

# 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**

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Doesn't time fly! Nearly half-way through the year already. Over the past months the days have been getting longer, and for me personally, for the better. However, this generally means that because of the increase daylight period we try to fit ever more into what is already a hectic schedule. The weather too has been really good these last couple of weeks.

Looking back on last month, we had the King's Coronation, and as I write this, at the similar time last year, the Queen celebrated her Platinum Jubilee marking 70 years of service to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth; so much has happened and changed in a year!

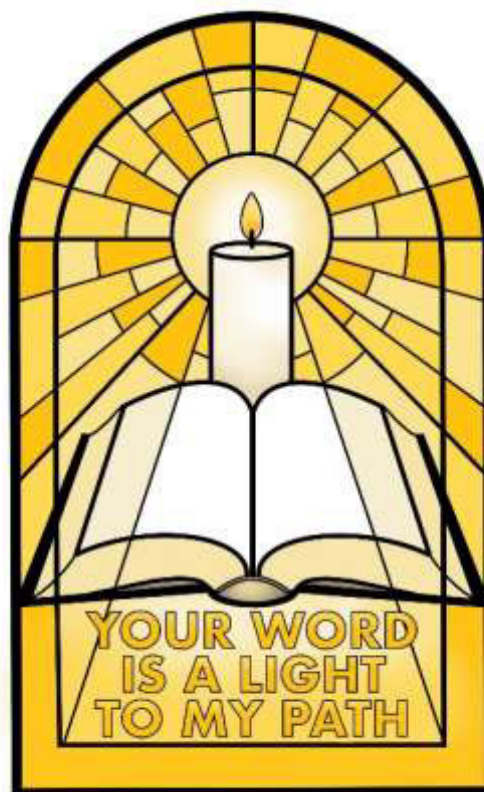
Talking about time, June, of course is the month of the summer solstice, the month of the Sun. *Sol + stice* come from two Latin words meaning 'sun' and 'to stand still'. As the days lengthen, the sun rises higher and higher until it seems to stand still in the sky. The Summer Solstice results in the longest day and the shortest night of the year. The Northern Hemisphere celebrates in June, and the Southern Hemisphere celebrates in December.

I now turn to some of this month's contents: along with the standard contributions, Pat Brent gives an update from Starfish Malawi; there is the continuation of Ken Lee's Bible Study; Pip Cartwright gives us the history of WCC; and Elaine Kinchin gives us one more move, 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 3-monthly Winter edition, covering September, October & November is due on **Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September** Your Editor



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# June, July & August Diary

## June

3 <sup>rd</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
4 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
	pm	Rev Elaine Kinchin	Communion
11 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
17 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Rev Bryan Doyle Induction Service	
18 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	Communion
25 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	

## July

1 <sup>st</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
2 <sup>nd</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
	pm	tbc	Communion
9 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
16 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	Communion
23 <sup>rd</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
30 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	
	3.00pm	Rev Bryan Doyle	Madley Park Residential home

## August

5 <sup>th</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
6 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
	pm	tbc	Communion
13 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
20 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Judi Holloway	Communion
27 <sup>th</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	

## September

2 <sup>nd</sup>	11.00am	Saturday Praise	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	am	Rev Bryan Doyle	
	pm	tbc	Communion

The following events are given for your particular attention:

## June

1 <sup>st</sup>	Safe Place and repeated on 8 <sup>th</sup> ; 15 <sup>th</sup> ; 22 <sup>nd</sup> & 29 <sup>th</sup>	12.00 – 2.00pm
5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Charades with a twist	6.00pm
6 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
24 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am

## July

4 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Treasure Hunt	6.00pm
6 <sup>th</sup>	Safe Place and repeated on 13 <sup>th</sup> ; 20 <sup>th</sup> & 27 <sup>th</sup>	12.00 – 2.00pm
29 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am

## August

1 <sup>st</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Safe Place and repeated on 10 <sup>th</sup> ; 17 <sup>th</sup> ; 24 <sup>th</sup> ; & 31 <sup>st</sup>	12.00 – 2.00pm
5 <sup>th</sup>	Hi 5's Barbeque & games	12.30pm
26 <sup>th</sup>	Witney Book Circle	10.30am

## September

5 <sup>th</sup>	Lite Bite piece of the Word	12.15pm
	Hi 5's Film Night	6.00pm
7 <sup>th</sup>	Safe Place	12.00 – 2.00pm

## Rotas

### WELCOMING TEAM

<b>June</b>	04	Joan Currie
	11	Jacqui Powlesland
	18	Pat Smith
	25	Janet Hayes
<b>July</b>	02	Pat Brent
	09	Lesley Barter
	16	Joan Currie
	23	Jacqui Powlesland
	30	Pat Smith
<b>August</b>	06	Janet Hayes
	13	Pat Brent
	20	Lesley Barter
	27	Joan Currie
<b>September</b>	03	Jacqui Powlesland



### FLOWERS

<b>June</b>	04	Janet Hayes
	11	Jacqui Powlesland
	18	Induction flowers
	25	Judi Holloway
<b>July</b>	02	Rita Hayes
	09	Pat Brent
	16	Joan Currie
	23	Janet Hayes
	30	Jacqui Powlesland
<b>August</b>	06	Judi Holloway
	13	Rita Hayes
	20	Pat Brent
	27	Joan Currie
<b>September</b>	03	Janet Hayes



### SUNDAY COFFEE

<b>June</b>	04	Pat Smith & Pat Brent
	11	Elaine Kinchin & Glenn Ryan
	18	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
	25	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
<b>July</b>	02	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
	09	Pat Smith & Pat Brent
	16	Elaine Kinchin & Glenn Ryan
	23	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
	30	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack
<b>August</b>	06	Sue Birdseye & Claire Woodward
	13	Pat Smith & Pat Brent
	20	Elaine Kinchin & Glenn Ryan
	27	Jacqui & Terry Powlesland
<b>September</b>	03	Jean Hodgson & Ann Clack



**THURSDAY COFFEE (10 – 12)**

<b>June</b>	01	Judi Holloway
	08	Pat Smith
	15	Jean Hodgson
	22	Ann Clack
<b>July</b>	29	Elaine Kinchin
	06	Judi Holloway
	13	Pat Smith
<b>August</b>	20	David Kinchin
	27	Jean Hodgson
	03	Ann Clack
	10	Elaine Kinchin
<b>September</b>	17	Judi Holloway
	24	Pat Smith
	31	David Kinchin
	07	Jean Hodgson

**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>June</b>	04	Terry Powlesland
	11	Terry Powlesland
	18	Nanna Blackman
<b>July</b>	25	Terry Powlesland
	02	Terry Powlesland
	09	Nanna Blackman
	16	Terry Powlesland
<b>August</b>	23	Nanna Blackman
	30	Terry Powlesland
	06	Terry Powlesland
	13	Nanna Blackman
<b>September</b>	20	Terry Powlesland
	27	Nanna Blackman
	03	Terry Powlesland



**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>June</b>	09	Glenn Ryan
	14	Norline La Fortune
	16	Sandi Franklin
	17	Michael Hutchings
	20	Carol Jones
	24	Janet Park-Pratley
	26	Barbara MacLarty
30	Jacqui Powlesland	



<b>July</b>	05	Bob Blackman
		Lynn Swift
	25	Oscar Stanley
	26	John Brent
		Jennie Garrett
	28	Michael Pratley
	30	Irene St Clair

<b>Aug</b>	02	Janet Hayes
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<b>Sept</b>	01	Theo Howells
	02	Gail King
		Claire Woodward
	03	Bryan Doyle

## Minister's Letter

As we slip into a new season, much is changing. Spring has set the stage for Summer's entry and the world around us is *coming alive!* The warmth of the sun becomes more tangible, the trees are wearing their leafy gowns and the flowers displaying the depth and beauty of their colours. Isn't God's creation truly breath-taking?

We are also entering a new season according to the Lectionary, the season of *Pentecost*, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on many people. There are parallels that can be drawn between these two seasonal changes. In both cases, there are *dramatic changes!* In the one instance, the vegetation is transformed, and there is a bursting forth of new life. In the other instance, people are transformed with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which brings new life through His indwelling love and power.

The vegetation is reliant on the warmth of the sun and the life-giving rains that fall on the earth, in order to sustain its health and beauty. Similarly, people are reliant on the warmth of God's love and the streams of living water, from the Holy Spirit, to nourish their souls, in order to live out their Christian faith and show the love and beauty of God to the world.

However, the warmth of the sun and the life-giving rains are intermittent and depend on the seasons and weather patterns. This results in long periods when the vegetation loses its vibrancy and colourful display and becomes somewhat drab and dreary. This is an ongoing cycle of perpetual change, a cycle which God created – a time for showing the beauty of His creation and a time to concentrate on replenishing the reserves that it needs to once again, display its beauty.

In contrast, Christians are not subject to that cycle. Joel wrote these words, *"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people."*

This came to pass on the day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2:1-4, *"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."*

Pentecost was the birth of the church because from that dramatic event, people spread the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the world and that move of the Spirit continues today!

God living in us by the Holy Spirit is permanent, it is a promise from God. We are not subject to any cycle. John 14:16, *"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth."* Paul wrote, *"...I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."* (Galatians 2:20). What an incredible promise and truth!

Let's enjoy this summer season spending time outdoors with God, enjoying Him and His wonderful creation and taking time to marvel at the works of His hands. Let's also spend time with family, friends and strangers, sharing the indescribable love of God with them through acts of kindness, hospitality and words that are seasoned with love.

I pray that during this summer and all the seasons ahead, we will show something of the glory, beauty and love of God to those we meet. I pray too, that through our witness, those that already know Jesus will be drawn into a deeper relationship with Him, and those that don't know Him, will come to faith in Him and discover His unfathomable love, grace and mercy.

Much love and God's richest blessings

Bryan



## PRAYER LETTER No 208

### Prayer is just a conversation

Do you find that prayer is easy or difficult? Are there times in your life when prayer flows more naturally? Don't despair! Even Jesus's closest friends had difficulty. They came to Jesus and asked him to teach them to pray. Why did they do that? Because they had seen him praying. Both Gospel accounts – Matthew 6 and Luke 11 – start with the fact that Jesus was praying and after he finished, one of the disciples asked that Jesus teach them to pray, because John the Baptist had taught his disciples.

There's a theme here – the disciples had seen Jesus pray; they had seen or heard John the Baptist's disciples praying – and they wanted to do the same thing. But does this mean that until Jesus and John taught their disciples that no ordinary people prayed? Of course not. And I suppose it depends on your definition of "ordinary people".

Daniel prayed – and it got him thrown into the lions' den – but I suspect he prayed ritual prayers, as it was three times a day. However, he was visibly praying. Jonah prayed invisibly – from the belly of the big fish. Enoch "walked with God"; surely he, like Adam and Eve, was talking as he walked?

Hannah was definitely an ordinary woman; she was barren and her husband loved her more than his other wife, Peninnah. However, Peninnah had children and taunted Hannah. 1 Samuel 1:10: "Hannah was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly". 1 Sam 12-15: "As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, 'How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.' But Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD'."

Hannah had a relationship with God – she shared her darkest thoughts with him. There were no set prayers for women who were childless to pray – she just wept and spoke what she needed to say.

There is another ordinary person you have probably never heard of - Manoah. He had a barren wife but after she'd been visited by an angel who promised her a son, Manoah prayed. Isaac prayed when his wife was childless (Genesis 25:21). Ordinary people did and do and will pray, not because it is necessarily easy but because it is essential.

Loving God, we know you love each one of us and that you want us to pray to you in times of happiness and of despair. We thank you that we don't need to learn prayers, we can just speak to you as we would to a loving friend, because that is what you are. Amen.

Every Blessing, Elaine

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

The following article written by Ian Jones, has, with permission, been extracted from the Congregational Federation 'A Secluded Place 2023' series, and was submitted by Elaine Kinchin, and is entitled:

## One More Move



If you know anything about chess, you'll know that the object of the game is to trap your opponent's king such that they can't make any move to stop you being able to take off their king at your next move. When this position is reached, you say to your opponent Checkmate and the game ends.

There's a painting called Checkmate that used to hang in The Louvre, Paris along with masterpieces like The Mona Lisa. (But the painting is now in private hands, having been sold at Christie's by auction in 1999). It is by the German artist, Friedrich Retzsch, 1779-1857. It depicts a chess game between Satan, who is looking at his opponent with expectant confidence, and a forlorn lad who believes he is in a hopeless position and about to be checkmated by the devil. All hope is lost. An angel looks on sadly (his guardian angel?), awaiting the outcome.

It was widely believed the painting's inspiration came from the play Faust. In that play a demon character called Mephistopheles had a bet with God that

Faust could be lured away from a righteous life and an honourable path. God said he could not. The painting sees the young man about to lose the chess game and, having no way out, is about to lose his soul to the devil. God was about to lose the bet and the devil would be the winner. Game over.

That was the case until around 1889, when the chess grandmaster Paul Morphy visited Paris for a competition and decided to look around the museum in some spare time. Walking around admiring the paintings, he came to this one called Checkmate and stood mesmerized in front of it. After a long time a smile appeared on his face. He asked a curator if they had a chess board and set up the position as in the painting. He stood behind the white pieces and studied the board again. After a while, a smile again broke upon his face.

Looking up at the lad in the painting, he said, "Boy, I know you can't hear me, and I know it looks like all is lost, however I want to tell you that you haven't lost yet! Your king has one more move, that if made, will win you the game."

Apparently, several people later challenged Morphy saying he couldn't win the game from the position of the pieces in the painting. He played against each one of them and beat them all.

What can we learn spiritually from this?

All through eternity God and the devil have been locked in a sort of chess game:

- God made everything perfect. Satan made his move and rebelled.
- God made us in His own image. Satan countered and moved us to sin.
- God's move was to call Abram to become a chosen people. Satan's move was to get them trapped in Egypt.
- God called Moses to lead them out and into The Promised Land. The devil got them wandering in the wilderness.



- God spoke to His people through the prophets. The devil's move made the people ignore them and get sent into exile.
- God's great attacking move was to send His Son to live on earth. Although the devil could not get Him to sin and fall, he moved to get Him crucified on the cross ... and so it looked like God was checkmated. All was forlorn. Game over.

But like in the painting, the King had One More Move ... RESURRECTION!

The Lord had won. The devil was lost.

If we then go on to work through the final moves of this eternal game, we see that 40 days afterwards, King Jesus Ascended back to Heaven and then make another crucial move of sending the Holy Spirit to breathe Life into the Church. Thus the devil has lost all his advantage. For we are now like God's pieces on the board of play, participating in the end game, awaiting the King's Second Coming at the end of time to finally move to Checkmate the devil throwing him into the lake of fire. He calls us each to play our part and carry out the things He's prepared for us to do for Him. May we not fail Him.

Lord, I confess the times I have failed You by moving into sin. Forgive me I pray and assure me that I am Yours. As this Pentecost approaches, help me to grasp the Wonder of Your Eternal Victory and the significance of The Spirit dwelling in me. Help me to make the moves You are seeking me to make, such that Your moving against the devil may be brought to complete Checkmate. Amen.



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

## Starfish Malawi

### April

Cyclone Freddy, hit the Malawi area, not exactly where our village is but very close. They sent clothes parcels to tented villages. Care packs of food and hygiene products from our Christmas appeal.

Prices of grain have gone up many people do not have access to food and damaged roads have made supplies harder to transport. Unclean water and sanitation have become a serious problem.

The Maternity wing has a nearly completed roof, and the walls have been plastered. Medical equipment is being sent on the next container.

Hoe Clinic provides free health care to 2000 people a month.

### May

Team leaving in 2 days. This year they are looking forward to seeing the Maternity Unit nearly finished, several groups are using it already. These include the Mums to be and the some of the Mums who have difficulties falling pregnant. Delivery of both medical beds and those for the wards. Incubators and baby scales. We have had a large donation of clothes from Sport England, and supplies of Christian books and supplies of books for the Pastors study.

Glad Tidings are engaging with the children visiting the Kadumba Foundation.

Thanks go to a dedicated team of packers



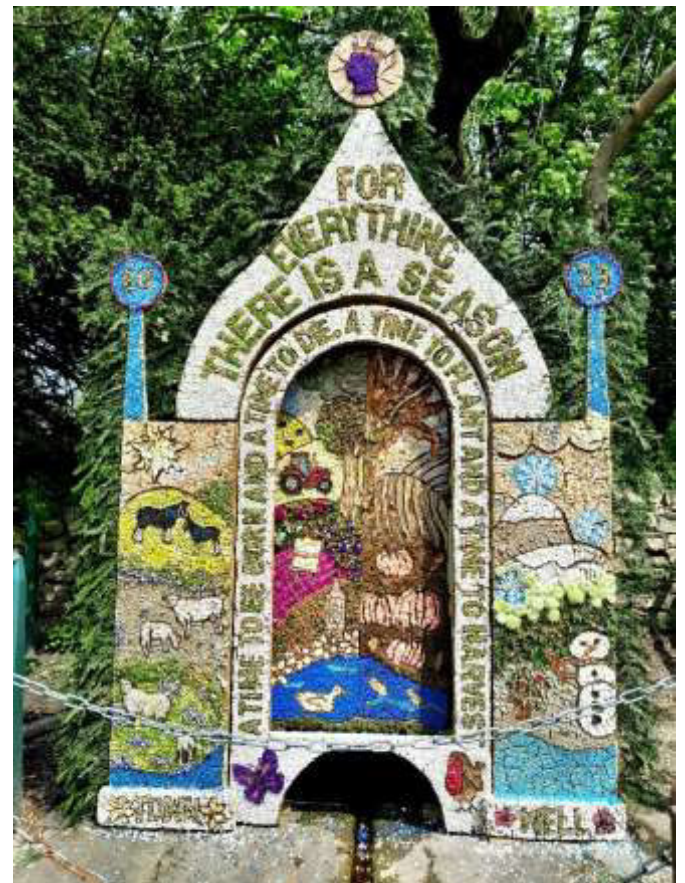
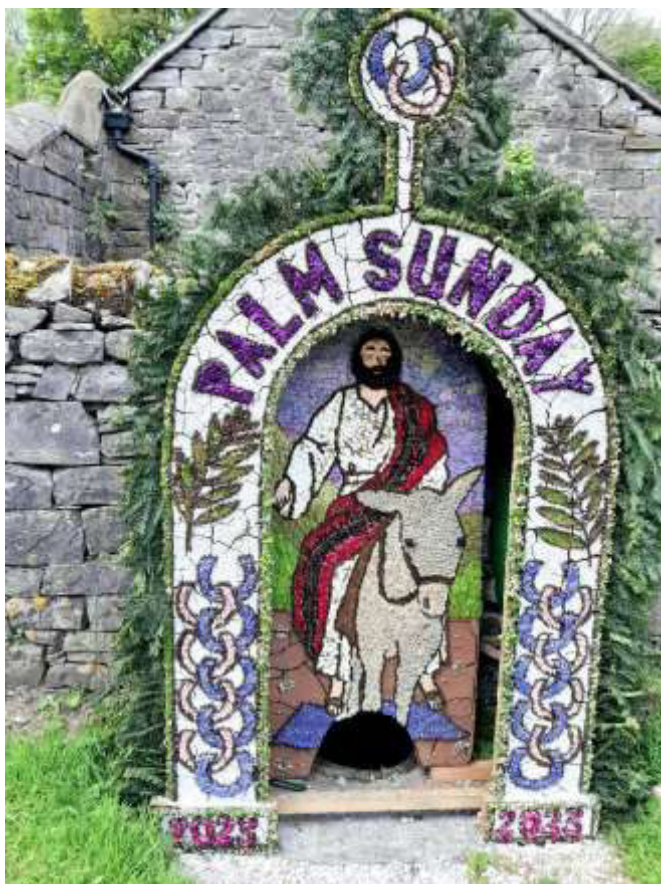
in UK who have boxed up hundreds of boxes, weighed and labelled them. Sadly, our blankets are not among them.

## Well Dressing

Last week Jacqui & I returned to the same place in Derbyshire, where we have been going for several years, to meet up with old friends for a week, and every year at a village called Tissington they celebrate a unique spectacle of Well Dressing, but we have never seen it as it usually takes place, the week after we have left; but this year we were fortunate that we could see the event for ourselves, and the village was packed – so what is well dressing?

Essentially it is a custom that celebrates water and the life it brings, and create living art installations to decorate their wells

Well Dressings are pictures made from growing things; wool, bark, cones, flower petals berries, leaves, seeds and other natural materials, constructed on a bed of soft clay spread over a wooden board and erected at the site of the spring or well and depict a wide range of themes; this can take a team of skilled people up to a week to produce, and the finished well will only last a week or so, as the flowers fade and the clay dries out and cracks



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

## To be a Pilgrim

As Christians we should be starting each day by counting our blessings and thanking God for them. Instead, as I mentioned in prayers a few weeks ago, it is tempting to wake up to a catalogue of woes. Our aches and pains, the depressing state of the world generally and our finances in particular. Even the weather seems to have turned against us with chilly winds to mask the sunny advent of Summer.

I have come to the conclusion that we Brits are natural pessimists. It was brought home to me by my Australian travels. The Aussies are just the opposite: relentlessly cheerful, pleased to tell me what a great country they live in, despite the evident (to them) idiocy of their governments! Is this just a function of living in a sunny climate? Are the people who live in cold, gloomy countries cold and gloomy themselves? Or is there another antidote?

The new epidemic of mental health problems is being fed by daily media reports of death and disaster and our bulwark against all this should be our faith. But somehow it isn't. There is always the niggling suspicion that as Christians we have chosen a path that aspires to perfection and we are therefore doomed to fail. Indeed, this quest for the perfect life is responsible for many of the mental health problems that abound. So why do it? We could just accept the fact that life is for living, doing the best we can with what we can get because that is all there is. Not such a cheerful prospect after all, is it?

We all know that no one's life is a bed of roses. I used to think that some people led a charmed life. Experience has taught me otherwise... Into every life some rain will fall. When it is our turn what matters is how we deal with it. And dealing with it is when we need our faith. Luckily Pentecost brought the Holy Spirit to take the place of the physical presence of Christ on earth by dwelling within us. We don't have to earn God's love. It is

given freely, as is His forgiveness for our mortal flaws. We just have to acknowledge that Christ was His son and paid the price for them all. This doesn't mean that our faith makes our life easy. Sometimes it makes it more difficult. But it does make some sense of the struggle.

## Kathy Shaw

Rev Kathy Shaw is at last on the roll of ministers of the Congregational Federation. The picture below shows Kathy being presented with her certificate by Rev Oliver Kinchin, newly elected president at her own church, Padfield Congregational Church, during their Area Assembly on 20<sup>th</sup> May.



In 2015, Kathy asked 6 members of our church to act as her support group in her ministerial training. This role was for her placement and to help her explore her personal development and experience; How she could build on, or expand on her skills. To pray with her, and together look at a range of opportunities.

Kathy completed her training and graduated on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and leaving Winey in March 2020 just before Covid19 lock down. A few months later she was called to Padfield Church as their Minister.

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: 1988 – 1990**

At the beginning of the year Beryl Cartwright stood down as Sunday School Superintendent after many years of dedicated service. Rev. Bob Henry and family left in February 1988 in response to his call to the Congregational Church in Kilmarnock. He was inducted on February 20<sup>th</sup> 1988.

The Church was now in an interregnum and the Deacons called on everybody to consider their skills and gifts and offer them as part of the Church's team effort to serve the Lord's Kingdom and our Church family.

In the town, concern had been expressed about Witney's young people and it was acknowledged that the evening Church Coffee Bar fulfilled a specific need. 30-50 youngsters used our facilities most evenings. Fiona Cartwright was the South Midlands Area CFY (Congregational Federation Youth) Representative and Stephen Cartwright represented CFY on the Congregational Federation Church Life Committee. Fiona Cartwright took over the leadership of the YPF and Paul Keates was responsible for the lawn mower rota. Some familiar names were active within the Church such as Jacqui and Terry Powlesland, Judi Holloway, Joan Currie and Graham Beechey who had taken up residence in the Manse.

With the need for a new Minister, the Deacons met the Federation Secretary for Pastoral Settlement so that the Federation could help us in our search. It was early days but the Church felt it was important that we got started to look for a replacement.

Sadly in July Jim and Monica Davidson moved to Sheffield to be near their family. Jim had been a valuable Deacon and helped with the maintenance of the building.

The Summer Church Outing visited the Abbey Grounds Abingdon by the River Thames, where we enjoyed many family games.

At the Church AGM, in addition to Mr Jack Field, Mr John Hardcastle, Mr Ernie Gascoigne and Mr Luke Taylor, three new Deacons: Dr Richard Paradine, Mr Allan Webb and Mrs Beryl Cartwright were elected. As Mr Jack Field had health problems and had been in hospital he stood down and Mrs Beryl Cartwright agreed to be Church Secretary. Our Treasurer, Mr Tony Clark, also stood down and his position was taken by Dr Richard Paradine.

Before the Revolution in December 1989 Romania was an authoritarian Communist Regime under the thumb of the notorious Nicolae Ceausescu. Under his repressive government the country suffered great austerity and political and religious intolerance. Churches were persecuted and bibles confiscated. One family in our Church, Stuart and Jenny Allen, felt called by God to support beleaguered and persecuted Romanian Christians.

With great courage they smuggled in food, medicines, bibles and concordances. Fiona Cartwright, with other young Christians, also smuggled in bibles. They were searched and followed by the Secret Police but, with the prayers of the Church and God's grace, they were able to complete their missions. Later, after the 1989 Revolution, our Church continued to support certain isolated Romanian Churches.

Towards the end of the year, eight of our young people joined with the Witney Dramatic Society to put on a production of Joseph and his Amazing Technicoloured Dreamcoat, directed and produced by no less than a certain Mrs Judi Holloway. Some of the proceeds went to fund our Church's Rainbow Coffee Bar. In the Autumn, we hosted the C.F.Y. 16+ Bible Study Weekend led by the Rev. Dr. Janet Wootton and gave hospitality to 20 young people from all over the U.K.

Since 1985 the Church had been investigating the best way to clear our bank debt due to the purchase of the Manse. In January 1989 we received an offer of £245,000 for the 'Gateway' site on the High Street from the Wesleyan and General Assurance Co. The Church, Deacons and Trustees agreed to accept the offer. This money not only repaid our debt, but gave us money for vital repairs. Cracks had appeared in the ceiling below the Long Room, probably due to table tennis activities. A structural engineer suggested some strengthening and a false ceiling as a cosmetic remedial answer. By June the sale had gone through, our debt paid and residual monies invested along the lines of 75% to a Church Trust and 25% to the Manse Trust.

During 1989, despite not having a Minister, the Church continued and developed the various activities with enthusiasm. Stuart Allen, Tony Clark and Allan Catterall successfully led three Fellowship groups. The problem of pulpit supply was overcome when 10 of our members regularly filled the pulpit. Mr Stuart Allen, Mr Allan Catterall, Mr Tony Clark, Mr Jack Field, Mr Ernie Gascoigne, Mr Ian Hayes, Mr John Hardcastle, Dr Richard Parradine, Mr Allan Webb and Mrs Mary Witt, with local lay preachers such as Mr Anthony Richards and Mr Bob Forster, led us spiritually.

We had "Come Together" Meetings which ranged from visits by other Church House Groups to social events such as a visit to Benetton Racing Cars Factory near Enstone, shown round by Mr Dave Wass (husband of Susan Wass). A programme of events was organised to allow Fellowship Groups to meet both spiritually and socially. Church outings included visits to White Horse Hill (YPF), Lechlade (Church picnic) and to Littlecote Manor (17 century) and a visit to the Theatre (Oxford Operatic Society) organised by Mr Pip Cartwright.

Mr John Hardcastle stood down from the Diaconate and Mr Graham Beechey was elected on. With the departure of Mr and

Mrs Allan Webb, Mr Beechey took on the post of the Newsletter Editor.

Sadly, in November, one of our oldest worshippers, Mrs Elsie Keates, died. She was a long standing and loyal supporter who, with her husband Bert, regularly cleaned the Church.

New Year 1990 saw Stuart Allen and family visit Romania. What a difference! The Revolution had taken place a few weeks before. At the border the guards and custom officers shook their hands and threw their arms around them and wished them a Happy Year and then waved them through. The collapse of the Communist Regime had left ordinary people in a terrible parlous state. The community Stuart visited was amazed at the quantities of medicines and baby food etc. The Churches of Witney had donated £1,800 which purchased nearly one ton of vital materials. In addition, Stuart took 460 Christian books to Romania. A Doctor commented that he had not seen so many drugs at any one time in the last 10 years.

In February and March a certain Pastor, M. Heaney came to preach and immediately got the Church talking. He was still in training until the summer. In April, a Special Church Meeting invited Pastor Michael Heaney to 'preach with a view' on May 6<sup>th</sup> and to ask him and his wife Rose to attend a meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup>, to allow the Church Members to talk and ask questions.

After this session Michael and Rose left and the Church made a final decision and agreed unanimously to ask him to be our next Minister. In May Pastor Heaney accepted and the Church recognised an answer to prayer and thanked God for sending a man of his choosing. The Ordination and Induction took place on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1990, the presiding Minister being Rev. John Bourne. The interregnum had ended and a new chapter was waiting to be written.

## 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.*

### 28. Mark 10:32 -52

"They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem." With these words Mark indicates that the journey on which Jesus and his disciples had been engaged is now moving towards its climax. Instead of simply moving about, going from place to place in what might have seemed almost a leisurely manner, now they were "on the road" - there was a sense of purpose in the journey, they were headed for Jerusalem, the place from which hostility to Jesus had radiated (3:22; 7:1). Mark pictures Jesus as walking on ahead of his disciples whom he describes as being both amazed and afraid. We may wonder why this was their reaction since they do not seem to have grasped the nature of the confrontation which was to happen in Jerusalem despite Jesus having twice endeavoured to help them to understand and to be prepared (8:31ff & 9:30 ff).

The disciples had failed to understand; in their hearts each one must have been aware that they were not fully ready for leading places in the Messiah's kingdom, yet it looked, to them, as though such positions might soon be thrust upon them. They were

"going up" to Jerusalem, going up to a festival, as they no doubt had done several times in their lives before now, but this time they were going not just at ordinary pilgrims, ordinary worshippers, but as disciples of Jesus whom they had acknowledged as the Messiah (8:29). Could Jesus's determination to go up to this festival mean that his moment of revelation, of openly making his claim to be the Messiah was about to happen? Jerusalem was the obvious place for him to lay claim to his rightful position, to call the people of Israel to acknowledge him as God's representative, the Anointed One. And what better time to make such a claim than at the Passover Festival which recalled what God had done to liberate his people in days gone by? This must be the time and the place to proclaim that God was again acting to liberate his people. The disciples had been looking forward to something of this sort happening at some time - but were they ready for it now, were they sufficiently prepared for their places in the coming kingdom, how would they cope? And, would the people respond, accept Jesus as the King, and would the power of Rome be overcome? Such may have been some of the questions going through the minds of the disciples causing them to wonder and to be somewhat afraid. Events were beginning to move much faster than they had bargained for. Whatever was going to happen at Jerusalem, the disciples must have realised that their lives were going to be totally changed.

Mark now pictures Jesus taking the twelve aside and telling them once again what is to happen, trying to get them to understand what it means for him to be the Messiah. The detail given is much more than on the previous two occasions. One scholar has described it as "Reading like a printed programme of a Passion Play" in which six stages or scenes are clearly enumerated. First is the going up to Jerusalem; second the Son of Man is handed over to the Jewish authorities who, third, condemn him to

death. Fourth he is handed over to the Gentile power who, fifth, torture and kill him. Sixth and finally, after three days he will rise again. While it seems highly probable that Jesus, in endeavouring to prepare his disciples for his rejection and death, may have added more detail than on the previous two occasions when he had spoken concerning these events, such detail as Mark here records seems more likely to have been written up after the events. If Jesus had indeed possessed such detailed foreknowledge it would call into question the reality of his humanity. Certainly the subsequent actions of the disciples, which Mark records, do not point to their having been given any such detailed account of forthcoming events nor of them having gained any further insight into the nature of the Kingdom which Jesus proclaimed and embodied. The action of James and John, which Mark recounts next, together with the anger of the other ten disciples at that action clearly illustrate how blind and unprepared they all were for those things which were to happen.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee are pictured by Mark as trying to steal a march on the other disciples by obtaining a promise from Jesus of plum jobs in his earthly kingdom. They come to Jesus saying "We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you". In some way their words echo the words attributed of king Herod (6:22) when pleased by a young dancer. James and John are attributing to Jesus the sort of power that Herod and his like exercised - that of the kingdoms of this world. Gently, Jesus asks them what it is that they want him to do for them and they come up with the request to sit one on his right hand and the other on his left in his glory. Such positions were those of the most powerful and most trusted of a monarch's subjects; apart from the sovereign, all other people were of lesser power and importance. James and John certainly seem to have had big ideas about

their own importance and, possibly, their own capabilities. Jesus corrects them quite gently as he tells them that they just do not understand what it is for which they are asking. And he questions them as to whether they can drink his cup and be baptized with his baptism. Never was there a more confident answer than theirs: "We can". Jesus accepts their answer; it is a though he says "Amen" to it; his cup and his baptism shall be theirs even though he can see that at that moment neither of the brothers understands what this means, understands that the cup of Jesus is suffering and his baptism is into death. Jesus simply accepts that however wrong-headed the brothers are, they are still totally committed to him.

Having heard and accepted the renewal of commitment which the response of James and John contains, Jesus turns down their request for positions of power and authority. These, he says, are not his to give but are for those for whom it has been prepared. Much speculation surrounds the question as for whom such positions were prepared or are prepared. Some have thought that Peter and James the brother of Jesus who subsequently became acknowledged leaders of the Church were those called to sit on the right and the left in glory. Others question as to whether, in the light of all Jesus's teaching, whether in his Kingdom there is any such distinction as to allow for pride of place. Such thoughts gain support from the next event which Mark records, the anger of the other ten disciples at the way James and John have attempted to gain first places in the "Pride of Place Stakes". Jesus gathers the twelve together and speaks to them concerning status and service. He reminds them of how it is among the nations and peoples of the world; those who are acknowledged as rulers have power over others and exercise authority over them, they make sure that subordinates know their proper places. "It shall not be like that among you," Jesus tells them. Greatness comes from being a servant, from acting as

the slave of others. The servant gets on with the job, with those things which need doing. Those who follow Jesus must take that way of living, that course of action. Jesus adds a final emphasis: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." A ransom is a sum of money given as compensation for a crime, to save a person from death. Jesus speaks of giving his life to save many from death; the word used for "many" has Semitic origins and does not necessarily imply the exclusion of some. The "many" could indeed include "all". The whole thrust of the teaching of Jesus here and elsewhere would justify the latter interpretation.

So the journey continues along the traditional pilgrim route from Galilee with its double crossing of the River Jordan. The second crossing brings Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd of pilgrims, to pass through Jericho. As they leave Jericho on the road which leads towards Jerusalem, they come to the place where at the roadside sits a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. No doubt he had a prime position for begging from the pilgrims heading up to Jerusalem, and no doubt he also heard a great deal of news about events elsewhere in the country from pilgrims passing by. Certainly Bartimaeus had heard of Jesus of Nazareth and of some of the healing actions attributed to him. So when he hears that Jesus is among this particular crowd of pilgrims approaching him, he seizes his opportunity and, in so doing, expresses the understanding which he has come to hold concerning whom Jesus is. Bartimaeus cries out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Bartimaeus uses a Messianic title for Jesus. What he has heard concerning Jesus has led him to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and that the nature of this Messiah is to be merciful.

The crowd tell Bartimaeus to be quiet, but he refuses to be silenced. Jesus hears his cries and sends for the man. The disciples, or some of the crowd, we don't know who, say

to the blind man, "Take heart, get up, he is calling you." The response of the man is utterly full of faith; he throws off his cloak, that most essential of items to enable him to sit in one place for hours on end begging, and springs up and comes to Jesus. The eagerness and the certainty with which this man acts proclaim his confidence in the power and the mercy of God shown through Jesus, Son of David. Bartimaeus is the first person to publicly use a Messianic title for Jesus who is not told by Jesus to keep quiet about his discovery. Jesus accepts the title from the lips of Bartimaeus and asks him: "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus makes no assumption that the man wants to see; he waits for the man to make specific his plea for mercy. Bartimaeus responds "Master, that I may see again." His words indicate that he has not been blind from birth but has lost his sight at some time during his life. Jesus heals him, heals him by telling him that it is his own faith which has delivered him, rescued him, made him well. Effectively Jesus is saying to the man, "As you have believed, so it is for you." And it was so, the man regained his sight and, so Mark records, followed Jesus on the way.

With this story of the acknowledgement of the title "Son of David" in the midst of a crowd of pilgrims setting out to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem, Mark has once again challenged his readers to decide for themselves as to whom Jesus is and he has prepared the way for the climax of his story of the One whom he believes is Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1:1).





The following articles have been extracted from Parish Pump:

## God - the Three in One

This month we celebrate Trinity Sunday. The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most important of the Christian faith, for it goes to the very heart of what God is like. The Bible is quite clear: there is one God, but He is revealed in three 'persons' – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



Have you ever wondered at what point in the Bible God is revealed as being more than one person? Well, you don't have to read very far: only to Genesis 1:26, where God (Elohim – a plural noun) says: Let US make man in OUR image. (Gen. 1:26)

The Bible reveals a pattern: God the Father lives in heaven and has never been seen. God the Son became the incarnate Jesus Christ, who made known to us the Father, and God the Holy Spirit, who is unseen, has been sent to live within and to equip His people, the Church.

The Trinity is basic to our salvation – for these three persons in the one Godhead have combined to save us from our sins: it is the WILL of the Father, the saving WORK of the Son, and the indwelling WITNESS of the Holy Spirit. (John 14:16, 23-26).

## Barnabas, Paul's first missionary companion

Would you have liked to go to Cyprus on holiday this year? If so, spare a thought for the Cypriot who played such a key role in the New Testament.

He was Joseph, a Jewish Cypriot and a Levite, who is first mentioned in Acts 4:36, when the Early Church was sharing a communal lifestyle. Joseph sold a field and gave the money to the apostles. His support so touched them that they gave him the nickname of Barnabas, 'Son of Encouragement'.

Barnabas has two great claims to fame. Firstly, it was Barnabas who made the journey to go and fetch the converted Paul out of Tarsus, and persuade him to go with him to Antioch, where there were many new believers with no one to help them. For a year the two men ministered there, establishing a church. It was here that the believers were first called Christians.

It was also in Antioch (Acts 13) that the Holy Spirit led the church to 'set aside' Barnabas and Paul, and to send them out on the church's first ever 'missionary journey'. The Bible tells us that they went to Cyprus, and then travelled throughout the island. It was at Lystra that the locals mistook Barnabas for Zeus and Paul for Hermes, much to their dismay.

Much later, back in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul decided to part company. While Paul travelled on to Syria, Barnabas did what he could do best: return to Cyprus and continue to evangelise it. So, if you go to Cyprus and see churches, remember that Christianity on that beautiful island goes right back to Acts 13, when Barnabas and Paul first arrived.

In England there are 13 ancient church dedications and not a few modern ones. Barnabas the generous, the encourager, the apostle who loved his own people – no wonder he should be remembered with love.