that it is God's plan for them. This may be immediate or take months or even years to realise that it is God's plan. Look back on your life and recognise where God's plan was involved.

One example for this Fellowship was in the 1980s when we worshipped in part of what now is the Auty Lounge. One member of the Young People's Fellowship, Paul Keats had a vision that the Church would grow and a 'new church' would be built with an entrance on Welch Way. The only entrance to the Church then was in the High Street, 33a. This project was inconceivable at the time but in the early 1990's this 'came to pass' after selling land to the Halifax for their bank to be built plus strenuous fundraising to enable the vision to be realised. All this was underpinned by prayer and God moved us forward.

Even today we hear stories of ordinary people whose plans for the future have been overturned by God or confirmed by God.

God had plans for Jesus' future, from His Birth to a Refugee, to a Carpenter, then Teacher, Preacher culminating in His death and Resurrection all of which was bewildering for Jesus' earthly parents, Mary and Joseph.

Our plans today can be made but can also be changed by circumstances e.g. economic, political, severe or unusual weather conditions, or by God's hand. You may or may not think God has a hand in any or all of the aforementioned. God uses ordinary people for His plans and for His purpose. As the Hymn writer A.C. Ainger puts it:

**'God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year' (Rejoice and Sing no 583)**

Do take a Hymn book and read the whole hymn if you are not familiar with the words.

So where are we in all of this? The make-up of our Congregation has changed considerably over the last few years with people dying, moving away from the area and young people going off to university in different parts of the country. However whatever the size and make-up of the Congregation we are still God's people 'working His purpose out in and around Witney' every day of our lives, 'love in action'. The Sunday Gathering is for worship, teaching and refuelling our batteries with the help God's Holy Spirit.

Jesus, during His Ministry, regularly sought time with God in prayer so we too must follow His example and spend time together in prayer seeking guidance concerning a new Minister and ways to continue our Christian witness in our town.

Besides our times on Sunday for corporate prayer there will be other opportunities to come together for prayer in small or larger groups to pray for the future of our Church. Give thanks to God for where we have been, where we are and trust in Him to where he is leading us

Every Blessing,

Beryl

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



The following article, written by Bill Colclough, past member of the Lee Abbey Devon Community, has been re-produced with permission from Lee Abbey, and is entitled:



## Just talk to me

**D**on't be afraid if you don't understand  
Don't fear you won't do it right  
Don't worry about performing  
**Just talk to me**

Don't need no words you can't define  
Don't need a special voice you keep reserved just for me  
Don't even have to close your eyes  
**Just talk to me**

Don't need to wait until you're hopeless  
Don't need a particular reason to call  
Don't need to fake your holiness  
**Just talk to me**



Don't worry that you don't love me enough  
Don't need to do anything special  
Don't pretend you're someone or something that you're not  
**Just talk to me**

Don't need some formal speech about all the social  
and theological issues of the day  
Don't be afraid I won't listen  
Don't use lots of fancy phrases you heard some preacher say  
**Just talk to me**



Don't try to be impressive  
Don't think about your image  
Don't need to be self-conscious  
**Just talk to me**

Don't think it has to make sense  
Don't feel the need to use complete sentences  
Don't feel the need to use words at all  
**Just talk to me**

Don't pretend to be happy if you are not  
Don't be overwhelmed if you feel hopeless  
Don't worry if I'll do what you ask  
**Just talk to me**

Don't feel you have to take all day or all night  
Don't feel the need to be serious or sombre or stressed  
Don't even think about wearing your fancy clothes  
**Just talk to me**

Don't worry if you're pleasing me  
Don't think you have to have all the answers  
Don't try to feel anything different at all  
**Just talk to me**

Don't worry about feeling terribly confident  
Don't try to change the world  
Don't think yourself too bad or too good to do this  
**Just talk to me**

Don't spend your emotional energy getting all worked up over this  
Don't think of me as a perfectionist  
Don't believe everything you hear down there  
**Just talk to me**

Don't keep a list or record of when we chat  
Don't need to make an appointment  
Don't stop to talk to the receptionist  
**Just talk to me**

Don't try to be your preacher  
Don't try to be your mother  
Don't pretend you've got it all together  
**Just talk to me**

Don't need special glasses  
Don't need a microphone  
Don't worry if it isn't good  
**Just talk to me**

Don't lie to me  
Don't question if I understand  
Don't think it doesn't matter  
**Just talk to me**

Don't bother about the rules  
Don't bother about whether there are any  
Don't pursue anything by which to measure yourself  
**Just talk to me**

Don't confuse me with your father  
Don't put that kind of pressure on him or yourself  
Don't try get away from the point of who I am  
**Just talk to me**

Don't try to impress me  
Don't try to hide anything  
Don't concern yourself about whether you're wasting my time with trivialities  
**Just talk to me**

Don't ask if I know about the latest hospital report  
Don't think I don't know all the latest gossip  
Don't wonder if I know the best possible outcome  
**Just talk to me**

Don't think anything is too insignificant to bring up  
Don't worry if you cry  
Don't worry if you don't  
**Just talk to me**

Don't be afraid  
Don't be unnatural  
Don't be anything you don't want to be  
**Just talk to me**

Don't hesitate to shout if you feel like it  
Don't hesitate to rant  
Don't pretend  
**Just talk to me**

Don't forget to laugh with me  
Don't forget that I'm the one who started all this  
Don't forget I already know what you're going to say  
**Just talk to me**

Don't worry about what I might say or think about you  
Don't be concerned if you lose your train of thought  
Don't be surprised if I talk back  
**Just talk to me**

Don't forget to listen  
Don't forget I care more than you can possibly imagine  
Don't worry about the silence  
**Just talk to me**  
**Just talk to me**  
**Just talk to me**

*Bill Colclough, past member  
of the Lee Abbey Devon Community*

Intentionally left blank for your thought(s) associated with this poem, Prayer Letter or any other matter

The following article from Gracetruth has been submitted by Andrew Maclarty, and is entitled:

## **‘The Creations of God - Surpass the inventions of man’ Wood !**

Like all the creations of God, we can say of wood—there’s nothing like it!

Wood has been known to mankind from the creation onwards. The very earliest dwellings were made from wood: traces of wooden tools have survived for thousands of years. A visit to a museum will testify to the durability of wood. In Scotland a village constructed of wood has been submerged below the waters of a lake since prehistoric times—archaeologists reckon at least two and a half thousand years—yet the timber still conforms to the pattern and holds the historical record for posterity. Further, the wood used in making these dwellings did not come from any tree native to the area— trees were introduced there to grow the timber for the dwellings.

A great many things made of metal can also be made of wood, for it is capable of being machined to extremely fine tolerances. In the seventeenth century a fifteen year old Isaac Newton made himself a working clock entirely from wood.

Many of us have marvelled at the inlaid wood decoration in furniture and have been astonished to learn that an antique cabinet, though three hundred years old, is faced with a veneer of superior wood. Such was the quality of wood and such the skill of the craftsmen that it was undetectable.

The handiwork of Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, a man specially raised by God to work on the construction of the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle, must have been a marvellous sight.

Wood is immensely strong. A recent television documentary showed how a single arch stone bridge in China was replaced by a cantilevered wooden construction that had far greater torsional strength than the stone bridge it replaced, yet would not sink into the soft river bank owing to its much less weighty construction – nor would it suddenly collapse, but would give warning by creaking and cracking for a long time before breaking.

Even for the most unlikely applications, on a weight for weight basis wood is far superior to most metals. Some thirty years ago two car designers, searching for some way to give their sports cars more performance, chose to experiment with a largely wooden construction. With wooden chassis and mostly wooden bodywork these cars had a substantial weight advantage over their steel rivals and this advantage transformed into a performance edge in races.

Despite the passage of time and the development of new materials wood is still essential in the construction of houses, particularly for doors and roof joists. No substitute even comes close. Furniture for homes and offices is still made almost entirely of wood. From time to time attempts are made to construct furniture from other substances. Chair frames can be made from tubular metals, as can table legs, but these are heavy and lifeless compared to wooden frames. Storage cabinets made from sheet steel are cold and lifeless to the touch.

Many items of furniture are now made from what is called ‘chip board’ a board made by compressing wood chips and combining with a thick veneer of wood or other substance. Even in this form there is nothing to compare with wood. Chipboard cannot be made from gravel or iron filings, only wood is good enough.

Board made in this way is strong enough to use for house floors etc.

People who work with rulers will confirm that nothing compares with wood. Anyone who works with measures will tell us that no metal rule can be compared with a wooden ruler, tipped with brass ends. Rules made from high quality boxwood can be twirled by the fingertips, but this is impossible with a metal rule, even one made from lightweight aluminium.

Few metals have the resilience of wood. A very special steel is made for use in springs, and sometimes has a comparable resilience to wood, but this is in one plane only, and it shares none of the other properties of wood. Early drills and lathes found in carpenters' workshops were operated by pedal action where the return spring was made of wood. One press on the pedal gave forward movement and power for the return was stored in the wooden spring, an example of stored energy.

Another example of wood's remarkable resilience is found in the bow of the archer. In England many old churchyards are strewn with yew trees. This dates from the middle ages when by order of the king every parish was required to plant yew trees so there would be wood available for making bows for his archers. When the string is pulled by the archer – and it takes a very strong man indeed to draw a bow to full tension—the energy is stored in the wooden bow until it is released –an example of stored energy.

Yet another instance of the stored energy in wood is found when it is burned. From early times people sat around camp fires and warmed themselves. Had they known, they were releasing energy stored in the wood—energy first radiated by the sun. The sun's rays played on the leaves of the tree and the energy was used in the

growth of new wood, first as twigs, then branches then limbs.

### **Charcoal Burning**

For many centuries charcoal has been used to attain great heat for the smelting of metal. From earlier times kilns used in the firing of pottery were raised to great heat by charcoal furnaces.

Even older stored energy is found in coal seams deep underground. They are the fossilized remains of forests that lived thousands of years ago. These fossilized trees contain vast reserves of energy that has lost nothing since the days the trees flourished. Not only is there potential heat, but also many by-products such as oils, creosote, plastics etc. Many folks say coal is too valuable to burn !

Finally, wood floats—had that not been so then boats and ships would never have been made. Until the nineteenth century all boats and ships were made of wood, with very few exceptions. Metal ships are only possible because their shape makes them displace more water than their equivalent weight. Wooden ships can usually be repaired much more easily than steel ships. Large wooden ships would have a carpenter in the crew with the ability to make repairs and even replace a main mast if necessary.

*Yes, the creations of God surpass the inventions of man.*



## 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.*

#### 11. Mark 4:21-34

Mark now chooses to follow up the Parable of the Sower with a number of other short parables or parable-like sayings of Jesus. The setting in which these words are uttered is ambiguous. Mark introduces them in verse 21 with the words "He said to them". Who are the "them"? If we consider that these words are a direct chronological continuation from verse 20, then the setting is with an inner group of disciples gathered around with the twelve. However, verse 34, which concludes the section, speaks of "them" in contradistinction to the inner group of disciples. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that the teaching of Jesus here recorded was given by him, at some indeterminate time and place, to whatever crowd or gathering of people were prepared to listen - maybe the gathering by the seashore to whom the Parable of the Sower was addressed.

The first of this group of sayings is in the form of a rhetorical question concerning the use for which a person brings a lamp into a

dark place. Was the lamp brought in to hide under a large basket or under the bed? Of course not; a lamp is brought in to give light and so it is put in a prominent place on a lampstand. Everybody who listened knew the answer to the question and the ridiculousness of a possible alternative action. However Mark then records words of Jesus which seem to suggest that perchance it is the ridiculous course of action which is practised by some people, (by us?). Possibly the light is not put on the lampstand because there are dark corners of the room, of our lives, which we would prefer not to be lit up, secrets which we would prefer not to be revealed. Light has a nasty habit of showing up things which we either did not know were present or that we would like to pretend are not around in our lives. "I didn't realise how dirty the windows were until the sun shone". Have you ever said that and perhaps half-wished that the sun wasn't shining? Jesus said: "There is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light." Is there not here the challenge of Jesus to be prepared, to get the windows of our lives cleaned before the sun shines upon them, or, to return for a moment to the Parable of the Sower, to till and prepare the soil thoroughly before sowing the seed?

"Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" We may see these words as the conclusion of the preceding sayings in the same way as they mark the conclusion of the Parable of the Sower, or we may consider that they are the introduction to what follows. Possibly Mark intends them to serve both purposes in the structure of his Gospel record. Certainly what he now records is an imperative command from Jesus to listen, to strive to understand, to take in what is being said. The word, variously translated as "pay attention" or "take heed", is ἐκ ἀκούετε ἐν which is most often translated "see". Literally, Jesus is saying "See what you hear!" The picture is that of penetrating



beyond the words to the truth which is in and beyond the words; the call is for a more than superficial listening to what is said; more of the listener's being is to be involved than just the hearing. The words are important but the effort made in understanding is that which will bring rewards. Hence Jesus says: "The measure you give will be what you get, and still more will be given you." If little is put in to listening, to understanding, to worship, to following, then there is little that will be got from these things; but, if the attitude of "seeing what you hear" is applied, the "still more" will be given back than is ever put in. So it is that Jesus goes on to echo, or possibly re-write, the proverb quoted in II Edras 7:25, "Empty things are for the empty, and full things are for the full." That which one puts in is what one gets out with yet more, but if a person puts nothing in, then even that which they could have put in will be lost to them. The Parable of the Sower again remains apposite here; without the preparation of the ground and the sowing there is nothing to grow and so there can be no harvest.

Mark now finds it appropriate to bring into his account two more parables of Jesus concerning growth. Both parables concern the kingdom of God which is described as being "like" or "as if" or "to be compared with." The first describes the kingdom as being as if someone were to scatter seed upon the ground, and then to leave it until it is ready for harvest. The story seems very simple until we start to look closely and then the questions arise: Who is the sower? What exactly is the kingdom like - is it the seed, or the whole process of growth, or is it the harvest? Various interpretations are possible and have been given over the years. One path to understanding is to go back to what Mark records as the first teaching of Jesus (1:14-15), "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news." Jesus sees the kingdom as in his presence,

his activities, in the turning to God of people through faith in him, in his good news, which is God's good news. The fulfilment of a process is found in the activity and presence of Jesus whose task is that of gathering into the kingdom that which is grown. If we look at the parable in this way, the kingdom is present in the harvest of the grain which is ripe. On this basis, the seed has been sown long since by God and has over the years, we know not how, grown until that moment of ripeness when Christ himself puts in the sickle to reap his own. The parable says that the one who sows is the one who reaps: on the foregoing interpretation, the parable poses the question which dominates Mark's Gospel: Who do you say that this Jesus is? Is he the one whom Mark proclaims in his opening words, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God"?

Such an interpretation does present the challenge to decision regarding who Jesus is but maybe it is not the only interpretation which has something to say to us today. Perchance we should see the parable as a reminder to us, to disciples of Jesus, to not be over concerned about how the kingdom grows. The person who sowed the seed did not keep digging it up to see how it was growing but rather left it to the nurture of soil and sun and rain. The sower took his rest at night and went about his business during the day - and, no doubt, rejoiced to see the growth of the crop, even though he did not understand the process by which this marvel happened. He did, however, remain alert and, when the grain was ripe, put in the sickle to reap the harvest. Does this not encourage us to find the real similitude to the kingdom in trust that the king knows what he is doing to bring about its growth? Is it not also a reminder to us that we are required to be alert so that we may go forth and reap the harvest when it is ripe? There can be few sadder sights than that of seeing a crop going to waste because no one has made the effort to harvest that which has grown. Surely we are called to

the task of reaping the harvest of God's sowing so that both God and we may see the fullness of the kingdom and rejoice in it?

There is about this parable a confident expectation of harvest.

This thought leads naturally on to the last parable which Mark records at this point in his Gospel, the Parable of the Mustard Seed which it could be better to call the Parable of the Mustard Tree. The story is very simple, a tiny seed grows into the greatest of all shrubs, so large a shrub that it could be mistaken for being a tree. Mark, in recounting this parable of Jesus, is keen to give great emphasis to the amount of growth that can happen (or has happened) in the kingdom and so introduces an error by stating that the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds when, in fact, many other seeds are smaller. The point is, however, of little importance for the emphasis of this story is not on the seed but on the resultant tree which gives shelter and nest space for the birds of the air. Those Jews who heard Jesus tell his parable would recognise this image of the great tree which sheltered the birds of the air as being that seen by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek.17:23, 31:6) and in the vision of Daniel (Dan.4:12,21). The prophets' visions are of the tree, which protects all the birds of the air, as being a picture of a great empire offering political protection to all its subject states. "The kingdom of God is like this," says Jesus. "The tree is here and now in me - let all people come home to roost." The growth of the kingdom is so that there may be a place for all people to find their fulfilment and rest. Perhaps we should think in terms of a large shrub rather than a tree, for a shrub tends to spread over a much larger area than a tree. Seen like this, the challenge of the parable is that of a kingdom which is much bigger and much more universal than the Jews (and today's church?) are prepared to accept: the Good News is for all.

Mark concludes this section with a reminder that his account is incomplete as there are many more parables which were told by Jesus. Jesus used parables to get over his message, to speak "the word to them as they were able to hear it". The form of Jesus' teaching was tailored to his hearers' needs. Mark then adds the words: "He did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples." As with Mark's overemphasis regarding the smallness of the mustard seed so also we may want to question the absoluteness of this statement particularly as Mark has already reported teaching of Jesus to the crowd which was not in the form of a spoken parable (e.g. 2:8-11; 3:4-5) even though such teaching might be regarded as being given in the setting of an acted parable. If indeed Jesus did explain everything in private to his disciples we may well wonder as to why such explanations do not appear in Mark's record, other than that given for the Parable of the Sower. It could well be that in private the disciples questioned Jesus as to the meaning behind his parables and, good teacher that Jesus was, he encouraged them to work out their own meaning in the situation in which they then found themselves. Over the years, as they grew in their following of Jesus, those disciples would have found different and renewed meanings to Jesus' stories, so that by the time those parables were recounted to Mark, the "meaning" first worked out with Jesus was a secret of their hearts. Now as then, the important meaning of any parable of Jesus is that which a man or woman works out for his or herself before God. "What does this word of Jesus, this story by Jesus mean to me?" could well be for us nearly as important a question as that echoing through the whole of Mark's writing, "Who do you say that this Jesus is?"



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

## **The Growth of WCC (1852-1913)**

In 1853 the County Congregational Union (then known as the Berkshire and Oxfordshire Association) met at Witney. The Rev. Tozer having resigned, his place was taken by the Rev. Henry Perfect.

Unfortunately not everything was perfect. As the Rev. Perfect put it "what a stumbling block to the Church's progress is a quibbling spirit among the members – and what a drawback are incompetent Deacons". By 1857 the situation reached such a parlous state between the Minister and his Deacons, particularly over the management of the village stations, that at his suggestion, the Church actually dissolved itself and continued as a station of the Home Missionary Society.

In 1858, Mr Perfect accepted a call to a Church in Cumberland and he was replaced by the Rev. David Bell M.A. who left the following year. In 1859 the church building was "thoroughly repaired, cleaned and beautified" and the Rev. Thomas Wallace was invited to the pastorate. His ministry lasted four years and there followed a succession of ministers:- Rev. George Bulmer (1864-1870); Rev. John Branton (1870-1874) and the Rev. John Landel Jones (1874-1877). It is recorded in 1860 that a Communion Cup, two salvers and a flagon were purchased.

In the 1870s the village stations continued to be of great concern to the Church and further attempts were made to work them. Open air services were started and the interior of the Church was restored and modernised.

On leaving the Church in 1877 the Rev. Landel Jones records that: - The present

Deacons and I have confided in each other fully. We have had their sympathy, love and co-operation and now as we have through the Grace of God secured peace in the Church, our prayer is that it may continue and that great prosperity may follow".

Thus a stormy period in our Church history seems to have come to an end. Also by the end of the 1870's an outstanding debt was paid off and the Church was free from all its liabilities. It appears that from thence until the beginning of the 1900's, the Church had more stable and happier times.

In 1878 the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Opening of the High Street Church was celebrated and the Vestry and Church Chapel house received restoration work. During this time and up to 1912 the Horne family gave great service to the Church. Firstly with John Horne and then followed by Leonard Horne who served as Deacons and Sunday School Superintendent. In 1881 it was decided at the AGM to elect Deacons for 3 years instead of doing it annually.

The Church was served by various ministers. Rev. Benjamin Sackell (1878-1880); Rev. G W Brownjohn (1881-1886) and the Rev. John Branton (1886-1897) who returned for a second time and then Rev. William Williams F.T.S. (1898-1906). The Rev. Branton records are almost illegible! In 1896 a Mr V Collis was made Deacon and later in 1903 Frank Collis started his long service for the Church. Frank Collis was the father of Sydney Collis and father-in-law of Kathleen Collis who is remembered by some of our members today.

In 1904 the water supply to the Manse was condemned and the Church decided to connect to the Town Sewer and freshwater systems. In 1905 it is recorded

that repairs were made to the organ and stoves in the Church and in December 1905 electric light was installed.

As has happened from time to time when the Church was without a Minister, from 1905-1913 the ministry of the Church was supplied by seven graduate students from Mansfield College, Oxford. They were: R O Nadebaum (1908); F A Stowell (1908-1909); Gordon Matthews (1909-1910); Andrew Thompson (1910-1911); T Gordon Robertson (1911-1912) and C J Haydock (1912). In 1908 The Congregational Church Hymnal was adopted.

Although the motion to sell the Brize Norton Chapel to the Primitive Methodists was raised in 1894 it wasn't until 1909 that the Church finally agreed to its sale.

In 1912 it was the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1662 ejection and so to celebrate this, the Church organised a lecture given by the then Principal of Mansfield College, the Rev. W B Sellie M.A.D.D. on "The Ejection of 1662 and its lessons for today".

It might be of interest to note that in 1909 the Minister Stipend was made up of the Manse Rent plus £75 (an annual endowment) and the Sunday offering!!

### Wordsearch Clues – Holy Cross Day

Holy Cross Day (14<sup>th</sup> September) is when the Church celebrates the Cross as a symbol of triumph, as the sign of Christ's victory over death. It began back in the fourth century, when Helena, mother of the Christian Roman Emperor Constantine, travelled from Rome to Israel to seek out places of special significance to Christians

Much of Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans in 135 AD, but even so, Helena located what she believed to be the sites of the Crucifixion and of the Burial (and modern archaeologists think she may well be correct). The sites were so close together that she built one large church over them - the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. And that church, built in honour of the Cross, was dedicated on 14<sup>th</sup> September 335

The sign of the Cross has been used by Christians since early times. Tertullian, writing about AD 211, noted that Christians seldom did anything significant without making the sign of the cross

*Holy; Cross; Day; Celebrate; Symbol; Triumph; Victory; Death; Helena; Roman; Emperor; Constantine; Rome; Israel; Site; Crucifixion; Burial; Sepulchre; Church and sign*



The following articles have been extracted from Parish Pump

## **Government accepts recommendations on support for Persecuted Christians**

The Bishop of Truro has welcomed the Government's commitment to accepting all of the recent recommendations of the Independent Review into Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Support for Persecuted Christians.

The Rt Revd Philip Mounstephen, who chaired the review, said he hopes it will now become a significant catalyst for change.

Sir Alan Duncan (who was then the Foreign Office Minister) told the House of Commons that the Government had decided to accept every recommendation in full and outlined how they would take them forward. Sir Alan also said that a bold, whole-government response was needed.

Bishop Philip said he was: "delighted that Sir Alan has formally recognised the need for a response across the rest of Government.

"Our review was restricted to looking at the support from the FCO, but there was a feeling from the outset that this needs a cross-governmental approach, as this crucial issue traverses many boundaries and is not something that can be neatly compartmentalised."

The Bishop hoped that there was "a recognition at the highest level that Freedom of Religion or Belief is a fundamental human right - and one that is inextricably interconnected with other basic human rights."

He hoped that "the report will become a catalyst for change and enable Britain to pursue an aspiration to be the global leader in championing this right."

The Bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth, said: "The plight of Christians around the world is all too often overlooked. We now expect this important report to provide renewed impetus for the Government to rise to the challenges so clearly identified and for the UK to become, as the report recommends, 'the global leader in championing Freedom of Religion and Belief for all'."

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## **Angels Unawares**

*By Canon David Winter*

One of those surveys which some newspapers love to publish claimed recently that a large number of British people believe in angels – almost as many, in fact, as claimed to believe in God. They didn't tell us what people meant by 'angels'. I suspect quite a few were thinking of young children who die, who are often now said to be 'angels' 'up there'. They're not, of course. They are transformed human beings. Be that as it may, when Christians celebrate the feast of St Michael and All Angels later this month, there will be many of us, inside and outside churches, who will wonder exactly what or who we are celebrating.

Most simply, the word in the New Testament means 'messenger'. An 'angel' is a being who brings to us God's message or his help. In the Bible angels are variously described. The familiar notion of wings and flight comes from a vision given to Isaiah in the Temple when he was being called as a prophet. The angel Gabriel, who told Mary that she was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, is not described at all, but his words are recorded in detail. Angels speak to people in dreams (Joseph, the husband of Mary, for instance) and Jesus spoke of 'angels' who particularly care for children ('guardian angels').

Most people, even very devout ones, have never knowingly encountered an angel, I guess. However, the New Testament tells us that in 'showing hospitality to strangers' some of us have 'entertained angels without knowing it'. Clearly wings and eyes of flame are not obligatory. Just human care. 'Oh, go on, be an angel and make me a cup of tea!'

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## **Enter all the angels, led by Michael**

*By Canon David Winter*

What is an angel? Easy, people think: a shining figure with glorious wings, who appears from time to time to do some mighty work for God or bring a very special message from him.

Well, that's right in one sense (apart from the wings, which owe more to stained glass windows than the Bible). But the fact that not all 'angels' in the Bible are 'glorious' or 'shining' should make us hesitate to categorise them in this spectacular way.

After all, the three apparently ordinary men who visited Abraham and Sarah to tell them that she would have a son even though she was long past child-bearing age had none of those outward embellishments.

Nevertheless, Abraham recognised them as divine messengers.

The Bible is full of angels, from the early chapters of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation, and often they had a key role in crucial events. It seems, from just two instances, that Michael was their leader, an 'archangel'. In many stained glass windows he's seen with a sword, because in a vision in Revelation he led the angelic host who fought and defeated Satan and his army.

In the Gospels, an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah in the Temple, to tell

him that his elderly wife was to have a son, the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist. An angel - Gabriel - appeared to Mary to tell her that she would be the mother of the Messiah, the Son of God. An angel appeared 'in a dream' to Joseph, the village carpenter in Nazareth, to tell him to go ahead and marry his fiancée, Mary, and later - also in a dream - warned him not to go back to Bethlehem. A 'young man', whom we take to have been an angel, was sitting in the empty tomb on Easter morning, waiting to tell the startled women that Jesus wasn't there - He had risen (Mark 16:5).

Without going into every biblical reference to angels, those should be sufficient to show that the word covers an enormous diversity of experience. So the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of those who practice hospitality as sometimes 'entertaining angels unawares'. Sometimes people recognised angels for who they were, and sometimes they didn't. Angels, quite simply, are God's agents or emissaries, messengers and ministers of His will. Sometimes they are human; sometimes they seem to be spiritual beings.

Perhaps we could even say that *anyone*, in any situation, who is at that moment God's 'messenger' to us, or serves us graciously, is an 'angel'. So, when we say, 'Oh, be an angel and pop up to the chemist for my prescription', we may be nearer the heart of the matter than we think!

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## **Christians escape as Boko Haram attacks northern Cameroon villages**

About 200 families escaped with their lives when Boko Haram Islamist militants recently ransacked a mainly-Christian village in the Far North Region of Cameroon.

The armed gang stormed Roum village, in the Tourou area, setting fire to homes, killing livestock and plundering food stores and possessions.

A Barnabas Fund contact estimated around 1,120 families in the area were now “living in distress”. He said, “The populations have all lost food stocks, clothing, sleeping sets and many other material goods and animals.”

Christian villages in the far north of Cameroon are subject to attacks by Boko Haram militias who are attempting to establish an Islamic caliphate from north-eastern Nigeria all the way to northern Cameroon, which is predominantly Christian. The UN estimates that more than 170,000 Cameroonians, mainly Christians, have been forced to flee

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### **Millions displaced as monsoon causes devastation in south Asia**

Millions of people have been displaced, as monsoon rains cause extreme flooding and devastation in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The most vulnerable have been hit the hardest. Children are particularly affected, with widespread damage and closure to primary schools.

Shivani Rani, Christian Aid’s Emergency Programme Officer for South Asia, said: “Huge numbers of families have been affected, many uprooted and living either in government organised camps or in makeshift shelters. Lack of food, clean water and sanitation are serious issues here with many people stuck in their houses in inaccessible villages. Minority communities, including Dalit groups are the most vulnerable, often unable to access vital food, water and sanitation”.

6.3 million have been affected in India, across 42 districts with Bihar, Assam and

Uttar Pradesh states most affected. Heavy rains and flooding have left many villages marooned by water.

Christian Aid has helped people in India, Bangladesh and Nepal to prepare for disasters over several years but is appealing for much needed support to respond to the scale of need. If you can help, please go to: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/emergencies/south-asia-floods-appeal>

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### **First time around the world – 500 years ago**

Five hundred years ago, on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1519, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan led a Spanish expedition to the East Indies that turned into the first circumnavigation of the world in 1522.

Magellan was a minor Portuguese noble serving the crown until King Manuel I refused to support his bid to reach India by a new route, south of America, through what are now known as the Straits of Magellan. So, he switched allegiance to King Charles I of Spain and set off with five vessels to reach the Spice Islands.

But Magellan was killed in a battle with natives in the Philippines in 1521, when he took the side of a local chieftain who had converted to Christianity and was defeated by one who did not. The circumnavigation was completed under the command of the Spaniard Juan Sebastian Elcano, in the only remaining seaworthy ship, the Victoria.

Magellan had encountered many problems, including a mutiny. Of the 270 who left on the expedition, fewer than 20 returned, and most of them – including Elcano – were anti-Magellan, whose reputation suffered as a result. But Antonio Pigafetta, a Venetian survivor who had kept a diary, was eventually able to put that right.