

# CORNERSTONE

The Magazine of  
**WITNEY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**



Christ Jesus is the chief cornerstone.  
In Him the whole fabric is bound together, as it grows into a temple,  
dedicated to the Lord (Ephesians 2:21)



**2023**

4 Welch Way Witney Oxon OX28 6JF  
Tel: 01993 709992

[www.witneycongregational.org.uk](http://www.witneycongregational.org.uk)  
Office: [witneyconoffice@gmail.com](mailto:witneyconoffice@gmail.com)



Just as stated in the last edition - Doesn't time fly as we have suddenly reached the publication of the Autumn edition covering September, October and November!!

Generally, other than July, the weather has been very good over the last 3 months, and, even though some cannot bear the heat, hopefully most of you have managed to take a break of some kind, some possibly more relaxing than others, and are now feeling rested and refreshed, ready for the next church activities: Film – Casablanca; AGM; Harvest & Quiz

If like me you like sport, there has been plenty to celebrate via the Women's Football World Cup, and even though we didn't win, England exceeded expectations, and recent athletics all of which had good coverage on the television; which probably for some, wasn't particularly good

I now turn to some of this month's contents: along with the standard contributions, there is the penultimate edition in the continuation of Ken Lee's Bible Study; Pip Cartwright gives us the history of WCC, which this time includes the ROCK Appeal and hence the beginning of our current Church and 30 years since the Church's wish to extend the premises; Pat Brent gives a Malawi update; Lesley Barter tells us what it was like walking in The Pyrenees and some articles have been extracted from Parish Pump, 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](mailto:terrypowlesland@uwclub.net)  
[jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net](mailto:jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net)

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

The next 2-monthly edition, covering December 2023 & January 2024, is due on **Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December**

Your Editor



**BST ends 29  
October  
Clocks go BACK**

**Witney Congregational Church is holding  
a Quiz Night  
in aid of Witney Food Bank  
FRIDAY 29<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023  
at 8.00pm**

People can enter in teams of two to six.  
The entrance fee is just £2 per person.

To book your team in please contact Sue on  
(01993) 709992 or email:  
[witneycongooffice@gmail.com](mailto:witneycongooffice@gmail.com) by 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

## Contents

1. Editorial
2. Diary
5. Minister's Letter
6. The divine gardener
7. Prayer Letter No 209
8. Just talk to me
10. WCC – ROCK appeal
13. Persecution of Christians
15. Finding God in the mountains
16. Bible Study
18. Starfish Malawi
19. JRR Tolkien & When Autumn comes
20. How can a Christian be a scientist

# September, October & November Diary

## September

2 <sup>nd</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
	pm	David Kinchin	Communion
10	am	Dr Dave Adams	
17 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	Communion
24 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	

## October

1 <sup>st</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	Harvest
	pm	tbc	Communion
7 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
8 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
15 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	Communion
22 <sup>nd</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
29 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Oliver Kinchin	
	3.00pm	Rev Bryan Doyle	Madley Park Residential home

## November

4 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
5 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
	pm	Hi 5's Café Church	Communion
12 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	Remembrance Sunday
19 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	Communion
26 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	

## December

2 <sup>nd</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	am	tbc	
	pm	tbc	Communion
10 <sup>th</sup>	am	tbc	

The following events are given for your particular attention:

## September

5 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Hi5's Film Night – Casablanca	6.00pm
24 <sup>th</sup>	AGM	
7 <sup>th</sup>	Safe Place and repeated on 14 <sup>th</sup> , 21 <sup>th</sup> & 28 <sup>th</sup>	12.00 – 2.00pm
29 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz Night in aid of Witney Food Bank	6.00pm
30 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am

## October

1 <sup>st</sup>	Harvest Lunch	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
5 <sup>th</sup>	Safe Place and repeated on 12 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup> & 26 <sup>th</sup>	12.00 – 2.00pm
28 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am

## November

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Safe Place and repeated on 9 <sup>th</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> , 23 <sup>rd</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup>	12.00 – 2.00pm
7 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
25 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am
26 <sup>th</sup>	Church Meeting	

## December

5 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
7 <sup>th</sup>	Safe Place and repeated on 14 <sup>th</sup> & 21 <sup>st</sup>	12.00 – 2.00pm

## Rotas

### WELCOMING TEAM

<b>September</b>	03	Janet Hayes
	10	Pat Smith
	17	Jacqui Powlesland
	24	Lesley Barter
<b>October</b>	01	Pat Brent
	08	Janet Hayes
	15	Pat Smith
	22	Jacqui Powlesland
<b>November</b>	29	Lesley Barter
	05	Pat Brent
	12	Janet Hayes
	19	Pat Smith
<b>December</b>	26	Jacqui Powlesland
	03	Pat Brent
	10	Lesley Barter



### FLOWERS

<b>September</b>	03	Janet Hayes
	10	Jacqui Powlesland
	17	Judi Holloway
	24	Rita Hayes
<b>October</b>	01	Harvest Flowers
	08	Pat Brent
	15	Janet Hayes
	22	Jacqui Powlesland
<b>November</b>	29	Judi Holloway
	05	Rita Hayes
	12	Pat Brent
	19	Janet Hayes
<b>December</b>	26	Jacqui Powlesland
	03	Judi Holloway
	10	Rita Hayes



### SUNDAY COFFEE

<b>September</b>	03	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	10	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	17	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
	24	Pat Smith & Pat Brent
<b>October</b>	01	Harvest Lunch
	08	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	15	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	22	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
<b>November</b>	29	Pat Smith & Pat Brent
	05	Elaine Kinchin Glenn Ryan
	12	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	19	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
<b>December</b>	26	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
	03	Elaine Kinchin & Glenn Ryan
	10	Pat Smith & Pat Brent



**THURSDAY COFFEE (10 – 12)**

<b>September</b>	07	Jean Hodgson
	14	Elaine Kinchin
	21	Judi Holloway
	28	Pat Smith
<b>October</b>	05	Ann Clack
	12	Jean Hodgson
	19	Judi Holloway
	26	Pat Smith
<b>November</b>	02	David Kinchin
	09	Ann Clack
	16	Jean Hodgson
	23	Elaine Kinchin
	30	Judi Holloway
<b>December</b>	07	Pat Smith

**Soup Lunch (12 – 2)**

See Rota in kitchen



**Nanna Blackman as standby - We would be extremely grateful for other people to join**

**SOUND SYSTEM**

<b>September</b>	03	Terry Powlesland
	10	Nanna Blackman
	17	Terry Powlesland
	24	Nanna Blackman
<b>October</b>	01	Terry Powlesland
	08	Nanna Blackman
	15	Terry Powlesland
	22	Nanna Blackman
	29	Terry Powlesland
<b>November</b>	05	Terry Powlesland
	12	Nanna Blackman
	19	Terry Powlesland
	26	Nanna Blackman
<b>December</b>	03	Terry Powlesland
	10	Nanna Blackman



**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

<b>Sept</b>	03	Bryan Doyle
	08	Joy Dawe
	09	Judith Bungey
	12	Jean Hodgson
	18	Julia Hutchings
	19	Ann Clack
	23	Clare Ryan
	28	John Garrett



<b>Oct</b>	08	Rita Hayes
	10	Susan Wass
	13	Luke Lau
	15	Chris Esapa

<b>Nov</b>	17	Olaug Usher-Witz
	18	Fleur Faith de Fraine
	19	Nanna Blackman
	26	Ellie Rose Esapa
		Elaine Kinchin
		Hilary Pratley

## MINISTER'S LETTER

Greetings, in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

As Summer begins to fade and we await the falling of the leaves from the spectacularly colourful Autumnal trees, it's timely to reflect on our ever-changing world. Although our world is ever-changing, our God is never changing. Hebrews 13: 8, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*"

Let's take stock of the "*state of our world*" and let's be brief and honest.

Well, *economically*, we're in a crisis! No government seems to have enough money to run their country!

*Politically*, we're in a crisis! There's in-fighting and corruption in many governments and even military takeovers!

What about the subject of *wars and rumours of wars*? Unfortunately, also in crisis mode! The ongoing war in Ukraine and many localised civil wars are being fought!

*Climatically*, we're also in crisis! (Global warming, floods and widespread wildfires). The result is a lack of food, water and shelter, causing mass migration of people.

Then, what about *inter-personal relationships*, how are they faring? They too, aren't doing very well – in fact, they're in crisis too! (The very fabric of society, our families, are falling apart – to use modern terminology, they're often *dysfunctional*).

Even the *Christian Church* is in crisis! Its witness is being tarnished by reports of widespread abuse – physical, emotional and financial!

Well, are you feeling a touch *overwhelmed and downcast* after that brief overview of the "*state of our world*?"

A careful reading of the Bible will reveal that *nothing that is taking place in our world today is new*. They may present themselves differently, but each of these *crises* have been part of life on earth before. We read these words in Ecclesiastes 1:9, "*What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.*"

However, we ought to be a *people of hope, never overwhelmed or downcast about the world and its state* because our Eternal God, not only created the world, but He is also our Sovereign God who rules and reigns over all the earth. He is all-seeing, all-knowing, all-wise and all-powerful. He will never be caught by surprise at anything going on in this world of ours or in our lives!

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, "*May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.*"

Our Sovereign, faithful, loving, gracious and merciful God *will do it* – everything is under His control and His plans will come to pass, in His perfect timing!

Another reason for us to be a *people of hope* is that He lives in us by His *Holy Spirit*. Paul writes in Galatians 2:20, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave*

*Himself for me.” We are no longer alone because Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, is our power for living and our hope for the future!*

As we continue together on our adventure with God, let’s continually draw near to Him and place our hope and faith in Jesus Christ, as we love and serve Him faithfully.

Your brother in Christ,

Bryan

*Closing prayer: Lord God, just as the leaves fall from the trees during the Autumn season, and You prepare the trees for a time of regrowth and renewal, please work in us and remove anything that hinders our relationship with You and with one another and renew us so that we become fruitful builders of your Kingdom with You. I ask this in Jesus Name. Amen.*

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

## **The divine Gardener**

This is the time of year for many churches to hold their Harvest Festival services. No doubt, there will be displays of food, some grown in local gardens. While gardeners have pleasure growing fruit and vegetables, it can be hard work tending to them.

Jesus knew about the care given to vines. In John 15:1-8 Jesus compared Himself to a vine and referred to God as the gardener. In this parable, God is responsible for pruning the vine. He sees what parts are useful, and what parts useless. The unproductive parts are cut away, so that growth is encouraged. Jesus is telling us that God will prune our lives, not to harm us, but to encourage our spiritual growth.

God’s pruning cuts away wrong attitudes and wasteful behaviour, all of which serve no useful purpose in our lives. This pruning is required so that we become more fruitful. And the fruit God wants is love, joy, patience etc. (see Galatians 5:22-23) These holy qualities are intended to influence the world to change it from the bad to all that is good.

To encourage its growth, a vine has regularly to be cut back. The effect looks drastic, but it is still essential. When God cuts away the dead wood in our lives, He does it because He knows how our lives can grow. The pruning knives are in the hands of our Father God who only desires the best for us. This pruning process can be painful, but Jesus says that it is vital if the Holy Spirit is to flow through us to produce the fruit that God wants.

Also in this parable, Jesus said He was the Vine, and we are the branches. We have no existence apart from Jesus. We can do nothing for God on our own and must be joined to Jesus. In the same way a vine utilises the life-giving sap to flow into the branches, so we need the Holy Spirit to flow His life into us. It is only by us remaining in Jesus, that He can give us the inner resources for an effective fruit-producing life.

Jesus said, ‘*Abide in Me*’ (John 15:4 King James Version). Abiding speaks of sustenance, being upheld and supported, enduring and withstanding. So, if we are to reap a harvest of holiness, may we be prepared for God’s pruning, and continue to abide in Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.



## PRAYER LETTER No 209

This is a difficult letter to write! Midway through a sermon series on prayer, delivered by our minister, I am supposed to come up with something different to say about prayer. But there is nothing new or different to say about prayer – over the centuries it has all been said, written about, digested, regurgitated, pondered upon...

I dug out an old book called “Be thou my vision, a diary of prayer” compiled by Christopher Herbert. The book has 31 double page spreads, one for each day of the month, and for each there is a starting point for Adoration – often a verse of Scripture; a place to begin a prayer of Confession; some words to lead the person praying into Thanksgiving; some suggestions for prayers of Intercession; and finally a closing passage labelled Dedication – where the pray-er can come out of the dedicated time of prayer and into the rest of the day. There is a space each day to add personal lists which is also introduced by some helpful words. At least two of the encouraging or introductory sections were written by other authors. To make it clearer, here is Day 30:

**ADORATION:** Romans 11:33, 36 which includes: How deep are God’s wisdom and knowledge.

**CONFESSION:** O most Holy God, you know me better than I know myself, forgive what needs forgiveness, strengthen what is weak, and give me wisdom for Jesus’ sake, Amen.

**THANKSGIVING:** Thank God that he is God

**INTERCESSION:** Pray for all who work in difficult situations: sailors, fisherfolk, police, nurses, street pastors...

**DEDICATION:**

I find prayer so powerful that I need but one:  
Heavenly Father, grant me the wisdom  
to see the good in everyone and everything.  
You know my needs: I do not need to ask,  
I appreciate your gifts. Amen *James Haylock Eyre*

**PERSONAL LIST** is headed by:

I said to the man who was stood at the Gate of the Year: “Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown”. And he replied: “Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way”.

*Minnie Haskins*

I love the prayer by J. H. Eyre as it echoes the words of Jesus: “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words”. Matthew 6:7 (NRSV)

We do not need to keep talking, to say things in different ways, to add in silly details. God knows these things. Let us keep our prayers simple and remember to listen for answers!

Over the last few months, those of us on the prayer chain have been asked to pray for: the situation in Niger and especially for one family (friends of Bryan and Ruth) and their work; for various people with mental and physical health problems; for the recently bereaved; and with good news - for a family with a new baby; and a job promotion.

Every Blessing,

Elaine

*Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Elaine 07534 879449)*



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**

<p>Don't try to be impressive          Don't think about your image          Don't need to be self-conscious  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>Don't bother about the rules          Don't bother about whether there are any          Don't pursue anything by which to measure yourself  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>
<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>
<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>
<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>Don't try to be your preacher          Don't try to be your mother          Don't pretend you've got it all together  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>
<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>Don't need special glasses          Don't need a microphone          Don't worry if it isn't good  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>Don't think anything is too insignificant to bring up          Don't worry if you cry          Don't worry if you don't  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>
	<p>Don't lie to me          Don't question if I understand          Don't think it doesn't matter  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	

<p>Don't be afraid          Don't be unnatural          Don't be anything you don't want to be  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>
<p>Don't hesitate to shout if you feel like it          Don't hesitate to rant          Don't pretend  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p>Don't forget to listen          Don't forget I care more than you can possibly imagine          Don't worry about the silence  <b>Just talk to me</b>  <b>Just talk to me</b>  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>
<p>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  <b>Just talk to me</b></p>	<p><i>Bill Cairncross, past member          of the Lee Abbey Devon Community</i></p>

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

The following article, written & submitted by Pip Cartwright, was correct when first published in July 2006, and corrections have been made since then, and is a continuation from the last edition, and is entitled:

## **Church Building Development (ROCK Appeal) 1990-1996**

ROCK was an acronym for **Reaching out for Christ's Kingdom**. With the induction of the Rev. Michael Heaney in September 1990 ably assisted by his wife Rose, activities within and outside the Church increased.

During the interregnum Church membership had slowly decreased due to people moving away from Witney or worshipping in other local churches. However, use of our limited old buildings continued. Wear and tear on our limited resources was apparent.

It must be remembered that the old building consisted of a Sanctuary which was 35% of the present Auty Lounge. Two small rooms off the Sanctuary, where our Kitchen is today, were a dingy Vestry and Office/Storeroom. A small room to the left of the foyer entrance on the High Street (now the St Andrew's Bookshop), a wooden panelled Committee Room (used originally by the Sunday School) but used by the Citizens Advice Bureau and an antiquated Kitchen behind the Committee Room with door access off the foyer by the stairs. Upstairs we had a long room and the Rainbow Room used by our youth organisations and currently Guideposts

With the coming of the Rev. Heaney, Church Membership increased. (61 new members between 1990-1994). On a few occasions the Sanctuary was so full that late comers had to sit outside in the foyer.

This situation was crystallised in May 1991 when the local Planning Officer informed us that a proposed development of a superstore along Welch Way might affect the Church. In fact the developers offered to buy our garden (which was much bigger then) to make service access easier. The pressure on our

overburdened and limited facilities led to the situation where the Minister and Deacons felt that the Church needed to be extended in the near future and we needed all our land. A working party was set up to consider the possibilities and in July 1991 a questionnaire was handed out to Church Members. Of the 52 replies, 2% agreed that our present Church needed extension or alteration and 70% expressed the desire to consider a purpose built Church.

In November 1991 Alistair Watson, a Christian Architect from Thatcham was approached and went ahead to make preliminary plans based on facilities we thought the Church needed.

In January 1992 the architect proposed a development costing approximately £400,000. This plan included a new Sanctuary, Vestry, Office, Toilets and School Rooms and extending the old Sanctuary to make a lounge and new kitchen. The possibility of a flat for Minister or Caretaker was also considered. This new development would take up half of the garden.

After much prayer and discussion particularly regarding finances, the Church stepped out in faith and agreed to apply for full planning permission (51 for and 2 against) and Alistair Watson submitted plans to West Oxfordshire District Council in May 1992. Mr Watson provided a full set of plans and breakdown of cost of phasing of the Development.

In November 1992 planning permission was granted and a Deacon, Mr Pip Cartwright, was asked to coordinate the setting up of a Building Fund and a Fund Raising Committee. Fund raising started immediately.

Mr George Howell, Chairman of Trustees, approached the Halifax re the sale of the freehold of their site and in January 1993 they offered £50,000. He also arranged for the money in the Church Capital Trust Fund (£220,000) to be made available for the Church Development. This was the invested money raised from the selling of the old High Street Church site. It was considered

advisable that £10,000 be kept back to cover any major repairs that might occur.

In March 1993 Mr John Jarman was asked to chair a Fund Raising Committee consisting of Mrs Elaine Hayes, Mr Pip Cartwright, Mrs Judi Holloway, Mrs Jacqui Taylor and Mr Tony Clark.

Mr Alistair Watson agreed to address the Church at a Special Church Meeting held on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 1993. He explained his plans and offered 4 options. These varied from Option 1 which would cost £316,000, where much of the shell would be built and only the Sanctuary, Vestry and fully fitted kitchen would be completed to Option 4 which included everything and costing £440,000.

May 1993 Tenders were sent out to 6 firms (3 local and 3 nationally). The returns which varied from £346,619 to £430,623 were evaluated by Mr Watson and at a Church meeting in September 1993 under the guidance of Mr Watson, Western Counties Construction (£361,714) was given the contract. At a further meeting between the Directors and Mr Watson, it was agreed to commence work on a figure of £270,000, which would provide the shell of the main building with a completed foyer, Sanctuary, crèche room, kitchen and stores. The Church Office, Vestry, Toilets, Rooms 1, 2 and 3 and 1<sup>st</sup> Floor would be finished at a later date as finances allowed. To complete the ground floor would cost £292,000. The £270,000 phase was accepted by the Church Meeting.

Work started on October 11<sup>th</sup> 1993 and was scheduled to last 40 weeks. Payment of the first phase relied on the Church Capital Trust money and sale of the Halifax freehold and £12,000 already raised by the Building Fund (now called the ROCK Appeal).

**Our first celebration was on December 18<sup>th</sup> 1993 with the Stone Laying Ceremony carried out by one of our youngest children, Charlotte Hayes, and our oldest member, Mrs Mary Honey, in the presence of our Minister,**

**Deacons, Mr Watson and many friends and members. You can see this stone in the wall to the left of the Sanctuary doors.**

I feel it is important at this juncture to mention fund raising: The monies from the Church Capital Trust and critically the sale of the Halifax freehold covered the largest part. Loans from the Congregational Federation (Area and National) and our Bank were considered. Sadly in December 1992 Mrs Elsie Auty, wife of a former Minister (1938-1953) and one of our oldest members, died. Her family having pre-deceased her, generously left the monies from the sale of her home in Davenport Road, to the Church. The interest from this invested money was to be used for repairs and upkeep for the Church. St Andrew's Christian Bookshops were approached to see if they would like to be part of the Development, commanding a prime site for a shop on the corner of Welch Way and the High Street next to the Halifax Building Society. With rent income from Citizens Advice Bureau and Pregnancy Crisis, who occupied rooms next door, further income could be generated.

To achieve completion of our Development it was considered that the Church needed to raise £50,000 which was the task of the ROCK Appeal. Suggestions for fund raising activities were called for. One Gift Day raised over £500 as did a generous Wedding Gift, but social activities were paramount. Fund raising activities included:-

Auctions, Bar-B-Qs, Bring and Buy sales, Buy-a-Brick, Bazaar, Coffee and Cakes (each week), Concerts and three performances of Saints Alive (Roger Jones) Musical, produced by Judi Holloway, ( raising over £1,000 ), filling Smarty Tubes with 5p's and 20p's (raised £1,000), sponsored Half Marathon (our Minister and Dr Paradine), House Parties, Ladies Craft, selling Marmalade, ); Moth Watch (Lawrence Bee), Musical Evenings, New Beginnings (Keep Fit sessions led by Mrs Beryl Cartwright), Plant Sales, Seekers Week

(activities for youngsters during school holidays), Sponsored Slim and Toy sales.

Michael Heaney, when he launched the ROCK Appeal, said it was a test of our faith. The £50,000 was a 'financial faith gap'. We needed to consider our commitment and pray about it.

The ROCK Appeal money would be vital in completing all the details of the Development. The Church responded with enthusiasm and imagination and the target was reached in 1996.

With the commencement of work, we lost the use of our Sanctuary and Rainbow Room. Thus, accustomed to being peripatetic, we worshipped at The Batt C. of E. School hall on Sunday mornings and our Evening Services were held in The Long Room. The Church tried to continue as normal as best as possible. The Neighbourhood Centre ceased but the Coffee Bar and youth activities were able to continue. Much dust and disruption was overcome with good humour.

In February 1994 at a Special Meeting, the Church was told that for a further £55,000 the whole of the downstairs could be completed and the upstairs walls plastered and ceiling artexed. It was agreed to use the offer of an interest free loan from the Congregational Federation South West Midlands Area (£8,000) and National Congregational Federation (£3,000) and a commercial rate loan from our Bank (£35,000).

The St Andrew's Bookshop agreed to open a shop in Witney on a partnership basis (split profits 50/50) and this opened in August 1994.

By July 1994 the Roof was on and good progress was made on the interior. It was hoped that the work would be finished by August. This was in the main accomplished, but tidying up and seeding of the grass area continued.

**On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1994 a Service of Dedication of the New Sanctuary and premises took place.** The Official Opening

(cutting of a ribbon on the foyer doors) was done by Mrs Andrea Adams, who was the President of the Congregational Federation. Many people were present including the Mayors of Witney and Carterton. The Address was given by Pastor Graham Adams BA, MBA, General Secretary of the Congregational Federation.

Under the leadership of Mr Pip Cartwright a team of members decorated the upstairs rooms and two rooms for Junior Church were ready by November 1994.

Unfortunately, an important glitch regarding the sale of the Halifax freehold had continued on in the background. It revolved around West Oxfordshire District Council's insistence that the Halifax continued to rent the car park. It was finally resolved in March 1995 and the sale went through. Sadly, it meant the Church had to borrow another £66,000 until the sale was completed.

With the need for new chairs for the Sanctuary and other furnishings, fund raising had to continue.

In June 1995 the Church decorated and furnished the Flat in order that the Rev. Rupert Hambira from Botswana, who was on a 2-year course at Mansfield College, could stay there.

Thus, the Development was finished. Our debt was cleared in 1996, the 'faith gap' was bridged and we now have our lovely new Church and buildings.



The following articles have been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## **Persecution of Christians:**

### **Conflict in Sudan puts Christians at greater risk**

Since the fighting broke out in Sudan this April, thousands have been killed and several million have been displaced.

Ceasefire attempts by the warring parties – the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) – have failed, and the conflict has now spread beyond the capital Khartoum to the south. It is affecting the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, where there are large Christian communities who are already vulnerable.

“We are deeply concerned,” said bishops from South Sudan, where many are fleeing to. “The conflict is destabilising the region which is already fragile.”

Since fighting broke out, more than 165 churches have closed and at least 15 have been destroyed. Churches have also reported human rights violations such as rape, kidnap and looting. “There are many Christians still present in the war zones today who do not have any means to flee, who are suffering, and we cannot reach them,” says a local partner. “This is very tough for us; they are part of the body in Christ.”

“Christians in Sudan are especially vulnerable and on the receiving end in war times,” adds Fikiru. “We ask that churches worldwide do not grow tired or forget to pray for the situation in Sudan.”

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Fear among Christians in Niger**

On Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July, the army in Niger announced a coup and removed the country’s president, Mohamed Bazoum,

from power. The West African country’s borders were closed, a nationwide curfew imposed, and all government institutions were suspended.

General Abdourahmane Tchiani has since declared himself the new leader of Niger. This military takeover marks the ninth coup in the West and Central Africa region in the last decade.

“The country is in tension now,” shares an Open Doors partner in Niger. “We are not sure how the current situation will affect the church in Niger, because we don’t know how this new government feels about Western support, especially France.

“We also don’t know whether this military junta will be friendly with the church, given that there are many Muslims within the army who have extremist views,” they continued.

“If they are among this new junta, then persecution for the church may well be on the rise,” explains the Open Doors partner. “There is great fear among Christians now, because nobody knows what is going to happen during these protests. They did something like this some years back, which ended up in burning churches and Christian properties, such as shops and houses. Therefore, there is a need for prayer regarding tomorrow’s demonstration.

“Please pray for stability in the country, because there are a lot of rumours on social media. Also pray for the church in Niger, and let this new regime favour them.”

\*\*\*\*\*

### **How China is increasing persecution of Christians**

China has been trying to tighten its grip on Christians in China through a programme of ‘Sinicization’, a policy to compel churches to adopt the atheist ideology of the Communist Party.

According to reports, a recent conference in Jilin was attended by state-appointed pastors of the government-controlled Three Self Church. It called for Christianity with a Communist core to be exported around the world. And it concluded with a rallying cry to 'change the face of world Christianity' – which was greeted with thunderous applause.

So, what does this hybrid of Communism and Christianity look like in China itself?

The official policy of Sinicization, of state assimilation and control, has led to a ban on online religious content and the tearing down of more than a thousand crosses from official churches. Pastors have been imprisoned, along with Chinese lawyers who try to defend their legal right to display the cross of Christ on their buildings.

The Communist Party has insisted that pictures of Mao and President Xi Jinping are displayed in churches and demanded recently that a large hammer and sickle be put up beside a church sign in Zhejiang province.

Pastors who rock the boat are put under surveillance, singled out for harassment, and accused of extremism. Some who take up offerings have been arrested for fraud or illegal business operations.

The current wave of persecution in China has been described as the most severe since the Cultural Revolution.

Yet China watchers point out that thousands of Chinese Christians each year express what they think of Sinicization by voting with their feet to leave the Three Self Church. There is an exodus to the unofficial house churches.

Bob Fu, a partner of UK-based Release International, says that, despite worsening persecution, the church is growing: "Secular Purdue University estimates the number of Christians in China today has already – at minimum – exceeded 100 million."

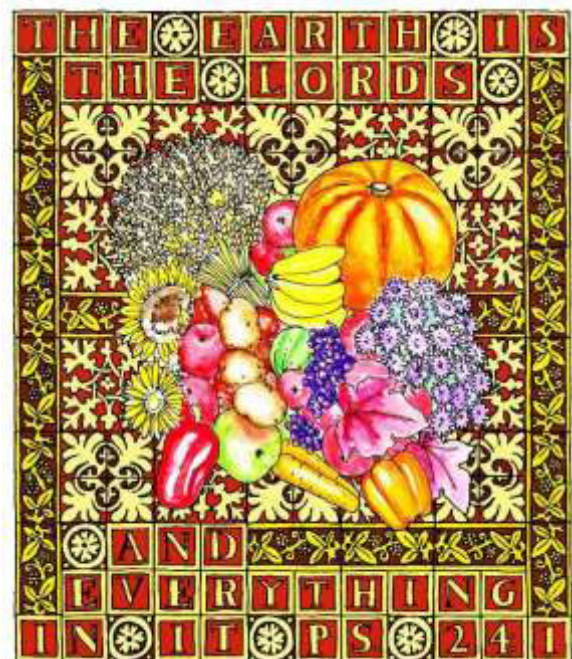
The following article has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

### **God can use everything we give Him**

The story is told of a man in charge of building a great church, who was pestered by an apprentice who wanted to design the glass for one of the windows. Finally, he agreed that the apprentice should be given one very small window. BUT – the apprentice would have to provide all the materials himself.

Undaunted, the apprentice carefully swept up all the stray bits of coloured glass that had been discarded and set to work. Slowly, and with great care, he pieced together a window of rare beauty. When the church was finally opened, many people stopped to stare in wonder at his small, but so beautiful, iridescent window.

Our lives can be like that - no matter how small we may feel, or that we have only scraps to offer to God, He can still help us use every bit of time and energy and love we do have, to build a life that is beautiful, and which will reflect the glory of God to others.



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

## **Finding God in the Mountains**

Like many people, the times when I have felt God to be closest are when I have been outside, in the countryside or in a beautiful garden. Often in majestic surroundings or gazing at breath-taking landscapes. I am reminded that I am only a tiny part of His great creation and yet, unbelievably, I am not insignificant. We are all known intimately to Him and we have a part to play in His world.

This I know, but I often have trouble convincing myself that it is true. I was reminded of the truth of it this summer.

One of my holidays recently was taken walking in The Pyrenees. It is a landscape of towering mountains, blue lakes and forest valleys. It is sublime in all senses of the word. The soundtrack is of birdsong and distant cowbells. Although it is a ramblers paradise, it is not unusual to walk all morning and see no one. The narrow, uneven tracks often zigzag up steep valley sides, with the occasional small hamlet visible down below. Small though these places were, they all had a church – sometimes more than one. Indeed, the valley where I was staying is famous for the 5 Romanesque churches within it. It was these that I had come to see especially. The area is designated a World Heritage Site because of these, as well as a number of hermitages that we came across on our walks. The churches mostly have elegant bell towers, from which we could view the magnificent vistas outside. They also have some wonderful early wall paintings depicting Christ, the Virgin, Saints and Angels. The inside of these buildings must have been filled with colour and vibrant images when they were built. It is hard to ignore the

atmosphere in these remote communities where Christianity has endured since the ninth century – despite the Moorish conquest and persecution for heretical worship. One of the better known of the sects that sought refuge in the caves of The Pyrenees were the Cathars, hunted to extinction in Medieval times.

As Christians we are privileged to enjoy a rich and powerful heritage. It is a responsibility, but also a support. These ancient, holy buildings re-enforce faith and their majestic surroundings speak of an all-powerful God who will never abandon even the least of us. For this reason it is crucial that we maintain and preserve our own historic holy places. Tragically we lost many during the Reformation and those that are left are in constant need of restoration and repair. Dwindling congregations are struggling with the financial burden that this entails. They are not a luxury, they tell the story of our faith here in Britain and that matters. We must campaign to ensure that it doesn't just disappear by default.

I started by celebrating the joy of finding God in his glorious natural creation. It behoves us to give back our thanks in worship inside buildings and monuments that are worthy and which tell the story of his bounty.





## 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 this is the penultimate Study in this series, 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.*

### 29. Mark 11:1-11.

"When they were approaching Jerusalem ..... he sent two of his disciples and said to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you'. Leaving aside for the moment the question as to what was the mission on which the two disciples were sent, this action of Jesus is a clear indication of his taking the initiative, the initiative as to how he will enter the city from which has radiated scepticism and opposition to his ministry. Mark describes the event as happening "at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives." The significance of Bethphage is somewhat of a mystery as Mark makes no other mention of the village. Moreover the exact site of Bethphage appears to be in some doubt although it is generally reckoned to have been nearer to Jerusalem and to the Mount of Olives than Bethany. We may speculate that it was after Jesus and his disciples had passed through Bethany and were approaching the Mount of Olives that Bethphage, situated on the slopes of the Mount, was "the village ahead of you" into which Jesus sent his two disciples. However, seeing that it was to Bethany that Mark

records Jesus as returning for the night (v.11) it may be to that village that the disciples were sent on their errand. Neither of these two villages had any particular significance in popular Jewish expectations of the period, unlike the Mount of Olives which was featured in prophecy concerning the coming of the Lord. Although Mark makes no reference to them, the prophecies of Zechariah regarding the coming of the triumphant and victorious king (9:9) and of the Lord fighting for Israel with his feet implanted upon the Mount of Olives (14:3-4) were well-known and were often linked together in the minds of expectant Jews. Mark pictures Jesus as approaching Jerusalem along the expected Messianic route.

Mark further presents the entry to Jerusalem at this time as being carefully prepared for in advance by Jesus. His words to the two disciples as he sends them on an errand are very precise. They are told exactly where to go and what they will find when they get there, and they are given a precise message to give to anyone who questions what they are doing. Everything about their errand goes very smoothly and they return to Jesus with a young donkey which has never been ridden. It is difficult to picture such a sequence of events happening so easily without a certain measure of prearrangement. To find a donkey tethered in a village street would be highly likely in most villages, but to find one that had never been ridden, and to know that it had never been ridden would indicate pre-planning. Alternatively, it could indicate some form of divine foreknowledge on the part of Jesus, as well as attributing very persuasive powers to the two disciples. Such a reading calls into question the real humanity of Jesus and also indicates the presence of character attributes in the disciples which up to this time Mark has not shown them to possess. The event indicates preparation, preparation of which neither Mark nor the disciples of Jesus present with him at this time may have been aware. Mark here records events on the basis of what

he had been told.

The message which the two disciples take with them, with which to respond to any questions asked of them as they seek out the young donkey, may also be seen to have a significance. "The Lord needs it." Such are the words Jesus bids them to say. They are words by which he claims authority, a lordship not just over those, his disciples, who call him their Lord but over others as well. He is "The Lord". A significant claim and a change of emphasis from earlier in his ministry, a change which we saw at Jericho when he did not rebuke Bartimaeus for calling him "Son of David". The hour has come for Jerusalem to acknowledge or deny its Lord. The crucial choice is about to be openly put before Israel. But Jesus is to put that choice in a way which breaks the linkage in the popular imagination between the two Zechariah prophecies. The turmoil and destruction pictured by Zechariah in Chp.14 with its emphasis on vengeance and all the nations effectively being forced to come to Jerusalem to worship, or else to be smitten with plague, finds no place in the action planned by Jesus, an action based on Zechariah 9:9-10 which speaks of the king who comes in peace, who comes to do away with war, not only for Israel but for all the nations. The claim is being made by Jesus; will people accept him as King, and will they understand what is the way in his kingdom?

Mark records events which seem to indicate that at least there were some people who were willing to respond positively to the claim Jesus was making. The disciples brought the donkey and, seeing that Jesus wished to ride upon the beast, made some sort of improvised saddle out of their cloaks. Jesus then sat on the donkey, and the donkey let him ride it. Here was a donkey that had never been ridden before but who doesn't appear to kick out, or sit down, or object in any way when Jesus mounts upon his back. Surely here we have yet another picture of the peace which Jesus comes to bring, the donkey feels safe and secure in this new experience. So Jesus sets

out to ride the remaining distance into the city. Among those around him, maybe one of the disciples, maybe simply another pilgrim who had come up from Jericho at the same time as Jesus and his disciples, we just do not know who started it off, but someone suddenly wakes up to what is happening. Pilgrims don't ride into Jerusalem; only the one who comes in the name of the Lord rides. A light dawns, a question is faced and answered, a decision is made - and down in front of the donkey's feet goes a cloak to pave the road. In a moment or two, it is followed by another, and then by some greenery from a tree, and some bundles of long grass - and the excitement spreads. and voices are raised in praise echoing words from one or more psalm (e.g. Ps 118:25-26.) So Mark pictures Jesus entering Jerusalem.

Jesus is recognized as the Messiah! Such is the conclusion we might draw from Mark's account. Yet is such a conclusion justifiable, was it so? Maybe it was for some people, yet the words which Mark records as being shouted out do not necessarily point to such a conclusion. Jesus is greeted as "one who comes in the name of the Lord" - in other words as a messenger from God, one among many such messengers whom God had sent through the ages. Further, reference is made not to the king nor to God but to the "coming kingdom of our ancestor David", an expression which speaks of those who look for the reinstatement of an independent Jewish State. Such shouts could be simply the exuberance of pilgrims drawing close to the climax of their journey to the festival rather than being an understood response to the actions of Jesus. There is ambiguity here; maybe Mark intend this to be so. He has moved on in his story from the times when Jesus told those who gave him Messianic titles to keep quiet, not to tell anyone else, to the situation where Jesus accepts such a title from Bartimaeus and appears to claim such a title in the message sent with those who fetched the donkey. Mark has moved his account on to a situation

where Jesus openly enacts a Messianic role. Yet it is not clear as to whether those who were present really understood. How did they truly respond to the constant question: "Who is this Jesus?"

Maybe some of those pilgrims were thinking, "Could this be the Messiah?" or even "Yes, this is the Messiah" but if so, they seem to have made little impression on those around them or on the city of Jerusalem. The fascinating thing about this story is that, according to Mark's account, nothing else happened. Jesus entered Jerusalem in this highly demonstrative manner, in a way which made a tremendous claim for himself and yet nobody in authority appeared to take any notice whatsoever. Admittedly, the pilgrim route from the Mount of Olives led down into the Kedron Valley and then up to the great terrace on which Herod the Great had built the temple, through the Golden Gate straight into the colonnaded area of Solomon's Portico, part of the temple precincts. So the procession surrounding Jesus would not have passed through the city streets and may have been unnoticed by the authorities. If so, it indicates the relative smallness of the number of people involved. Perhaps Mark is here pointing his readers as to how easy it is to miss God's moment when it comes. Or maybe he is challenging his readers to think as to how easy it is to for them to shout out praise concerning Jesus when the sun shines bright and religious expectation is high, and then how quickly the enthusiasm and commitment fade away as night begins to fall. Be that as it may, Mark records that Jesus went into the temple, looked around at everything and, because it was late, went back out to Bethany with the twelve disciples. We are left to assume that the donkey was returned to its owner as had been promised(v.3). The end of an eventful day has come and all seems quiet and peaceful; and yet Mark leaves us with a sense of tension in the scene which he has set; there is no going back; Jesus had come to Jerusalem "in the name of the Lord". How will Jerusalem

respond in the days immediately ahead?



The following article has been submitted by Pat Brent, and is entitled:

### **Starfish Malawi**

Bible Explorer project inews reaching hundreds of children and schools across the Salima area.

Glad Tidings Orphan Care is painting a mural to greet the new young people when they arrive.

3.8 Million people in Malawi are facing further increases in their food prices because of the bad weather and the depreciation of their currency.

Our lorry arrived at the end of August and its cargo is being distributed much to the joy of everyone. More next time!

By the way the Walk which was in July/August has raised £3310 so far & we had a cheque from the Church for £220 which was from the sixpences collected in Church.

We are finishing doing blankets for Malawi because of difficulties in getting them to the distribution centres. These 18 months we have made 19 blankets and about 4 scarves - Well done everyone

Thanks go to a dedicated team of packers in UK who have boxed up hundreds of boxes, weighed and labelled them. Sadly, our blankets are not among them.

The following articles have been extracted from Parish Pump:

## Remembering the genius of JRR Tolkien

Fifty years ago, on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1973, JRR Tolkien, the fantasy writer, poet, scholar and educator, died. He was best known for his novels *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Born in Bloemfontein and descended from a family that originated in an area that was then East Prussian and is now Russian, Tolkien – always known as Ronald – thought of himself as unmistakably English. He was brought up in the Birmingham area after the death of his father, who had stayed in South Africa while his wife and children visited England.

Ronald's mother then died when he was 12, and he was raised by aunts, uncles and a guardian who was a Roman Catholic priest, Father Francis. Tolkien later became a devoted Catholic and insisted that his fiancée, Edith Bratt, join him in that faith. She did so, reluctantly, and they had a long and extremely happy marriage. His beliefs were a significant factor in C S Lewis's conversion to Christianity.

Tolkien had a longstanding fascination with language and became an acknowledged expert in both linguistics and mythology, which led to his writing his two most famous works – and several others. Despite assumptions by some, none were intended as children's books, and *The Lord of the Rings* was never a trilogy – it was printed in three volumes for cost reasons.

The huge success of his writing led to unexpected fame. He and his wife eventually moved to Bournemouth and lived there until she died in 1971. He was then given rooms in Merton College,

Oxford. He said in an interview shortly before his death: "A pen is to me as a beak is to a hen."

Since 2003, The Tolkien Society has organised Tolkien Reading Day, which takes place on 25<sup>th</sup> March in schools around the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

## When Autumn Comes

Should we be sad  
When autumn comes  
And winter looms ahead?  
Is it so bad  
That days grow short  
And verdant leaves grow red?

We'll miss the sun  
And long, hot days  
We'll miss the sea and sand;  
But soon will come  
The starry nights  
And wintry landscapes grand!

Perhaps it's best  
That nature sleeps  
And things no longer grow;  
We get a rest  
From vibrant weeds  
And grass we need not mow.

So celebrate  
The equinox  
The autumn season's here!  
It is a date  
To mark, with joy  
The turning of the year.

\*\*\*\*\*

The following article, written by Dr Ruth M. Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, writes on the positive relationship between

Science and Christian faith, and has been extracted from Parish Pump and is part of the **God in the Sciences** series, and is entitled:

## **How can a Christian be a scientist?**

I used to ask this question as a student. I wondered what it was like to have a career in science, and how being a Christian might make a difference. Eventually I met a good number of successful scientists who were sincere Christians, and I learned that science and faith are a great combination. Dr Francis Collins, former Director of the project to decode the whole of human DNA, wrote that it is “possible for the scientist-believer to be intellectually fulfilled and spiritually alive, both worshipping God and using the tools of science to uncover some of the awesome mysteries of His creation.” So, what do people like this make of the opportunities and challenges of a life in science?

Although our beliefs may affect what we notice about the world and how we interpret our data, they don't affect the outcome of the experiments themselves. If a Muslim and a Christian drop the same ball from the same height under identical conditions, it will fall at the same speed. This means that a scientist can be respected by her colleagues for doing good work, regardless of what she believes and what her colleagues think of her worldview.

Science is an exercise in observing and measuring things, and coming up with general principles about the way things are. The world has been declared by God to be ‘very good’ (see chapter one and two of Genesis), and exploring it is a way to express our gratitude to Him. Scientific discoveries can also bring a sense of awe and wonder that feeds into our worship.

Some people don't want to get involved in certain lines of research because of ethical concerns. On the other hand, there are many issues that make Christians want to get stuck into new research that will help care for people and the rest of creation, such as medical research, ecology or developing appropriate technologies.

Organisations such as Christians in Science and the Faraday Institute gather together scientists who are also people of faith, and others who are interested in the subject. They come from a wide range of backgrounds, and express their beliefs in a variety of different ways. What they have in common is the conviction that you don't have to choose between science and God. As the young people in our churches prepare to return to their studies, online if not in person, let's encourage them that science (along with many other fields) is a great way to serve God.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Off to school**

Mother to young daughter after first day at school: “Well, dear, what did they teach you today?”

Daughter: “Not much. I've got to go back again tomorrow.”

## **In common**

I was the supply teacher for a class that was learning about groups. In one exercise, pupils were asked to label a group of items according to their common characteristics. Pictured were onion rings, doughnuts, and party biscuits. The correct answer would have been that all the items have holes in the centre.

But one health-conscious boy pointed out: “All of those things contain far too much cholesterol.”