

St Helen's Magazine

June 2022

50p



St Helen's Church

Ashby-de-la-Zouch



Loving God, loving others, loving the world

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Editor Writes ...



June is when we will celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. It is no secret that Elizabeth II's faith in Jesus is deeply important to her, and that her life has been shaped by the Bible. She features in this month's magazine's letter, written for us by Sue Brown (page 4), in this month's poem from Chris Lewis (page 19), and in Quotes of the Month on page 37. When Alan Cross's latest gardening tips arrived in my inbox, the article was embellished with royal crowns! See what June requires of us on page 14.

Talking of digging, you never know what you might find when you dig through the archives. On page 16 Wendy Freer tells us the story of another fascinating bit of Ashby's history she's unearthed.

Perhaps we all need to dig out our old family Bibles - An extremely rare bible made the news in May, famous for an unfortunate error. The 1631 "Wicked" Bible omits the word "not" from its seventh commandment, informing readers "thou shalt commit adultery". One thousand copies of the text were printed, with the error only discovered a year later. Most of the texts were destroyed, but it is thought about 20 remain in circulation. I've checked and rechecked the magazine, but any typos that slip through will surely not be quite so momentous!

The recently discovered bible had made its way to New Zealand, but its history is a mystery because, whereas many bibles contain detailed descriptions of family trees, dates, places, and recordings of births and deaths, this copy has just one illegible name. The book has been now fully digitised and will be free to the public via a website. It is hoped someone might see it and be able to discern what the name scrawled inside actually says. Discernment isn't always easy. On page 22 Andy Smith is considering what we at St Helen's need to discern about our future.

Sue Brown Writes ...

God save the Queen

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend will soon be upon us. Here in Breedon we're gearing up for the lighting of the beacon on June 2nd and an all-day picnic on the Sunday. In Ashby, there's the Street Party and a special Evensong in honour of the Queen at 6.00 pm (don't miss it!).

Did you watch the Royal Windsor Horse Show, I wonder? There was a surreal moment at the end when Dame Helen Mirren (who played Elizabeth II in the film, 'The Queen') appeared on stage, resplendent in the costume of Elizabeth I, to deliver a message of gratitude to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. It was a strange moment of time-warp in which the lines between fact and fantasy, reality and imagination were blurred. The sentiments expressed were genuine and heartfelt – but the person voicing them was doing so on behalf of Her Majesty's present subjects, not the citizens of 16th century. I wonder what the Queen made of it? ..an acted queen addressing a living monarch in words she could not have spoken in real life.

Let us deal with truth rather than with theatre and spectacle. For whatever she made of that speech, we, her subjects, know that we owe a huge debt of gratitude to our Queen. Those of us who are older have watched her mature from a slip of a girl to the person she is now: still there, albeit older and frailer, still at the post of duty, still animated and smiling, still taking an interest in all that is going on around her – and all this, having weathered storms in her personal and family life, often in the public eye. One cannot help but admire her fortitude, resilience and dignity. And yes, whatever our



views on monarchy, we cannot but be grateful for the dedicated service and the consistent example she has given us, as someone who did not choose her calling as Queen, but who embraced it, trusting in God's anointing Spirit to enable her to fulfil that role.

And yet – and I suspect Her Majesty would be the first to acknowledge this – when the robes and titles of office are stripped away – at the foot of the Cross she knows herself equal with any other human being who comes to Christ for salvation, for we are all equal at the foot of the Cross and equally in need of the Saviour. Yes, one of her titles is 'Defender of the Faith' and she has a particular calling in relation to the Church of England, but she is also a fellow sinner saved by grace, who depends just as much as any one of us, on the promises of God for those who believe. Indeed, if the recent book by Catherine Butcher ('Our Faithful Queen') is anything to go by, the Queen has taken the promises she made to God on her Coronation Day with the utmost seriousness and fully conscious that she could only keep them by his enabling grace.

So we are grateful. Grateful for the stability, security and steadiness of her reign. Grateful to God for hearing her prayers and ours.

Music, of course, has always played a large part in the traditions of our nation. Think of 'Jerusalem', 'Land of Hope and Glory' and 'Rule Britannia' at the Last Night of the Proms, or 'Zadok the Priest' composed for the Coronation of George II in 1727 and sung at every coronation since.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee is no exception. At least two new anthems have been composed, and one is being sung by St Helen's Choir at Choral Evensong on May 5th. Written by a young composer, Thomas Hewitt Jones, the anthem weaves together extracts from the Queen's speeches over the years. The anthem serves to underline both the humanity and the dignity of the Queen, speaking as it does of 'grief, the price we pay for love' and 'a life of faith and constancy'. I hope you read this in time to come and hear the live performance.

Sue Brown

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Notes from a Bird Hide

Just cast your mind back to mid March 2020. Allan and I were on the Norfolk Coast for two weeks birdwatching when along came Covid and the lockdown found us on the way home early. In March 2021 we tried in vain to take the remaining week of the 2020 holiday. We were scuppered by Covid again. So in 2022, this year, we eventually got back to Burnham Ovary Staithe (BOS) just 2 years later.

We have been going to BOS those same weeks in March over many many years and you might think that in that tiny little place out on the salt marshes

that nothing would change and we could pick up where we left off two years previous – No!

The redshanks which used to be there in their millions were noticeable for their low numbers. But the oystercatchers which used to be far and few between were there in their millions. Usually we were tripping over the Grey Lags but they were a bit sparse, instead we were inundated with Brent Geese. The bird hides at nearby RSPB Titchwell were empty. No need to wait for a seat and trip over people's scopes, but the world seemed to be full of folks carrying around very large cameras outdoors and snapping anything that moved.

The occasional canoeist had been replaced by occasional paddle boarder and the abundance of second homes, usually empty at that time of year, appeared to be full of their owners who had decamped from London and stayed. Even Wells-next-the-Sea just down the coast, usually with a

smattering of visitors in March, was positively heaving!

We just couldn't pick up where we had left off two years previous.

This made us wonder if, as a church, we try to hard to pick up where we left off before Covid.

Things have changed. As Judith said in her letter last month maybe the

unexpected vacancy we find ourselves in is a time to develop "church" and our "church life" differently. A time for growth in a new direction rather than trying to replicate the past or pick up where we left off. That might seem scary or exciting depending how you look at it and if you have any ideas then I'm sure any of the ministry team would love to hear from you.

Remember, God says "I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper and not to harm." We need to take that on board, seek his direction and put our shoulders to the wheel, maybe sooner rather than later.

Rev'd. Margaret



The
What's
On
Notice board

Please send any articles, jokes,
book reviews, photos etc to
jill.chapman12@btopenworld.com

Thanks

ASHBY STREET PASTORS

invite you to a

GARDEN PARTY

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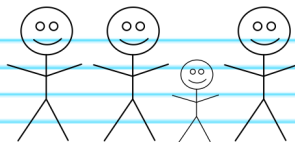
at
ST HELEN'S
HERITAGE
CENTRE
GARDEN
(OPPOSITE
ST HELEN'S
CHURCH)

on
SUNDAY
JUNE 12TH
2PM - 5PM



HOST FAMILY

required by Polish girl
called Aniela.



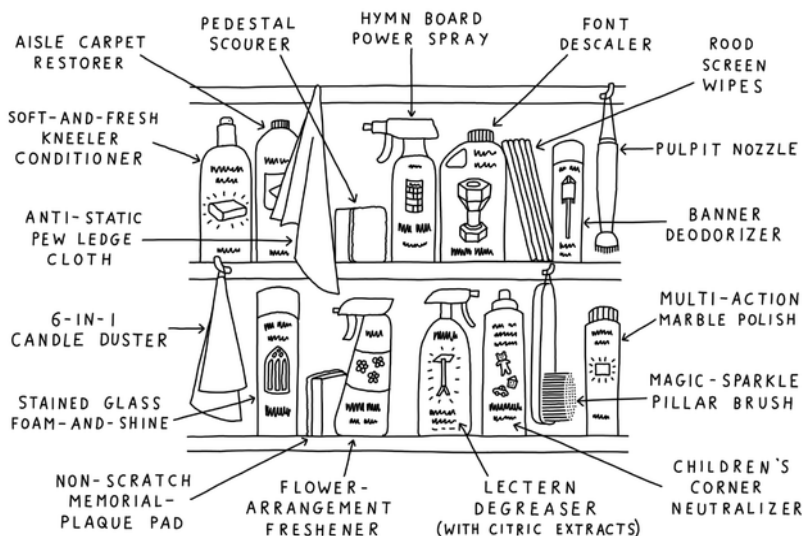
She comes from a good family and is aged 20. She is
studying History of Art at Warsaw University.

She already has a good command of English but would like
to improve her fluency in the language by working as an au
pair. She wants to spend a couple of months here namely
August and September.

For more details contact David Harris on 01530 415551

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Something Old, Something New ...

How long is it since you visited fair2all? Although it is a year since the end of the last Lockdown I still have customers returning for the first time.

I have been working on the 'Head over Heart Sale' display in our Bath Street window. As I added several Sikas (Macramé hangings that hold baskets or pots) to the reduced items on display I really did feel I was going back in time – Sikas were the first handicrafts sold by Tearcraft.



In 1974 Tearfund had chartered a plane to take medical and other relief supplies to the newly formed Bangladesh, following disastrous flooding. Rather than bring the plane back empty, a grant was given for the purchase of several tons of jute handicrafts which ensured that the craftspeople who made them had been paid a fair wage – a completely new concept 48 years ago!



So what is fair2all's newest product? It is probably our range of rugs which has increased from a few made of upcycled plastic. Now we have many made of recycled fabrics and traditional handwoven Kilim rugs. The excellent thing about all the rugs we sell is that, in addition to being fair trade, the production is checked ensuring no child labour is used.

The range of fair trade products has grown substantially over the years; you may be surprised if you visit fair2all by the variety available – not only wooden toys, gifts and cards but also clothes, socks and scarves.

Mandy McIntosh

fair2all, 17 Bath Street, Ashby 01530 417286

How shall we pray in such moments?

God whose heart
is as shattered as ours,
please do it once again.
out of the chaos which
swirls around us, create
those living waters into which
we may pour our tears, watching
them mingle to become pools
of gentleness and love from which
we may drink to make it through
the coming hours and days.
send the sun to light the way
out of the shadows of stunned
grief, anger, and loss.

how shall we pray in such moments?

Word who is as speechless
as we are in these moments,
offer us that simple prayer
which sustained you and so many
who have gone before us,
'do not be afraid.'
as difficult as it may be
for you to continue to utter
and for us to hear and believe,
whisper to us that hate will not win,
that fear will not control us,
that death's power is but an illusion.

how shall we pray in such moments?

Spirit whose breath has been knocked
out of you by this punch to your soul
as well as to all of us, breathe.

breathe peace into all the fractured
hopes and homes in Texas and
so many other places.
breathe hope into all who wonder
how we can continue to go on
seeking to find another way.
breathe compassion
into all those hearts hardened
by indifference to such horrors.

how shall we pray in such
moments?

God in Community, Holy in One,
continue to create,
continue to speak,
continue to breathe
for us, on us, through us, for us
until we can do it for others.
Amen.





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June Gardening Tips



As I write this we are coming to the end of May, and we have been fortunate that the days have been generally warm, the evenings wet and there has been no sign of a late frost.

It is usual for bedding plants to be planted out in June but most of us have started this process earlier – but be prepared to cover them if temperatures drop.

There is an endless list of such plants that can make a brilliant bedding display. My favourites are geraniums, marigolds, lobelia, dahlias, begonias and petunias. Our, “Spanish Area”, is full of brightly coloured Spanish ceramic pots containing a multitude of orange and yellow flowers, which include a few Cannas.

We have started to look at hanging baskets but are yet to choose them as they are not yet fully developed, but we will complete the task by the middle of June.

Please remember, deadheading both annual and perennial plants is always worthwhile in order to keep them flowering, rather than setting seed. However, do not dead head digitalis or aquilegia if you want them to self-seed.



June is a safe time to plant out more tender vegetable plants such as courgettes, French beans, tomatoes and cucumbers, providing your garden offers a medium degree of shelter from the wind. Please remember to sow and plant vegetables sparingly but often, if you are fortunate enough to have the space.

Some vegetable species require physical support during growth. For example, broad beans, French beans, runner beans and peas have slightly different growing requirements in terms of support. Runner and French beans grow very tall and so need long cane or twig structures (for example a



wigwam) to climb up as they are self-supporting, whereas peas need a relatively low net (3-4 feet high) to cling to. However, broad beans do not climb or cling to supports and so need individual rods or canes to stop them falling over.

You either like them or hate them – wood pigeons! At this time of year the garden is

visited frequently by these birds. Unfortunately, they love to eat the new growth of brassicas. When young, the brassicas (not the pigeons) need to be physically protected by mesh over a frame. The same goes for strawberries and other soft fruits. Pigeons (as well as blackbirds) like to peck at new growth on young onions and garlic which results in them being lifted out of the soil. The ones that are scattered around need to re-planted and then growth will continue (until it happens again!).

Now it is warm enough to plant out or sow tender herbs in pots, such as coriander, dill, basil and tarragon. Don't forget to bring them back inside later in the year.

Our Queen's Platinum Jubilee is fast approaching. The weather forecast looks to be OK and so get into your garden and enjoy the, "Fruits of your labour", whilst Toasting Our Queen.

Alan Cross



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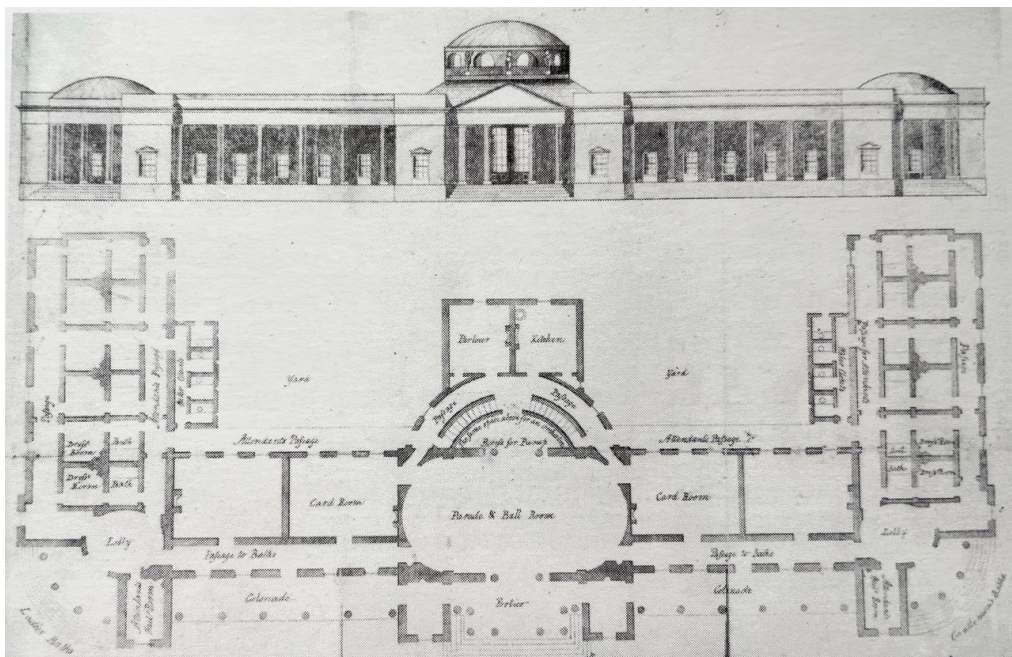
Ivanhoe Baths Bicentenary

In the month that we have the big celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, I wanted to draw your attention to another anniversary this year, a little closer to home and far less well-known.

The Ivanhoe Baths, which once stood alongside The Royal Hotel, opened two hundred years ago in 1822. There appears not to have been a big opening ceremony, or at least nothing seems to have made the newspapers of the day. In fact, part of the building had been open in the autumn of the previous year. The Leicester Chronicle reported on 10th November that six baths were opened on 22nd October 1821 and would continue to operate through the winter season.

On 4th July 1822, the Birmingham Chronicle carried the following report:

"Ashby de la Zouch Ivanhoe Baths. We understand that this magnificent building, which is completing on a very grand and elegant style of architecture, will be adorned with three noble and princely entrances, two of which are nearly finished. Fifteen baths are quite ready, and the arrivals are daily becoming more numerous."



It was expected that the Baths would attract wealthy and fashionable people to the town and so of course, it was necessary for them to have a place to stay. The Royal Hotel, at first called the Hastings Hotel, was built five years

later, and two terraces of houses were also provided, Rawdon Terrace and Ivanhoe Terrace.

The Baths themselves provided treatment for an astonishing range of



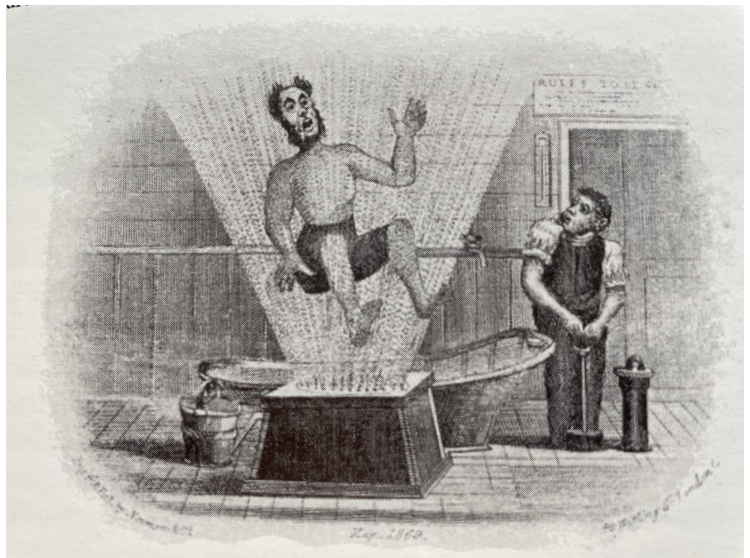
ailments. To judge from the description written by T Wayte in 1831 almost any ailment, internal or external could be treated. Just a few of those he mentioned were indigestion, nervous and hectic atrophy, worms, scrofula and the mesenterical affections of children. The cold baths were said to be effective for “recent cutaneous eruptions, especially those that consist of pimples, blebs, pustules, scurfs and scales.”

Hextall, writing a few years later than Mr. Wayte wrote that “when swimming is impractical the bather should employ the arms in brisk movements over the chest, abdomen and bowels.”

Bathers could be totally immersed or sponged over the “problem areas”. Water could either be flowing as in the stream bath or applied through a tube which could be directed at particular parts of the body. Rain in the shower bath was said to be “thrilling and effusive” when applied over the head and shoulders.

The building itself had an elegant classical frontage with a colonnade some

150 feet long, topped by a splendid dome. (This latter had to be taken down some years later as it was reckoned to be unsafe). Inside was an impressive ballroom, also known as a Parade Room, with an orchestra gallery above. As well as the many baths and treatment rooms there were also rooms for cards and billiards and the Baths became the premier place for holding functions such as balls and dinners, taking over from The Queen's Head and The White Hart.



Although I can find no mention of an opening ceremony in 1822, the Marquis of Hastings, on whose land the Baths had been built, did pay a brief visit to the town in August 1823 and was given a magnificent reception. Scott tells us: "the horses were unyoked from his carriage on the Tamworth Road, opposite where Rotherwood now stands, and enthusiastic admirers drew it into the town. Market Street was decorated with boughs, flowers and triumphal arches, and crowded with people on horseback and on foot. Ashby's best brews of ale flowed freely." A dinner was held in the Baths to which all the gentlemen of the town were invited by purchasing a ticket for five shillings.

Sadly, we no longer have the magnificent Baths building today as it was demolished in 1962. For anyone wanting to know more, however, there is plenty of information available. Ashby Museum will be putting on a special exhibition in July to mark the bicentenary. The museum has a very attractive model of the baths on permanent display and there is a book, written by Ken Hillier. Two films have been made about the Baths. The first was a documentary which was available on DVD from the museum but can now be seen on the Pudding Bag Productions Facebook page. The second was a fifteen-minute drama made by Pudding Bag Productions in 2016 for the Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds entitled *Polkas and Pustules*. This can be seen on YouTube.

Wendy Freer

May - June

Maverick May morphs miraculously into Jubilant June just in time to joyfully celebrate Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee!

The weather, remembering how she performed at the coronation cloudy skies bursting forth with teeming rain echoed again at the Diamond Jubilee; the weather (at time of writing) can't decide whether it really is June or whether, in fact, she's stuck in January.

Whatever the weather it is time to celebrate 70 glorious years with parties both street and garden or simply by raising a glass –
"Here's a health unto your Majesty!"

Thank you Ma'am for your dedicated service to God and your people your entire life long.

Chris Lewis

World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day is an international day organised every year on 20th June by the United Nations. It is designed to celebrate and honour the strength and courage of refugees and people seeking sanctuary, their contributions, creativity and resilience, and to encourage public awareness and support for people from around the world who have had to flee their home lands because of conflict or natural disaster.

The day was first established on 20th June 2001, in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

The UNHCR's most recent estimate of the number of refugees in the world is from mid-2021. The number of people forcibly displaced was thought to be 84 million, with **over 26.6 million** refugees. This was before the war in Ukraine.



Our Worship on Sundays in June

Week	8.30am	10.30am	pm
1 5 th June Pentecost	Staunton Holy Communion	St Helen's Jubilee All Age	6.00pm St Helen's * Evensong Isley Walton Holy Communion
2 12 th June Trinity		St Helen's * Holy Communion	
3 19 th June	Staunton Morning Prayer	St Helen's * Morning Prayer— Word & Worship Breedon Holy Communion	
4 26 th June		St Helen's * Holy Communion	12.30pm St Helen's Baptisms 3.30pm Coleorton Messy Church



* - denotes services at St Helen's which are streamed live to Facebook, on the Flagstaff Family of Churches Facebook page, and later on the website - www.sthelensashby.net

Other Regular Services:

- **Wednesdays - Holy Communion - 10.30am**
 - First Wednesday of the month - Holy Communion - in church
 - Second Wednesday of the month - Holy Communion - at Prior Park Community Centre
 - Third Wednesday of the month - Service of the Word - in church
- **Saturdays - Parish Prayers - 9.30am** in church (Hastings chapel or, if weather is fine, the Community Heritage Centre garden)

Regular activities:

Monday mornings, term time

First Tuesday of the month

Third Tuesday of the month

Third Tuesday of the month

Fourth Tuesday of the month
(October to March only)

First Wednesday of the month

Thursdays

- Little Fishes
- MU meeting 7pm - 9.30pm
- MU branch meeting 10am - 12.30pm
- PCC meeting 7 - 9.30pm
- Heritage lectures 7pm - 9.30pm
- 'We're In Stitches' Knit & natter 2 - 4pm
- Choir practice 6.30-8.30

From the Albums



May's wonderfully interactive All-Age included Noah's Ark and rainbows.

The choir stalls are back in their regular pre-pandemic places.

Our team service was held outside at Breedon on the Hill.



By popular request here is Andy Smith's thought provoking sermon from May's Word & Worship service. The readings were Revelation 21, verses 1-6, and Acts 11, verses 1-18.

Who was I to think that I could stand in Gods Way?

May the written word, and the spoken word, lead us to the Living Word.
Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Who was I to think I could stand in God's way?

It's the question Peter asks at the end of the story we've just heard

A question Peter by implication, asks of the Jewish leaders.

A question he asks of each of us today.

A question driven by his experience of the Holy Spirit.

Today, we're near the end of the Easter season. Soon we'll celebrate the Ascension and Pentecost, and our attention shifts from The Son to The Spirit.

So today it's good to ponder what the reading from Acts says about the work of the Spirit – especially in times of change and challenge for the church.

The reading comes from 'The Acts of the Apostles', BUT it's clear that the apostles only "act" when pushed, nudged, shaken and stirred by the Spirit. Perhaps the book should be called The Acts of the Spirit...?

And this passage from Acts 11 sits at the heart of where the Spirit is trying to take the Church.

When something is especially important in Acts, we either get a speech about it or we get told it three times. This story has the apostle Peter give a speech about its core message and it's the second of three tellings of the same basic story. This story **matters** ...

It shows how God changed the thinking of the early church on something critical to the spread of the Gospel.

So, let's unpack it...

Peter's story stresses the disturbing, challenging nature of God's rescue mission and the need to abandon ideologies, traditions, habits, that no longer serve God's purpose.

How does that happen? Let's step through the story ...

Peter prays – it all begins with prayer, it always begins with prayer -

Peter meets God in prayer. He's still. Receptive. And hears, feels, senses...

He sees a vision, hears a voice...

Peter's only human and snubs what he has sensed...

but the message is repeated ...

"I replied surely not Lord...the voice spoke from heaven a second time...this happened three times...

Peter has an encounter

"right then three men stopped at the house... the Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them ...

Peter's encounter leads to a sharing of stories, of encounters with the Spirit-

Peter and the man he's encountered share a sense of God's purpose and the Spirit moves among them

And as a result, what was unthinkable, unimaginable, unbelievable happened...

The Holy Spirit had just broken down established, unchallenged, ethnically based traditions.

The Holy Spirit has just opened up the spread of the Gospel of Hope, THE Good News to the entire population of the world.

But it's never **that** simple, back at the start of the story, we discover that Peter returns to Jerusalem to a harsh reception. "So, you had a meal with Gentiles, mmm?"

Again, helped by the Spirit, Peter takes them through his experience, step by step, and ends by asking, "Who was I to stand in God's way?" and convinces them – for now. If you know Acts, you'll know a few more twists await before Gentiles are fully accepted by the church leaders.

So, what learning can we draw from this?

What questions does it raise for us, **now**?

What we learn from this story, is that, when the time requires it, God works to change wrong thinking among his people. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem thought:

tradition to be more important than salvation

that church should consist of "people like us"

that God needed to do things their way.

It was OK for God to save the Gentiles, but first they needed to become Jews.

And so, I wonder whether some of our thinking is "wrong".

Are we trying to hang onto what has worked well in the past?

Trying to build the future of the church in the shape of the past? Looking for

the next generation of “people like us”?

Do we, subconsciously think like the leaders in Jerusalem?

Do we need to allow God to confront any wrong thinking? And how do we do that?

Well, remember:

God changes us as we seek to walk with him – It was while Peter was praying that God gave him this life-changing vision. God can't change our thinking if we rarely spend time with him – time listening, open, ready to hear and feel God's wishes.

God changes us through encounters, and by nudging us into new situations and circumstances – Peter didn't pray for help in saving the Gentles, Peter didn't pray for a creative ministry idea. God intervened with **his** ideas, with **his** agenda. The cheek of it!! And that agenda was shocking – Peter's response was to say, “Surely not Lord”! But God persists, and then puts people in our path – but do we recognise them?

Time in prayer is vital – we need, individually and collectively to be with God. But we also need to be ready to recognise God's work in the events and people we encounter.

We can't be like the vicar in the oft told tale:

Where a storm descends on a small town, which becomes a flood. And as the waters rise, the vicar is praying in the church porch, surrounded by water. One of the PCC passes in a canoe and offers the vicar a lift.

"No, thanks" says the preacher. "I have faith in the Lord".

I'll shorten the story, as it is so well known, but basically as the waters rise higher and higher, the preacher is offered help from a motorboat, then a coastguard helicopter. And each time the vicar insists the Lord will deliver him.

Inevitably he drowns, and goes to heaven. After a while he meets God, and complains "Lord, I had unwavering faith in you. Why didn't you save me from the flood?" And God shakes his head. "What did you want from me? I sent you two boats and a helicopter..."

God changes us as we walk with him, through encounters with others and by nudging, and pushing us into uncomfortable scenarios. But we need to be alert to these things, and share our experiences with one another.

So, this morning, I encourage each of us to think about our benefice. About the vacancy, and the shape of the benefice in the years to come.

What does God ask of us – and more importantly, how will we know that? How will we as individuals and collectively seek to walk with God to allow

him to change our thinking?

Who have we met or will we meet, who may cause us to think differently about how we are church?

Change in the early church – epoch making change - came about because of ordinary people, encountering God, then one another and then sharing their experience.

God's will is not always shared in high-brow "theologically correct" expressions. God's will is not always shared through typical channels of leadership – Bishop Martyn has no higher claim on God's time or ear than you or me ...

And as I've been preparing this service, it strikes me that there is little in our pattern of worship, our regular meetings, any activity that focuses on us seeking God and learning his will.

So perhaps we need to think about how we might do that.

Might doing something different be as impactful as the change in the parish where a newly ordained curate joined and were lent a car that would not start without a push.

A bright young thing, they had an idea, went to the local school, borrowed some children, and had them push the car. Then as the curate worked, they would either park on a hill or leave the engine running.

This worked well for a couple of years when the time came to move on. As they explained the novel starting procedure to their replacement, the new curate looked under the bonnet and said, "Hang on, what's this loose cable?" She gave the cable a twist, got into the car, turned the key and the engine roared to life.

For two years needless trouble had become routine. The power was there all the time, only a loose connection keeping it from working.

I know that the challenge we face over the next couple of years isn't as easily solved as that. But the power – The Holy Spirit is here. How are our connections?

We need to explore new ways of thinking about the challenge we face, ways that begin with seeking God individually and together. In exploring and encountering new people and new thinking, and in sharing what we hear, see and feel.

The Spirit always pushes churches into greater practice of God's love for **all** people, we need to be ready to listen.

For after all, who are we, to stand in God's way?

Andy Smith

At the same service the choir sang “And I saw a new heaven” by Malcolm Archer, a setting of the first reading from the Book of Revelation.

Andy Smith also addressed this reading when introducing the anthem:

And I saw a new heaven

It's a beautiful anthem, and I hope you enjoy hearing it – but the reading that inspired it is also beautiful – and I'd like to say just a few words about it.

The Book of Revelation is often viewed with unease or suspicion and for sure, it contains some very vivid, strange imagery.

But it is a book with a very simple message. A message of hope. And this passage is at the heart of that message of hope, it tells of the end of the story. A very happy ending.

Knowing how a movie ends usually spoils the experience.

Knowing how salvation ends should make it easier for us to encounter and to walk with God.

And please note that the new city comes to earth, to where we are. “See the home of God is among mortals” writes John. Revolution and redemption do not happen in some removed place, they take place right here with the material of the world we live in.

It's a powerful vision of a liberated world, a new reality marked by all things being made new here among mortals, and the rest of creation echoing the Lord's prayer “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

And I believe the work we do now, the service we give God now, is part of revealing that Kingdom. Part of being pulled toward God, into time, through God's loving interaction with us.

Once again, I ask, who are we to stand in God's way?



Andy Smith

Who is your most underrated character in the Bible ?

This question was asked on Twitter recently. Here are some of the answers. Who would you suggest? Please do write in with their stories.

Pilate's wife. She was the only one who tried to stop the crucifixion because she listened to what God told her in a dream and was brave enough to publicly object to what was happening. And then there is a lot of theology around God trying to stop the crucifixion...

I'd be tempted to vote for **Ananias** - what did it take to believe God really wanted him to visit, evangelise and baptise Paul.

Ittai the Gittite. Put his trust in David and supplied troops for a fight that wasn't really his.

Shiphrah and Puah who stood up to Pharaoh about killing the Hebrew boys. The C of E Daily lectionary skips their story.

Simon of Cyrene. If he had not carried the cross of Christ, fallen humanity would not have been redeemed.

I like **Mephibosheth**, who doesn't do anything, but who gives a glimpse of another David - in so many ways a monster - as human, and kind. And who is disabled without having to be cured.

Eutychus. Guy was probably out feeding the poor, praying, worshipping w others, & telling anybody who'd listen about how amazing Jesus is. But you fall asleep & tumble out of a window during Paul's sermon & you get forever enshrined in scripture as "Mr Sleepy needs resurrected"

Nathaniel - questions, cynicism (?) and then apparently silent but still there at the end going fishing and 'getting it'.

The bleeding woman. In three of the Gospels and is an absolute star

Huldah - the first textual canon scholar. She identifies a scroll as containing God's word.

Esau. Done out of his inheritance he built another life. When Jacob, fearful, guilty, sorry and bowing low meets him, Esau runs towards him and embraces him and they both weep. Esau waves away the gifts saying 'I already have all I need.' What a guy.

Hannah. Barren and following fervent prayer, gets pregnant and gives her first born, Samuel, back to God.

Mary, the one who wiped Jesus' feet with her hair and poured the expensive oil over them. She was not afraid to show how much she admired Jesus, even though her actions brought rebuke and ridicule from others.

Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Modern Day Slavery - Speaker Margaret Rouse

Margaret Rouse started her talk with some disturbing numbers - there are:

- 136,000 Slaves in Britain
- 4 million in the World
- 10,000 + in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland
- 1 in 4 Children – (under 16 years of age)

These modern-day slaves are recruited in their own countries, befriended and offered jobs; Brought to this country and once in this country they quickly discover that their lives are not their own. They are taken to job centres to apply for benefits & for NI numbers, open bank accounts & receive bank cards which are immediately the property of their “employer”, who regularly visits an ATM machine & withdraws the slavers money. Housed in multiple occupancy properties, where shared sleeping arrangements are usually the norm, those on night work sleep in the bed in the day, those on day work use the bed at night with bedding rarely changed.

The most common types of modern slave labour exploitation are Labour, Sexual, Criminal, Child & Domestic servitude. During the covid pandemic, you may remember that the textile trade in Leicester was highlighted & many operations shut down & criminal proceedings brought. Those being used as slave labour were immediately found safe living & received care. But that was only those discovered, in other places they will still exist & some were moved quickly to establish new operations. The criminal trade is often drug related and uses children, and sadly the homes of the vulnerable to establish drop off, storage & delivery routes by children. The children who invariably are from poorer areas are befriended bought expensive merchandise, which would be beyond their means and then they are gradually taken in hand and told what their job is. We know of this as County lines, the Police are working tirelessly to cease this type of exploitation, but whilst they have numerous successes it can still resurrect itself in another street/area.

Margaret Rouse explained that we all, without knowing it, can either sit on a bus, or pass in the street, a person in this type of slavery. They are invariably walking/sitting with their heads bowed, don't engage with eye contact or if they catch your eye look scared, malnourished, travel in

groups in a minibus, she explained how we can if we become aware of properties that have an unusual amount of vehicle visits, at unusual times of the day, or people who go into a property but never seem to be in the neighbourhood. We can note this and contact the police on 101 who will follow it up. This follow up is often not by uniformed officers, but plain clothed surveillance is carried out to enable a full picture of what is occurring at the property. There is also a modern slavery helpline 08000 121 700

This short article as you can imagine is only able to give a small picture of the vast numbers of people who are trapped in Modern Day Slavery. It is thought provoking in making us think of our local area, does anything strike us as unusual, not for us to intervene but to contact an agency who can establish if there is anything to concern us.

Our 21st June our meeting is an open meeting, 3pm Cream Tea in the Heritage Centre. (Please contact 01530 458366 to come so that we have numbers for catering & ensure we have space to accommodate you.)

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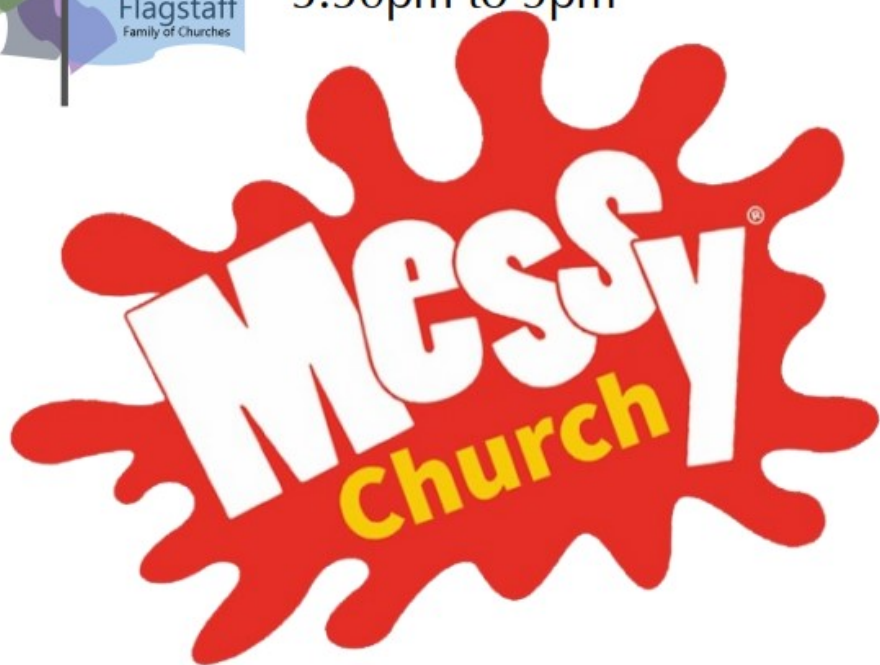
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- Please check our Facebook pages:



St Mary's and St John's, Coleorton

St Helen's Ashby de la Zouch

Messy Church in May





Adventurous

The Adventurous story so far: Generous people have supported the hard work that resulted in acquiring for Ashby Youth For Christ the HSE adventurous activities licence, insurance and supportive administration that allow us to provide challenging, fun and safe(ish) experiences in reunion with the beautiful world God has made.

Life is wild and scary. Hardly surprising when you think about the one who created life. We tend to shy from wild and scary. We like safe and tame. So we miss out on life and God. This is sad.

Adventurous is not a club or event. It's more of a Tabasco Sauce adding excitement to our existing clubs and partnerships.

We have added:

- Rock Climbing
- Nocturnal hill walking
- Stand Up Paddleboarding
- Canoeing
- Mountain biking
- Bushcraft

To

- Our existing clubs (e.g. Rock Solid)
- Mentoring relationships
- Partnerships with schools and other Christian youth initiatives
- Time with young people and their families

I was walking home the other day. I met a small flock of young ladies. I knew them through our "Sk8z" drop in. We had a cheerful exchange about some remarkably unhappy stuff. They told me they were partly excluded from school. This means they are at school for only part of a full school week. I can only guess how hard this must be for them, the school and their parents. My fantasy in a situation like this, is to be able to say to them, 'Let's float down a river with Emerald (my fantasy, instantly appearing, fully inducted youth worker) and have a picnic, then you can tell me more'.

My fantasy should probably remain a fantasy because if it came true you might miss out. You'd miss out on the privilege and fun of being part of God reaching out in love to local young people. I have recently spoken to two conspicuously confident people who have been joining us to serve local young people. I was surprised to hear both of them separately confessing how nervous they'd been about volunteering. I was also surprised to hear them both separately say how surprised they had been at how much fun serving young people had been. I thought everyone knew it was fun. My apologies. Please miss out no longer. Come and enjoy some more of that freedom that comes with ditching feeling safe for the real safety of following Jesus in uncomfortable faithfulness.

One of the plans we are currently hatching is a programme of Adventurous dates in the school summer holidays. For these to happen we will need the support of suitable adults - Safeguarding inducted, caring, praying types (and as a bonus ones that can provide transport).

We are currently looking at the weeks of 25th July - 7th August. If you would like to support us in a bit of Adventurous fun on any of these dates (or before then) please would you get in touch?

Thanks
Vernon

Football

When attendance at our <16 session is low it can mean that those lads who are there feel under less peer pressure. Some of the less skilled footballers tend to feel intimidated by their more able peers and are less likely to appear or 'be themselves' when the better players are present. When the weaker players begin to enjoy scoring they also begin to relax and speak with some vulnerability.

An increase in numbers can mean an increase in conflict. So thank you very much for your prayers for increased numbers, for rapport between the lads who come, and also for God's grace. There really has been a lot of it abroad but... Please will you pray that, as well as getting plenty of players, we will receive even more grace so that all of the players can share a football without feelings of fear and aggression / defensiveness undermining all of their fun and achievement. Please pray this for their whole lives as well - that their fear and defensiveness won't rob them of the relationships and peace essential their growth and achievement.

The older players can play with great vigour and aggression so that, at the closing whistle, I can be greatly relieved at the near-miracle that no one has been seriously injured. Please pray that in their competitiveness and passion they might know restraint and self-control out of respect for their fellow players.

One of the older players, whilst receiving first aid one week, told us that he had played for various teams in various leagues where he had not enjoyed the angry, aggressive competition, whereas Wednesday football, although it was no less competitive, had something else - something very good but mysterious.

Thank you for your prayers for these young people. Please go on praying that they will get to know good and mysterious Jesus. Pray they will hear their hearts urging them to seek his face (cf. Psalm 27:8).

Vernon

Sk8ers

Last term we celebrated young asking for and taking home bibles, a record 19 young people coming along to sk8ers and 2 new volunteers in the form of Jim Curtis and Gill Richardson, hurrah!

After Easter we had 5! However 2 of these were new people to Sk8ers! Praise the Lord.

Interestingly the young people have said they did not enjoy there being so many more of them around. They found that they didn't get enough time to be heard, chatted to and played games with; and that fascinates and excites me. We are building a culture and expectation within our young sk8ers, that giving time to another person is valuable and valued, and that's what God gives each of us every day, should we find the time to sit in his presence and enjoy.

This term, could you pray that our sk8ers get a taste of what it is to be in the presence of the living God, his Holy Spirit; that when they come to sk8ers, it is Him that they crave and not us awkward and very fallible adults Thank you.

Our numbers have climbed again through the month. Games have been played, laughter has been heard, and young people got to come inside and be served and loved just for being themselves. It's been wonderful. Yet, with so many young people coming along, we still really could do with more volunteers, especially to set up and clear down. Many people have to leave straight after group, but it does take time to clear away, clean and Hoover, leaving the church room as we found it - could you help, and will you pray that the right people come forward.

One game we play is called zombie dice, basically you are a Zombie and you need to throw the dice to eat brains or the people 'dice' run away. It's fun, quick, and if Vernon gets hold of it...full of spaghetti. However it is a good example of how messy sometimes following Gods path can be. I always fear that nothing we say is heard, but I have faith that the Holy Spirit will water the seeds of truth that we faithfully sow week upon week.

Please will you pray that those seeds take root and are watered by the Holy Spirit. Pray that our young people start to turn away from the behaviours and habits which bind them and seek freedom in Christ.

Could you pray for our young people who are struggling because it is exam / test season. Being tested is difficult for all of us, and it is our reliance on a God who provides for all our needs and loves us first, which gets us through; but many (I would say almost all) of the Sk8ers don't have this solid ground to stand on. They will feel like their world is tilting and everyone is judging them to see if they can remain standing. Please pray for peace, and the Holy Spirit to come upon them, that in this time of testing, maybe they look up and not out to the one who knows them intimately and wants to provide for them, if they would only accept his help.

Our [Amazon wishlist](#) is still live, please take a look and see if you can help us in anyway by purchasing one of the items on our list. or if you would like to come and volunteer with us (on a rota to suit you), or give financially to our work, please reply to this message. Thank you for your support and prayers.

In Him,
Katie & The Sk8ers team

Rock Solid

In a Rock Solid conversation which included questions about which had been the most enjoyed activities over the past few years, 'When we went outside and...' featured often.

Why is time together outside so enjoyable and / or memorable? Perhaps trying to understanding this truth is less important than accepting it. Originally God made the earth and planted a garden for people to enjoy with him. This design, however spoiled by us, remains a precious gift.

Please thank God that we don't just visit nature when we go outside, we worship him by enjoying being part of his amazing creation. Please pray that each member of Rock Solid would gain a greater knowledge of the Gardener and his call to them to be reconciled to him and in walking fellowship with him.

One of the outside games we've played is 'safari sardines' - which is too complicated to explain here. We



had fun and also reflected on the advantages of our hearing. Being quiet and really listening gave us an edge in the game we played. It also allows to open ourselves to God's guidance, correction, encouragement, words for other people...

Please pray that Rock Solid will become determined and disciplined listeners to God. Pray we will be delivered from the hum and chatter around us and hungry for his still small voice.

Vernon

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Quotes for the Month

'We built hell and put your children in it'

Justin Welby apologises to Indigenous Canadians, May 2nd

'Archbishop Tutu was the best at being Archbishop Tutu that Archbishop Tutu could ever be.' - Archbishop Rowan Williams

Ordinand Prof Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, Rediscovering the Middle Ground blog, May 14th

'You think I am leaving in disgrace ... I am not.' – Very Revd Professor Martyn Percy
Rosie Dawson, Dean Percy's Parting Shot, Religion Media Centre, May 14th

'It is the sort of debate that causes vines to lose their saltiness and makes them unable to finish the race.'

Simon Sarmiento, Thinking Anglicans, May 15th

'I have found that the God atheists don't believe in is very similar to the God that I don't believe in.'

Revd Mark Sandlin, ProgressiveChristianity.org, Facebook, May 16th

'Many blues songs took their lead from the haunting poetry of the Hebrew Psalms – unafraid to ask hard questions, to complain about stuff that happens, to stop pretending.'

Right Reverend Nick Baines, Pause for Thought on BBC Radio 2's Zoe Ball Show, May 16th

'You can never have too much bureaucracy when there is temptation involved, as St Augustine might have said if he were alive today.'

Party like it's 1753, LGBTQ Faith UK, May 16th

'What we vicars need is a bishop who, like an elder sibling will swoop into our parishes and help sort out nonsense, and if required (safeguarding rules permitting) give us a hug.'

Revd Daniel French, Let bishops be bishops, Savetheparish.com, May 16th

'The archbishop of San Francisco will no longer allow [US House Speaker] Nancy Pelosi to receive Holy Communion because of her support of reproductive rights. The way some people try to control the body of Christ, you'd think Jesus was a woman.'

Middle Age Riot, Twitter, May 20th

'Our world is addicted to oil ... Bringing an addict to the point of realisation often requires tough love. I see this non-violent civil resistance as the outworking of such costly love God is calling us to.'

Rev Bill White, held on remand at HMP Birmingham for Just Stop Oil protest, May 20th

'Worse than wolves disguised as sheep are the ones disguised as shepherds.'

Prof Karen Swallow Prior, Southern Baptist Convention report on abuse, May 24th

'There are no words, there is no hope, not today. We see Christ crucified in Texas and all we can do for now is not turn away. We look to see who around us most needs help. I hold to my deepest belief, that grace bats last.'

Anne Lamott, Facebook, May 25th

'I'm confident the Holy Spirit is at work in the people of God. I'm looking forward to exploring that ... rather than trying to help God across the road like a little old lady.'

Rev Canon Arun Arora next Bishop of Kirkstall, Premier Christian News, May 27th

'The suggestion that I, as archbishop, should not be political is a nonsense'

Archbishop Justin Welby, The Times Saturday interview, May 28

'There is not a smidgen of entitlement in the Queen's behaviour. Indeed, when it came to Prince Philip's funeral, it would never have occurred to her to set aside the lockdown rules.'

LICC's Mark Greene, The Queen's Faith, preachweb.org blog, May 30th

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