

# 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)

## Autumn 2022

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**Just a Heads Up That  
Daylight Saving Time  
is Ending...Be Sure To  
Set Your Clocks Back!**



**30<sup>th</sup> October**

Doesn't time fly; another 3 months have passed by since the last edition, and as I write this it will not be too long when it will be Autumn and you will have to change your clocks on 30<sup>th</sup> October; and I have put a reminder picture adjacent to my column

This time last year our primary concern was Covid, which hasn't gone away, but as a virus, and just like flu, we must learn to live with. Since then our lives have been interrupted with further issues like the war in Ukraine; the unusual drought and the alarming rise in the cost of living, and will be with us for some time, and for some, will be hard to live with. However, I hope this edition of the magazine will remind you that you are not forgotten; so, may God bless you and keep you in the months ahead. He alone is our refuge and strength when times get tough.

I now turn to some of this month's contents: along with the standard contributions, Lesley Barter, once again, gives us the Deacon's Letter; there is the continuation of Ken Lee's Bible Study; Pip Cartwright gives us the history of WCC 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:

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[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 2022 & January 2023 is due on **Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December**

Your Editor

## Remembrance Sunday



## Hearing is not believing

A wise schoolteacher sent this note to all parents on the first day of school: "If you promise not to believe everything your child says happens at school, I'll promise not to believe everything he or she says happens at home."

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# September, October & November Diary

## September

4 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	
	pm	David Kinchin	Communion
11 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
18 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	Communion & Harvest
25 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	

## October

2 <sup>nd</sup>	am	tba	
	pm	Nanna Blackman	Communion
9 <sup>th</sup>	am	Gillian Warson	
16 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Communion
23 <sup>rd</sup>	am	Dr Dave Adams	
30 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway Rev Judi Holloway	Madley Park Residential Home 3.00pm

## November

6 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
	pm	Rev Judi Holloway	Communion
13 <sup>th</sup>	am	David Kinchin	Remembrance Sunday
20 <sup>th</sup>	am	Gillian Warson	
27 <sup>th</sup>	am	Prof Bev Clack	Advent 1

## December

4 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Advent 2
	pm	tba	

The following events are given for your particular attention:

## Sept

5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Beetle Drive	
6 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
10 <sup>th</sup>	Ride & Stride	
12 <sup>th</sup>	Noah's Ark Toddler Group Autumn term restarting	10.00am
24 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am
25 <sup>th</sup>	Church AGM	12.00am

## Oct

1 <sup>st</sup>	Saturday Praise	11.00am
4 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
6 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Quiz night	6.00pm
29 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am

## Nov

5 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday Praise	11.00am
1 <sup>st</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Film afternoon	2.00 – 4.00pm
26 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am

## Dec

3 <sup>rd</sup>	Saturday Praise	11.00am
5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Games taster evening	6.00pm
6 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm

## Rotas

### WELCOMING TEAM

<b>September</b>	04	Lesley Barter
	11	Janet Hayes
	18	Pat Brent
	25	Pat Smith
<b>October</b>	02	Joan Currie
	09	Janet Hayes
	16	Jacqui Powlesland
	23	Lesley Barter
<b>November</b>	30	Pat Brent
	06	Pat Smith
	13	Joan Currie
	20	Lesley Barter
<b>December</b>	27	Janet Hayes
	04	Pat Brent



### FLOWERS

<b>September</b>	04	Rita Hayes
	11	Pat Brent
	18	Joan Currie
	25	Janet Hayes
<b>October</b>	02	Jacqui Powlesland
	09	Judi Holloway
	16	Rita Hayes
	23	Pat Brent
<b>November</b>	30	Joan Currie
	06	Janet Hayes
	13	Jacqui Powlesland
	20	Judi Holloway
<b>December</b>	27	Rita Hayes
	04	Pat Brent
	11	Christmas Tree



### SUNDAY COFFEE

<b>September</b>	04	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	11	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
	18	Harvest
	25	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
<b>October</b>	02	Pat Smith & Pat Brent
	09	Elaine Kinchin & Clare Ellis
	16	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
	23	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
<b>November</b>	30	Pat Smith & Pat Brent
	06	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	13	Elaine Kinchin & Clare Ellis
	20	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
<b>December</b>	27	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	04	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack



**THURSDAY COFFEE**

<b>September</b>	08	Judi Holloway
	15	Jean Hodgson
	22	Pat Smith
	29	Ann Clack
<b>October</b>	06	Judi Holloway
	13	David Kinchin
	20	Jean Hodgson
	27	Pat Smith
<b>November</b>	03	Ann Clack
	10	Judi Holloway
	17	Jean Hodgson
	24	David Kinchin
<b>December</b>	01	Ann Clack
	08	Judi Holloway



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

**SOUND SYSTEM**

<b>September</b>	04	Terry Powlesland
	11	Nanna Blackman
	18	Terry Powlesland
	25	Terry Powlesland
<b>October</b>	02	Terry Powlesland
	09	Nanna Blackman
	16	Terry Powlesland
	23	Nanna Blackman
<b>November</b>	30	Nanna Blackman
	06	Terry Powlesland
	13	Terry Powlesland
	20	Nanna Blackman
<b>December</b>	27	Terry Powlesland
	04	Terry Powlesland
	11	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>Sep</b>	01	Theo Howells
	02	Gail King
		Claire Woodward
	09	Judith Bungey
	12	Jean Hodgson
	19	Ann Clack
	23	Clare Ellis
	28	John Garrett

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



<b>Dec</b>	06	Sue Birdseye
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<b>Nov</b>	19	Nanna Blackman
	26	Ellie Rose Esapa
		Elaine Kinchin
		Hilary Pratley
	29	Marina Bowerman



## PRAYER LETTER No 204

### Here I am Lord, let me serve you

This title combines the words of two very popular hymns and makes us re-evaluate our commitment to God. Are we a server? could we be a server? or do we just want to be served?

Beryl Cartwright, who sadly passed away recently, was a server of God in so many ways and has, and will always, leave a big memory of her in our congregation. She served the Lord and our Church in so many ways: Prayer Chain – where she would find out about our congregation and their needs and pass these requests round for people to pray for them. Noah's Ark Toddler Group – she loved working with the children and engaging with new families who brought their babies and toddlers to the group. She would also organise pre-school activities for the older ones to do upstairs or, in the Spring/Summer months, out in the garden. Beryl loved the outside and tended the Church Gardens (previously with her husband, Pip) and then later with Claire. She loved the Noah's Ark children playing with balls, hoops etc in the Garden and finding previously hidden beanbags! Walks in the countryside and Prayer Walks – Beryl knew so many different scenic walks and would always find an interesting walk with history and fantastic views to take in. We must now take up Beryl's legacy and try and carry on what she achieved.

We are about to start a new journey as a Church. Hopefully, after 4 September, we will have a new Minister for the Church. How will we be expected to serve? Will we be asked to take on different roles? Will we have to work as a Church to fulfil what the new Minister has in mind for our future?

Will the things we have done in the past still carry on or will we have new opportunities and new things to work towards? Are we prepared for change?

**Acts 20:35 reads:** In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

**1 Peter 4:10-11 reads:** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

As Beryl said in her last Prayer Letter: **The important thing for us is that we must listen and leave space in our lives to hear God's Call. God can hear us call him but do we hear Him through the noises of our lives?**

Please reflect on the chorus from I, the Lord of Sea and Sky and the first two verses of Brother, sister, let me serve you:

Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord,  
if you lead me;  
I will hold your people in my heart.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace  
to let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

## Deacon's Letter

Dear Friends

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

We might do well to reflect on these words from Psalm 103 after listening to the news each day recently. It has indeed been a catalogue of woe, leaving us thinking 'when will there be good news?' The antidote is of course to count our blessings.

This summer has brought us many things to be grateful for, especially the resumption of some of the activities and events that we have been missing since the arrival of Covid. Garden parties and fetes, open gardens, theatres and cinemas re-opening, holidays possible, both at home and abroad....and best of all, being able to meet up with family or friends who we haven't been able to see much, or at all, lately. All against a backdrop of sunshine, sometimes rather hotter than we should choose! We live in a beautiful country that we have learnt to appreciate better this last few years. Those of us with gardens have been reminded that we have taken life-giving rainfall for granted, a blessing that is not freely available in many countries outside Europe. We are also reminded of the connection between the elements and our food, which doesn't appear in the supermarket by magic. We depend on God for the provision of the bedrock of our lives – a fact that was not lost on our ancient ancestors. Even (and especially) the pagans understood that their gods were the source of the essentials of their lives – to be given

or taken away at will. We know better, but we don't always remember to thank God for his blessings, both the little ones and the most important.

As a child I had a favourite book called *The Puppy that Lost his Wag*. It was the story of a dog who woke up grumpy and toured his garden taking it out on everything he encountered (anyone recognise this?). Eventually he happened upon the sundial, which had of course been asleep before the sun rose. Unnoticed by the dog, the sun had come out so of course the sundial had come to life. The dog was puzzled by this until the sundial told him 'I count only the happy hours.' As we prepare for a new phase of our church life, let us take a moment, regularly, to do just that.

*Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done. (Baptist Hymn)*

May God continue to bless us all

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

### Being grateful

World Gratitude Day (yes, it really does exist!) is on 21<sup>st</sup> September.

It may not be widely observed this year, for these have not been easy times in which to feel grateful. Coronavirus turned our lives upside down, and now we have the war in Ukraine, and the alarming rise in the cost of living. Add to that the heatwaves, the wildfires, and the widespread drought of this past summer, and what is there to be particularly thankful *about*?

To put it another way, how, as Christians, can we be grateful during disasters? Should

we even *try* to be grateful? The letters of St Paul give us some pointers.

First of all, he says that we are not to be terrified when bad things happen. Instead, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Then, “let the peace of God rule in our hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful ....” (Colossians 3:15)

Again, in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 Paul urges: “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” It is not that we should thank God for losing our jobs or other disasters; it is rather that we need to keep our eye on the bigger picture, and never forget what God has blessed us with in Jesus Christ.

Giving thanksgiving to God is a sure sign of the fruit of His Spirit in our lives. In fact, a thankless attitude is abnormal for a Christian! It goes against everything that is in our new life. No wonder that the NT continually calls us back to thankfulness.

And there is good reason for this. Romans 8:28 assures us: “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.” So even when things are bad, Paul assures us that we can be sure that God has not abandoned us, but instead will stand by us through the hard times.

The early church, whenever they gathered, gave thanks together. Whenever we meet for fellowship with believers, it is good to include a time of giving thanks.

But even when we are on our own, each day we can make time to be “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” (Eph 5:18). We can be “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph 5:20)

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

## **29<sup>th</sup> September: Enter all the angels, led by Michael**

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 fiance, 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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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:

## **History of WCC: 1974-1977**

At the beginning of 1974 the Church had found a new home at Staple Hall, but many things had to be done. The house had to be rewired, decorating was essential, carpets and lino had to be laid before we could move from St Mary's Close. The whole Church did their part, adults and children.

By March 1974 the Church had moved to Staple Hall. On entry from Bridge Street the Chapel lay to the left, a small vestry to the right and beyond, the Kitchen and Sunday School Room. From the hall were stairs leading up to two flats, one on each floor. Much work had to be done there, but more of that later.

We left St Mary's Close with much gratitude to Rev. C. Gordon for letting us worship there until we were ready to move into Staple Hall. We had our new Chapel, but no Minister.

We were fortunate to have the Rev. Raymond Moody and his father, Mr A. Moody, worshipping with us. Rev. R. Moody had previously been the Congregational Church Minister at Banbury before he moved with his family to Burford, where he taught at Burford School. Mr Arthur Moody and his 'teddy' was a great favourite with the children. One of our Deacons, Miss Angela Pedlar, was a Theology graduate and taught R.E. at Henry Box School. Thus with local lay-preachers and our Church members, we were able to fill the pulpit.

From our move in 1974 to the Annual Church Meeting in 1977, the Church Officers remained the same, being elected 'en bloc' each year. Mr Robert (Bob) Richardson remained our Church Secretary. He was a farmer living at Coursehill Farm near Ducklington. He and his wife, Eileen, guided us through all these changes with patience and wisdom. The Church enjoyed the hospitality at their farm especially for the barbecues and summer socials. The children loved the space; the rides on their daughter, Brenda's pony and on his tractor and trailer. The Church Treasurer was Mr Gerald Hayes whose wise handling of our finances was important. Mr Philip Turner continued his important responsibility over the Junior Church. From under 5's to young adults we had four classes to cater for over

30 youngsters in our Sunday School. There were seven Deacons, Miss Angela Pedlar, Mrs M. Honey, Mrs Linda Wheeler (Minute Secretary), Mr Philip Cartwright, Mr Philip Turner, Mr David Pearson and Mr Peter Sellman. You will, no doubt, recognise that two of the Deacons still worship regularly at our Church. Miss Angela Pedlar became the Rev. Angela Robinson who, after ministering at Grassington and Wivenhoe (Essex) worked and ministered out in Bangladesh. She has now retired and is back in England.

As regards calling a new Minister, after consultation with Rev. Burton (Cheltenham) in May 1974 the Church Meeting met the Rev. W. Webb and Mrs Webb of Exeter. The Rev. Webb took a service in June. The June Church Meeting discussed the pastorate and the Rev. W. Webb. 27 Church Members were present but, although several members spoke favourably of Rev. Webb, the vote was not unanimous and the Rev. Webb was informed of the decision not to proceed further.

In January 1975 the Junior Church visited the local Pantomime followed by a tea party at the Church, a tradition which was continued until recently. In March we were honoured by hosting the Cotswold Congregational Federation Spring Assembly. During the year two elderly members died. Ted Collis and Marjorie Lea both were active members of the Church. The Lea family had been associated with the Witney Church for over 100 years. Marjorie, who was a teacher at Ducklington School, became a member in 1930 and served the Church as a Deacon, Sunday School Teacher and choir member.

In June a student from Bicester studying theology in Wales preached at our Church. The significance of which will be revealed later (1978). About this time the Church accepted the offer of a student from the

Uniting Church of Australia who was coming to study for his Masters Degree in Theology at Mansfield College, Oxford. His course spanned two years and he, and his family, needed accommodation. At this point we needed a part-time Minister and we had an empty flat. This was an answer to prayer.

In August the Church started to re-furnish and decorate the first floor flat in preparation for the arrival of Mr Graham Twelftree, Barbara, his wife and Catherine, their little daughter. They arrived on September 16<sup>th</sup> 1975 being met by Mr Peter Sellman and Mrs Daphne Turner (Peter's sister) at Heathrow Airport. Graham's first service was on September 28<sup>th</sup> which happened to be Harvest. The Harvest Supper (a traditional meal of sausage and mash, apple pie and custard) was an opportunity for the Twelftrees' to meet everybody.

The Christmas Carol Service on the evening of December 21<sup>st</sup> was highlighted by a Nativity Play involving 26 of the Junior Church and Christmas Day was extra special because Bert and Elsie Keates celebrated their Golden Wedding.

December 10<sup>th</sup> 1975 was a most decisive day in the life of the Church, because it was the day of the Planning Appeal made by the Church against the decision of West Oxfordshire District Council to refuse permission to change the use of the front ground floor room at Staple Hall as a meeting place for worship.

The Church's case was submitted by our Solicitor, Mr Ian Welch, and Mr Gerald Hayes was called as a witness for the Church and cross-examined by the Council and the Inspector. The hearing lasted 3½ hours and, although the Council recognised the action taken by the Church to avoid any traffic hazard on the busiest corner and roundabout in Witney by arranging parking in a car park along Newland, their main

concern evolved around any possible extension of use of the premises.

The result was announced in January 1976 and, unfortunately, the Inspector found in favour of the Council's case, which meant that Staple Hall could not be a permanent home for our Church. This was a sad blow as we had settled well in Staple Hall and particularly as it is believed that the early Independent Church had worshipped there for a while in the 1680's.

The search was on for better premises. On April 20<sup>th</sup> 1976 there was a combined Deacons and Church Meeting to discuss the possible purchase of a Chapel situated in Woodstock Road alongside the access road into Wood Green School. Although the building had been built specifically as a place of worship, unfortunately there was no extra room that could be used for Junior Church. The Church Treasurer, Mr Gerald Hayes, explained the Church's financial position and gave the view that, if we were to grow, we needed a bigger building with good parking space. It was finally decided to postpone any decision until the May Church Meeting. In fact the Church decided against it.

Despite his studies Graham Twelftree, ably assisted by the Junior Church Teachers (Mr P Turner, Mrs K Collis, Mrs Beryl Cartwright, Miss Angela Pedlar) organised a number of activities to involve our young people and their friends. During August there was a successful Summer Holiday Club which involved films, a barbecue (at Bob Richardson's farm), table tennis, football and listening to records. It culminated in September by the visit of Scripture Union Children's Officer, Mr Stephen English who, after taking the Sunday Service and a picnic lunch, organised various children's activities.

For the Twelftrees September 1<sup>st</sup> 1976 will always be a memorable day as Barbara

Twelftree presented the family with a baby boy who was named Paul.

In October, following the success of the Holiday Club, Graham and Barbara Twelftree began a Youth Club for youngsters over eleven. He made it clear that his main reasons were not to entertain or keep the children in the Church fellowship, but to encourage the young people to get to know Jesus and have fun doing it. The work with the Junior Church continued apace. In December 1976 Junior Church provided the tableau under the Buttercross for the Lions Carol Service. I believe Mr George Howell, a member of our Church (Jean Howell's husband) was the President of the Witney Lions Club. They also performed a Nativity Play in Holy Trinity Church. Some of the older ones visited the homes of elder members and sang carols for them. This was much appreciated.

1977 was to be a very momentous year. With the eventual departure of Rev. Twelftree, the Church put their minds to what sort of Minister the Church at Witney wanted.

Graham Twelftree suggested that the New Testament indicated that a Minister should:

- 1) Be full of the Holy Spirit, bearing the fruits of the spirit
- 2) Preach 'The Word' and be Jesus centred
- 3) Be a Man of Prayer, having an open and intimate relationship with the Lord
- 4) He must 'love' his people.

Graham advised that we should not expect a 'perfect saint', but a man of spirit, who will lead the Church to Jesus.

At the January 1977 Church Meeting the future of the pastorate was discussed and in the March Church Meeting, the Church met with the Rev. Eric Burton (Cheltenham) who was in charge of Pastoral Care. Several suggestions were considered.

It was a busy time especially for Graham who was studying intently for his 'Masters' exams, which he took and passed. I was privileged to attend his Degree Ceremony held in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford.

It was about this time that a property 'Field House' came up for sale on the corner of Welch Way and the High Street. 31-33, High Street was a Christian Scientist Reading Room with living accommodation attached. The property had a large room at the back, an extensive garden and a car park of its own. Despite an attempt to 'gazump' the deal, the Christian Scientists kept to their promise saying they wanted the property to remain as a Christian place of worship. So we approached another chapter of our wandering and looked forward to moving to Field House.

On July 30<sup>th</sup> 1977 the Church said farewell to Graham, Barbara, Catherine and Paul at a Garden Social and Buffet Tea. Almost the whole of the Church was able to attend including friends from other Churches. I, on behalf of the Church, thanked Graham for his Ministry and presented him with a Book Token and a card signed by all the Church Members. July 31<sup>st</sup> was Rev. Twelftree's last service in our Church. Having passed his Masters Degree, he and his family moved on to Nottingham where he eventually successfully gained his Doctorate in Theology. Subsequently he became a Lecturer in New Testament Studies at All Souls Church, London. He returned to Adelaide where he started a Vineyard Church. Later he moved to the USA to become the Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Regents University in Virginia, USA.

Quite recently he returned to England and is now Academic Dean of the London Bible College.

## 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.*

ordinary life to which they now returned with Jesus. Was the "Good News" for the valley, or just for the mountain top? Mark gives his answer as he continues with his account of "Jesus Christ, the Son of God"(1:1).

### 24. Mark 9:14-29

The "high mountain" experience is over; Jesus, together with Peter and James and John, returns to the valley, to join with the rest of the disciple band. They find them caught up in a crowd, engaged in argument. Mark record two reactions at this point - the reaction of the crowd to Jesus and the reaction of Jesus to the situation. The reaction of the crowd involved every person present - they saw Jesus. Perchance they had been watching the four figures coming down the mountain for some time, but, Mark records, when Jesus came near enough for them to discern his features the crowd were "immediately overcome with

awe". The parallel to Moses descending from his meeting with God (Ex. 34:30) is obvious; the residual splendour must still have lingered on the face of Jesus. Yet there is one great difference from the return of Moses; the people were afraid to come near Moses but, despite their astonishment, their awe, the people still came forward to greet Jesus. The attraction of Jesus overcame the awe at his presence. Was it simply the attractiveness of Jesus or could it be that the presence of the three disciples who had come down from the high mountain with Jesus, standing close to him without fear, which helped the crowd into the nearer presence of Jesus?

Jesus now asks the disciples who had remained in the valley: "What are you arguing about with them?" Their argument had been with some scribes, learned interpreters of the Law, who were in the crowd. Mark does not record any answer from the disciples but leaves his readers to deduce what the argument may have been about from the subsequent deeds which he does record, deeds which are more important than any argument. Someone in the crowd short circuits any argument. The "someone" is a parent with a parent's love for their needy son, a parent who wants action, not words. At this point we are not told whether that parent is a man or a woman; the cry that is uttered could well be that of a mother. Maybe both parents were present for in verse 10 Mark records "They brought the boy to him", following which Jesus questions "the father". The voice from the crowd cuts through all the arguments, all the time-consuming discussion of the "why's" and "wherefore's", demanding action. The words tumble out in a rapid stream with three statements. First; "Teacher, I brought

you my son." This parent addresses Jesus as being someone having authority and yet we can detect a slight note of criticism, an implicit but unspoken "but you were not here". The need was so urgent and is stated with a whole description of the spirit-possession of the boy, with its many symptoms. Those symptoms would indicate a modern diagnosis of epilepsy; the parent, and Jesus, accepted the diagnosis of the day, spirit-possession. So the parent makes the third statement: "I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so." Thus is the situation made plain to Jesus.

The disciples had failed. They had been given the power to exorcize(6:7) and they had indeed successfully used this power on previous occasions (6:13), but here, at the foot of the high mountain, they had tried and they had failed. "Why?" is the question which hangs over the rest of this story. Perhaps the situation is different. Earlier (6:7-13) the disciples had been given the authority and power and sent out by Jesus with specific instructions as to where to go and what to do. But here, they had simply been left at the bottom of the mountain, left to wait until Jesus returned, left to their own initiatives as to how to put into practice the faith in Jesus which they held. They proved rather faithless. At least, that is what we might infer from the words of Jesus, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you?" The words seem harsh and yet maybe they were needful to wake up the disciples to the urgency of growing in faith. It could be that in recording these words Mark is indicating that the time is running out for the disciples to learn to manage without the bodily presence of Jesus, to put their trust in God directly, to have faith and to act upon it.

Jesus summons the boy to him. It would seem that Jesus had withdrawn from the mass of the crowd at this point to a somewhat quieter area. The boy is brought to him and on seeing Jesus he is immediately convulsed with a fit, rolling on the ground and foaming at the mouth. Jesus exudes calm as he takes his time, asking the father as to how long his son has suffered. "Since he was a child" is the answer. Could this answer imply that the boy is no longer a child, that perhaps he has reached the age for *bar mitzvah* when he should have become a "Son of the Law" accepting the full status of Jewish manhood but that this has not been possible because of his spirit-possession? Such an interpretation, attractive though it may be, is possibly ruled by the inclusion in v.24 of the word παιδιον which usually bears the meaning of "a young child". Maybe when the father uses this word it is because he still has to treat his son and care for him as though he were still an infant when in fact he should by now be beginning to be able to treat him as a man. We can only speculate as the father describes further the suffering of his son and adds the desperate plea "but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us."

"If you are able", "if it is at all possible", "if you could possibly manage it" - such are some of the translations given of the father's words. They resound with doubt, doubt as to ability and as to willingness. Yet the man had come initially looking for Jesus, full of faith and hope. Could it be that the experience of the failure of those who were closest to Jesus, his disciples, had destroyed his faith? Certainly it was weakened and yet there was still some there in the plea "have pity on us and help us." Jesus takes up the man's words and seeks to build up his faith, uttering the words, "All things can

be done for the one who believes." There is no limit to what God can do for those who have faith in his power and his willingness so to act. Those who are tuned in to God, who believe, who live out their lives in faith, day by day, will receive of God according to the measure of their faith. Immediately, on hearing Jesus' words, the father cries out "I believe; help my unbelief!" Literally, the father says. "I believe, help with the unbelief of me." This cry has surely been echoed again and again throughout the years as people have found that despite all the faith which they hold, the faith which they profess, unbelief still presses in upon their lives so that they need help, help with that lack of faith, that unbelief which yet remains. The cry of this father is the cry of us all.

Jesus responds, not with words, but with deeds. The commotion which is taking place has attracted the attention of the crowd who hasten over to see what may be happening. Jesus acts swiftly, addressing the belief that the father, and no doubt his son also, held of spirit-possession. He speaks to the spirit, commanding it to leave the boy and never return. The action of Jesus is once and for all time - a permanent making whole. This is not a easy deliverance, easy for the boy. The boy is thrown into a fit, his convulsions are described as "terrible". The picture is one of a life and death struggle, of tremendous agony. The result is such that most of those around who looked at the boy said "He is dead". That seemed a fair assumption for the struggle had been so intense that flesh and blood could not endure. Freedom from the spirit-possession had come at the cost of life itself. Mark however, continues his story: "Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand."

Mark gives no indication of the reaction of those who had said the boy was dead. Did they realise that they had been mistaken in their assumption of his death or did they remain convinced that he had indeed been dead and that Jesus had raised him to life? The crowd and the boy and his parents simply vanish from the story as Mark records a change of scene.

"When they had entered the house". Such are the words with which Mark continues. There is no indication of place or of time. Was the house near to the spot, or had they walked for some hours before coming to this house which they now entered? Mark is not concerned with such matters; he is concerned with the question which the disciples put to Jesus when they are alone with him, the question as to why they failed to cast out the spirit from the boy. They had tried but had not succeeded. What was the reason? The answer which Mark records Jesus as giving to them raises many more questions than perhaps it answers. The reply of Jesus is, "This kind can come out only through prayer". "What kind is *this kind*?" we may ask. Is it the kind which we would nowadays call "epileptic" or does it refer to the long standing nature of the "possession"? Or do these words have some other meaning? All we can deduce is that *this kind* are those which do not come out other than through prayer. Yet the story as Mark records it does not mention prayer up to this point. Jesus did not stop to pray or utter any words which might be seen as being a prayer. Hence, if prayer be the essential ingredient of success it must be prayer that has already been offered before the need for its power in action. The prayer must be an integral part of the being of the person exorcising the evil spirit. We know that this was indeed so with Jesus, but how much prayer would be required in

the life of his disciples? The question hangs in the air over them, as it still does over us. Mark provides no further clue other than to continue to present Jesus, so that each person may listen to him and decide who he is and what relationship each will have with him.



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

### **Prayer for September**

Father,

September – a month of new starts for many. We pray for all starting school, university or college, or moving into a new class or job.

We pray for the new Prime Minister to prove to be a person of integrity, dedicated to working for the good of all.

We especially ask you to help those struggling with the rising cost of living who don't know how they are going to make ends meet.

Have mercy on this nation, Lord and bring us back to Your ways.

Thank You for Jesus and that through trusting in Him we can know You, as Father and God of truth, mercy and compassion.

Thank You that You never give up on us. You will help us if we turn to You,

In Jesus name,

Amen.

## Witney Congregational Church's impact on poverty

### Lend-with-Care: The straight facts.

348	Number of loans
£11,869	Lent
2352	Entrepreneurs helped
7172	Family members helped
671	Jobs created
10195	people helped

**£3,000.00** Credit added **£9,790.70** Repaid **£691.75** Donated to LWC

The figures do not really tell the full story of our churches impact on over 10,000 people around the world.

The £3,000 we have invested since we started this initiative in 2018 has now been circulated over three times over. We have lent money out, it has been repaid to us and we have then re-lent this money.

### One example



**The Kapala 8 group** (picture) is located in Dedza (MALAWI) and it has five members. Four are married and one is single. They have 24 children who they support and most of these children go to school. The women engage in growing beans, maize, soya and Irish potatoes. The proceeds from these businesses enable them to provide for the basic needs of their families and to send their children to school.



They requested a loan to buy farm inputs. Beatrice aged 30 is a member of Kapala 8. Her husband is a farmer and together they have four children. Beatrice grows mainly Irish potatoes and beans for a living. She started this farming business four years ago to support her family with basic necessities. Beatrice will use her share of the group loan to purchase fertiliser while other members of the group will purchase farm inputs like seeds and pesticides. Beatrice wants to build a house.

The Microloan Foundation in Malawi lend to female entrepreneurs using the 'centre' model. A centre is typically made up of 3-4 sub-groups and these sub-groups almost always have five members. Each centre has its own name and the sub-groups within the centre share the same name. Each person within the group of five women is responsible for repaying her loan but the members support each other and if a member is unable to repay her loan on time, then the group assumes responsibility for repayment. Loan officers provide training to the groups, although it is expected that centre leaders will eventually assume responsibility for providing some of the basic training.

Witney Congregational Church lent this group £60, four months ago. A total of just over £800 was lent to this group (by Witney CC and other organisations) and they are now steadily repaying the loans. They have pledged to have fully repaid the loan within seven months.

This is just ONE example of the 378 loans we have made via this LWC scheme.

With some frequency, people are passing me money to top-up our LWC kitty which now stands at a staggering £3,000.

David Kinchin (treasurer)



### Witney Book Circle

Meeting on the last Saturday of every month, the book circle needs you! We are always keen to see new people – either church members or friends of members. Come along and have some fun.

The Rosie Project by Graeme Simsion is a book I would never normally have picked up. However, after reading it I was so impressed that I tracked down other books by the same author. That is the power of the Book Circle. So if you would like to join, and even bring a friend or neighbour then please come along to the next meeting.

*David Kinchin*

**Last Saturday of each month – 10.30am**

(note: There will be no meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> December!)