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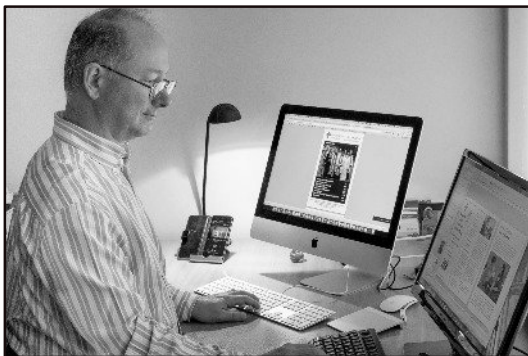
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Please submit text in an editable
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Submission Deadlines

Items for inclusion in the December
2020 edition must reach the
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November**.

Items for inclusion in the January
2021 edition must reach the
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December**.



We have no choice, at present, but to remain apart when together. Our photos of last month's annual parish meeting (opposite) drive the point home. But have we not always lived between the poles of *together* and *apart*? In normal times, we choose our position on the line between them according to personality, mood or circumstances; but whichever way we lean, we need both to feel complete. For all but the most irrepressible extroverts, to be constantly together would be unbearable. The same can be said of being constantly alone, especially when that isolation is enforced rather than chosen.

That is why your parish is making every effort this Winter to create opportunities for gathering in defiance of Covid-19 (though not of the rules). **See p.15 for details.** It is also why we continue to celebrate all who promote the common good (pp.18-21) together with any ideas (e.g. pp.16-17) aimed at penetrating the loneliness and anxiety which too many of our readers are currently obliged to bear.

How might we, as this pandemic continues, *'rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organisation of our societies, and, above all, the meaning of our existence'* (Pope Francis, p.19) so that none are excluded or forgotten? Facing the darkness alone, like the tree on our front cover, should not be an experience that any of us has to endure.

The Editor

From The Rector

Ancient Lockdown & Isolation

As we become used to the restrictions, the impact and the jargon of this pandemic we may regard our present sufferings as having a uniqueness all their own. After all, it's in our nature to regard our afflictions as having significance and historical importance over the sufferings of others, even when their sufferings are far worse; but, as someone wrote long ago, 'What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun'. An interest in history or a curiosity about how previous generations coped with peril and catastrophe may provide valuable insights.

The Christian Bible is a rich source of history, stories, myth, poetry and prose. Its content spans many centuries and many nations and includes references to the Middle East, North Africa and Europe within its pages, from Damascus to Rome, from the sands of southern Egypt to the cedars of Lebanon. It incorporates the political and economic rise and fall of numerous empires and concludes



with the establishment of the earliest Christian communities in the still flourishing Roman Empire. Even people with uncertain faith or none value the Bible's uniqueness, the vast scope of human endeavour it portrays and its literary influence upon the English-speaking world.

Within its chapters it is possible to find examples of people and communities experiencing plague

and pandemic, quarantine and lockdown, famine and natural disasters and their consequences. Some are naturally occurring, others are seen as the acts of God(s). All are, as one would expect in a pre-scientific world, linked to the supernatural rather than biological or meteorological causes.

The Plagues of Egypt are among the best-known of early Biblical stories. Moses led a slave rebellion against the might of Pharaoh and demanded release from their bondage to set up a new nation in a distant land. God afflicted the land of Egypt with various plagues to compel Pharaoh to agree to Moses' demands.

The final and conclusive affliction sent to punish Pharaoh's stubbornness was the Angel of Death who visited every household to take the life of all first born creatures, human and animal. However, the Hebrews were warned to stay in their homes (locked down) and to mark

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their doors, so the Angel of Death passed over them. This became the origin of one of the most important of Jewish feasts, the Passover. In this episode, the plagues are seen as both a sign of God's displeasure at the injustices

inflicted on the Hebrews and a demonstration of divine power to those who abuse worldly power. By obeying the call to lock down the Hebrews were spared the worst of the plague.

The story of Jonah and the whale is another well-known story but one affecting an individual. Jonah is a prophet called to a specific task by God. He challenges God's call to carry out a special mission. Jonah attempts to run away by travelling in the opposite direction to that in which God sent him.

Jonah ends up in a near shipwreck and is cast overboard. He spends three days in the belly of a whale, locked down and isolated, during which he repents of his disobedience and recognises that God's claim upon his life cannot be

disregarded. His brief period of isolation out of the world helped him to re-evaluate his life and its purpose.

The story of Noah, his wife and family and of the Ark they built to isolate and save them from the impending disaster of global flooding is also instructive. Noah's neighbours mocked him and his warnings. They perished in the deluge while Noah, his family and their floating zoo were isolated from it. They heeded the signs and took action to save themselves and as many creatures as possible. Through their offspring, they also secured future generations. It is hardly surprising, in a world where climate change and global warming pose an imminent threat to our planet, that the story of the Ark has many contemporary resonances.

Whether we understand these events to be factual or allegorical, they are part of the rich treasury of sacred writings known to billions around the world. Other cultures and religions have similar myths, legends and stories which provide wisdom and insights from previous generations who struggled with the inevitable uncertainties and vulnerabilities of being human in a

world filled with forces beyond their control.

One particular practice of self-isolation in the ancient world still flourishes today in many forms. According to the New Testament, Jesus practised it regularly, as did many of his followers and the pantheon of women and men whom we call the saints of our religion. It is a practice widely used by other religions. It requires individuals to leave the normal routines of their lives and to self-isolate in a place set aside for silence, contemplation and prayer. We often refer to it as a spiritual retreat.

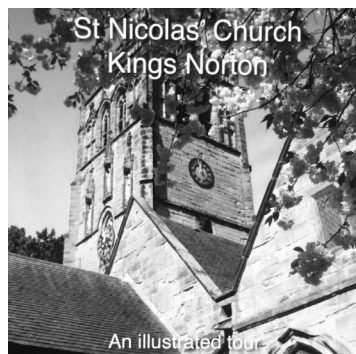
To choose a time of spiritual self-isolation is not an escape from the world but rather a means of living better in it; a time to be still and to concentrate on our inner life away from the duties and distractions of our usual routines.

Knowing how many demands would be made upon his first disciples, Jesus would encourage them to, 'Come away with me to a quiet place and rest a while.' It is advice from which we could all benefit centuries later.

The Reverend Larry Wright

ST NICOLAS' CHURCH

A NEW BOOKLET



As Kings Norton people know, St Nicolas' is one of the finest and, architecturally and historically, one of the most significant parish churches in the whole of the West Midlands. Yet it hasn't always been given the recognition it merits.

A striking new booklet called *St Nicolas' Church, Kings Norton: An Illustrated Tour* seeks to redress that balance. It tells the history of the church from its very earliest days when a building of the size of the current chancel was constructed in the 12th century. It takes the form of a guided tour of the building, outside and inside, superbly illustrated with colour

photographs taken by the Editor of this magazine, David Ash.

It has been developed by local author and church regular Michael Kennedy, whose book *Kings Norton: A Kaleidoscope* was published in October last year. Michael has been helped in his work by the locally-based church historian James Melling. The book also includes sketches by Mr Melling of how the church has evolved as a building over some nine centuries.

Michael says, 'Our church has a central place in Kings Norton life, and is a visually appealing building. It is and has been loved by so many and the booklet will be a source of delight for people who live in Kings Norton now, and those who remember it.'

Designed and printed by local company Positive Group, the booklet is priced at £5.00, with a print run of 200 copies. Profits will go to the St Nicolas' Church Restoration Fund.

The big challenge is how to buy it! With the shop in St Nicolas' Place closed for the foreseeable future, and the church itself only open at restricted times, the normal outlets are not available. The only interim ways of purchasing the booklet are therefore by contacting the Parish Office on 0121 458 3289, by email (parishoffice@kingsnorton.org.uk) or by contacting Michael Kennedy on 07932 644627, (michaelkennedy@talk21.com).

Kings Norton's

ALBERT HENRY ROSS

Author of 'Who Moved The Stone?'

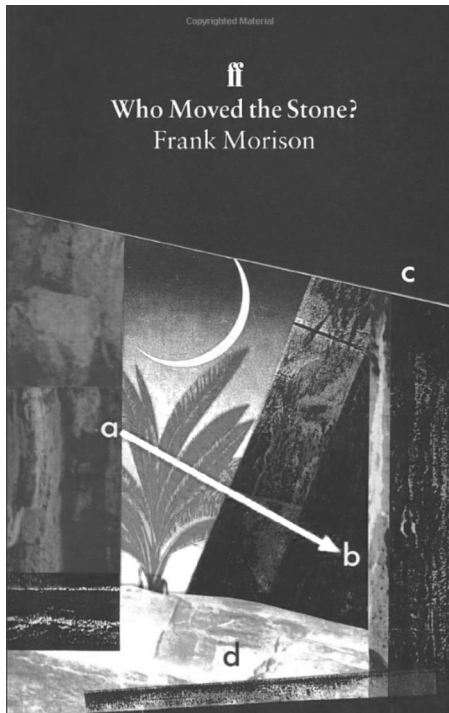
A number of our readers may be aware of the remarkable story of the book 'Who Moved the Stone?' It has been almost continuously in print since it was first published in 1930 and many people have found it a vital contributor to the strength of their faith; but it was written by a man who had no religious belief, a man born in Kings Norton 140 years ago.

The story of the book is made more remarkable in that, when he first set out to write it, the author set out to challenge the story of the Resurrection, and to disprove it. But as his investigations progressed, he came to believe that it must indeed have happened.

Though he is normally known by his *nom de plume*, Frank Morison, his real name was Albert Henry Ross. He was a New Year's Day baby, born here in 1881. His father, John Charles Ross, was a wine merchant who operated different businesses in Birmingham. John and Albert's mother Mary married in 1878.

It seems like the family moved out into Warwickshire when Albert was a child, because he went to King Edward's Grammar School in Stratford-upon-Avon. But, by 1901, they were back in Birmingham, because the 1901 census records the 20 year old Albert as a printer-compositor. In 1910 he joined the leading advertising agency S.H. Benson in Kingsway, London, where he managed the printing department. He had a successful career in advertising, becoming a director of Bensons in 1936 and retiring in 1947.

As his advertising career developed, there is no evidence that faith was a driving force for him. In fact, some



sources describe him as an atheist. Interestingly, one of his colleagues was Dorothy L Sayers, who became one of the country's great detective story writers, and had a strong faith. In due course, she was one of those who paid tribute to Albert's ground-breaking book.

His advertising career was interrupted by the First World War. In 1916 he enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps, serving as an instructor in aerial bombing as well as working in the general administration of the Air Ministry's Directorate of Intelligence

(also known as MI7). He married Annie Elizabeth Mills in 1915 in Birmingham. In 1917 their only daughter, Margaret Lilian Ross, was born.

Alongside his professional career as a printer and advertiser, Albert developed ambitions as a writer, producing seven books, all published under the literary pseudonym of Frank Morison. His first book, published in 1908, was about the celebrated Birmingham preacher J.H. Jowett, who worked at the Congregational Church in Carrs Lane in the city centre. It's not clear why Albert/Frank chose this subject.

As his literary career developed, in various books and articles he showed a determination to adopt a legal and forensic approach to his chosen subjects, even though he had no legal background. It was with this approach that he decided to investigate the Resurrection of Jesus. He little realised that not only would the book make him famous, but it would also transform his doubts into a passionate belief that the Resurrection definitely took place.

As he began his research, he adopted the view of the established Sceptical

movement that 'miracles do not happen'. He had studied the life of Jesus for several years and had come to believe that, though Jesus had existed and had been a great teacher, he had simply been a human being and the stories of his miracles were myths. 'When, as a very young man, I first began seriously to study the life of Christ, I did so with a very definite feeling that, if I may so put it, his history rested on very insecure foundations', he explained.

His idea was to apply his keen scientific mind to the task of examining the historical documents that existed from the time of Christ to prove once and for all that dead men simply did not rise again. He intended to write a short work called *'Jesus: The Last Phase'* studying not only the Gospels, but looking beyond them to other sources, such as the works of the historian Josephus, and early historical writings about Pontius Pilate.

He developed, and set out to answer, important questions which he believed no-one had ever asked, such as 'Why did Judas choose that particular night to hand Jesus over to the Pharisees?'; 'Did the Sanhedrin and Pilate work hand-in-hand on

Jesus' case, or separately?'; 'Where and why did the disciples hide during and after the trial and crucifixion?', 'Why did the arrest happen so late at night?' and further questions, approaching them in a purely forensic way, treating the whole issue in effect as a court case.

However, as he progressed, for him the evidence became more and more convincing that Jesus did, indeed, rise from his tomb. He came to think that all the evidence pointed in that direction. The book he set out to write was not the book he completed. As he wrote it, he was brought to, in his own words, the 'unexpected shores of salvation'.

He was probably influenced by prevailing trends in literature. *Who Moved the Stone* was in effect his own version of a 'whodunit', which were so popular in the 1920s and 1930s during what is known as the Golden Age of English detective fiction. His concise writing style, given impact by his advertising background, gave his arguments immediate appeal to the reader.

His manuscript caught the attention of the great poet T S Eliot, who was an editorial consultant to the celebrated

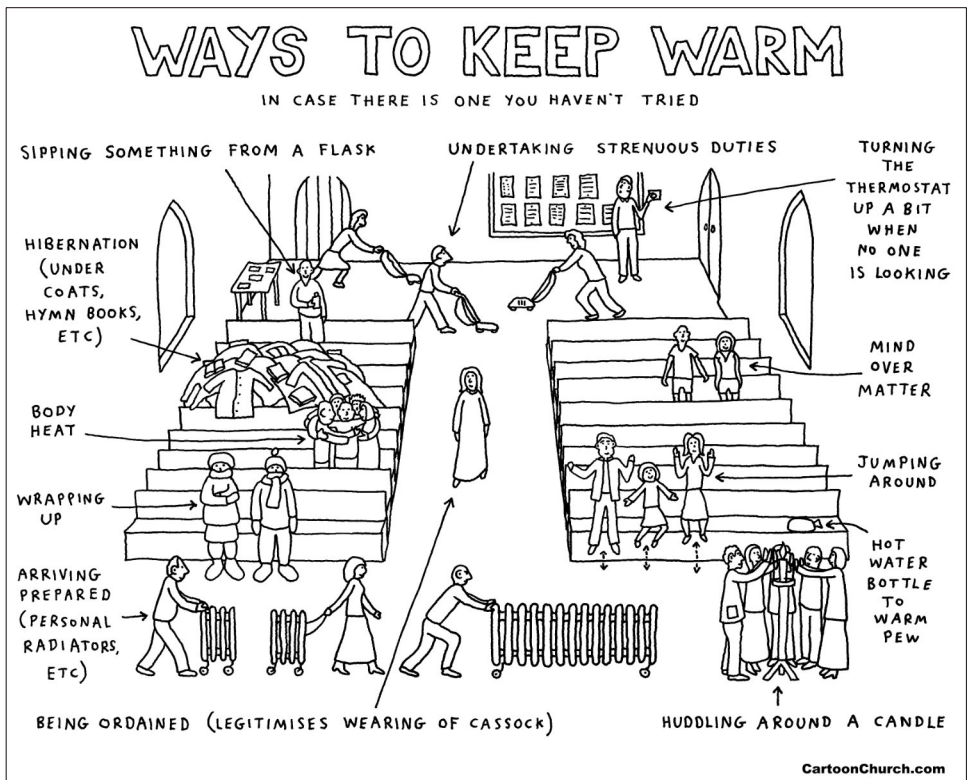
publishing firm of Faber & Faber. He persuaded the company to read it and recommended it for publication. The publisher made sure that it was released in time for Lent 1930.

The pioneering book rapidly came to be acknowledged as a truly brilliant piece of analytical work into the events surrounding the trial, crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Ross went on to write other historical works on differing themes, including one on Pontius Pilate himself and one on the impact of air

raids on cities during World War 1, but none has remotely achieved the status of *Who Moved the Stone?*, which has been reprinted in every decade since it was first published.

Albert/Frank died on 14 September 1950 at his home in Headley Down, Hampshire. He was buried in the church grounds of St. Luke's Anglican Church, Grayshott in East Hampshire.

Michael Kennedy



A SUMMER PLACEMENT IN DRUIDS HEATH

Druids Heath, the housing estate in south-west Birmingham, is home to many in a mixture of high rise and low rise accommodation. One can hardly miss how parts of it are poor and seem to have been forgotten for a very long time with tower blocks that have seen better days. However, its people have big hearts and are friendly and so was the welcome when I spent two weeks of my placement there as an ordinand in training under the supervision of The Reverend Catherine Matlock.

Kath's Café, located at Idmiston Croft, seemed to be a favourite, always busy with people coming in and out, respecting the lockdown restrictions but still exchanging greetings and checking up on each other.

One of the highlights was when an old friend came in after having been away sick and just seeing them after so long in lockdown resulted in so much cheer and clapping which was beautiful to

witness. It spoke so much of friendships that have been knitted over years, love and support for one another and the hope and encouragement to see each other do well.

When I spoke to Kath, she expressed how much this place means to her, just to have a place where people feel at home; and indeed the place felt like home filled with pictures, history and even names of tower blocks that have since gone. She further



expressed her hopes for this community, hopes that are shared with many of the residents who meet at Kath's Café to talk, pray and plan about the changes they want to see happen in this place, Druids Heath, that they call home.

During my time there, I was able to sit with some of the residents who have a huge passion for justice for Druids Heath, challenging the Council

and wanting to see better than what has happened before. With regeneration under way, their hope is that the Council will live up to its word and its promises. These residents want to be listened to and to be involved. They have previously felt ignored by the City Council and their views were not considered when such a big decision was taken, that would change Druids Heath as they knew it. They raised concerns regarding the

displacement of their people and questions about whether there will be enough accommodation for everyone once all the work has been done.

During one of the prayer meetings that takes place at Kath's Café on a Wednesday morning, I was joined by residents Tamika, Esther, Devon and Alma, amongst others. They shared their experience of lockdown in Druids Heath and expressed how much they, including Kath and her Café, had to step up and step into the gap when the system was failing its people. They explained the café's impact on people's lives, both in providing meals and just in keeping an eye out for how people were faring.

I met people from charitable organisations who had been contributing during lockdown, as well as professionals who are offering their time and skills to give back to their community. This makes you

think that, if a group of people can stand up and do this for their community, how much more could be done if they had the full backing of those who have the position and the means to offer support.

Although my placement has finished, my prayers and thoughts are still with this community and the amazing people that I met during that short period of time. I learnt and witnessed a lot about what community means; but most importantly, what community means for them: love, care and support for one another.

I can't help but be thankful for all the people who are now standing up and fighting for Druids Heath, helping it to move from being a place that is neglected to a flourishing place, full of life, to match the green spaces that surround it.

Tāriro Matsveru

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

Advent and Christmas in Kings Norton will be very different this year for obvious reasons. As a result, all advertised services and events may change at short notice. Please watch the website, magazine, newsletter and Facebook for updates.

Date & Time	Event	Details
Sun 6th Dec @10 am	St Nicolas' Day	Patronal service at St Nicolas' Church
Sat 12th Dec 10.00 am -2.00 pm	Born in Bethlehem	A family hunt around St Nicolas' Church and Churchyard
14th-24th Dec	Angels	An angel-themed activity at home and in St Nicolas' Church
Sat 19th Dec @ 2.30 pm	Comfort & Joy	Music & readings in St Nicolas' Church
Sun 20th Dec @ 11 am	Outdoor Christingle	In St Nicolas' Churchyard
Mon 21st Dec @5.00 pm	Night of the Stars	In St Nicolas' Churchyard
Mon 21st Dec @6.30 pm	Night Prayer	In St Nicolas' Church
Thu 24th Dec @ 5 pm	Outdoor Crib	In St Nicolas' Churchyard
Thu 24th Dec @ 8 pm & 11.30 pm	Midnight Communion	Advance booking essential by 12 noon on Tue 22nd Dec. Zoom option available.

Putting Pen to Paper

'Does anyone still write letters by hand or is it old-fashioned?' was the question posed at the start of a sermon recently.

We had heard an extract from a letter which St Paul wrote to the Phillipians. Paul was keen to write words of encouragement, praise and guidance to scattered groups of Christians forming the early church.

Together with a number of people, I responded positively to the question and it set me thinking because during the past six months I have received and written more letters than I have in a long time. Not all of us are online nor do we necessarily have a modern, carry-it-with-you-switched-on phone capable of quick messaging of the kind which continue to take over from using pen, paper and postage stamps.

Many of us learnt to write letters at an early age. Birthdays were eagerly anticipated but afterwards came the chore of writing 'thank you' letters to family and friends, trying to think of something to say to interest a grown-up after expressing words of gratitude for our presents. Sometimes, one of my gifts included a pack of children's writing paper and envelopes decorated with nursery rhyme characters or animals.

My parents were great letter writers. When I was eight years old, they bought a little cottage in North Wales and we would go there for all the school holidays. During the six week summer breaks, my father would have to return to work in Wolverhampton for a month on his own. He and my mother would write to each other daily. It was my job to walk each day with mum's letter to the nearest postbox a mile along the country lanes. I often wondered what they found to say to each other, but a year ago, sorting through accumulated positions of 46 years in Lincolnshire ready for downsizing to my flat in Kings Norton, I found a large collection of letters which my husband and I had written to one another as students. We were at the same teacher training college in Yorkshire but were separated during end of term breaks. They were the love letters of 50-plus years which brought a wealth of cherished memories. Do the young people of today write love letters, I wonder?

When handwritten letters arrive through my front door there is an inner sense of joy and I can usually tell who has sent them from the writing on the envelope. The sheets inside may be a precious gift from someone I have not



seen for a year, maybe longer, and we may not meet again, but as I unfold the written sheets which they have put together and held, I can read their thoughts and return to them again and again. In writing, we put glimpses of ourselves onto pieces of paper and receive glimpses of loved ones in return.

During my training for lay ministry in the Lincoln Diocese we were invited to write to someone who might not expect to hear from us or to write words of encouragement to another person. A challenging task which brought pleasing yet unexpected responses in return. This is something well worth doing.

Back to St Paul's letters to the early Christians. We can imagine them being received eagerly and listened to, being read and re-read, passed around and discussed at length. There would be agreement and disagreement over

some of the advice and instructions he gave. I wonder what sort of replies Paul received. When in prison, letters would have lifted his spirits, surely?

Coronavirus continues to surge onwards and I am pleased that this gives me more time to write. The price of postage stamps does not deter me: at least I can help to keep the Post Office afloat as I am no longer able to support the economy as I used to. Perhaps you and I can find some young people to write to so that they can experience the joy of holding a letter. Let's continue this precious God-given gift of putting pen to paper in the hope that it will continue through future generations, keeping words of encouragement, praise and love flowing onto pieces of paper to be passed around.

Angela Brady

FRATELLI TUTTI

Pope Francis delivers new teaching aimed at healing divisions in the face of coronavirus

Pope Francis has delivered a message to the world's 1.2 billion Catholics and people of goodwill everywhere which aims to soothe the fear caused by the coronavirus pandemic and unite communities riven by racism, inequality and climate change.

Fratelli Tutti (All Brothers) was signed on October 3 in Assisi, central Italy. It is the third encyclical since Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio took the name Francis on his election to the papacy in March 2013. He has always wanted to make it clear that his papacy is one of action – placing the needs of the poor, marginalised and disenfranchised at the centre of his ministry.

As a community of believers, Catholics are expected by Pope Francis to mobilise and become agents for change in the world.

This action was to be based upon the canon of Catholic social teaching that had built up since the late 19th century and was, until recently, known as the church's "best kept secret".

Francis was going to make sure that Catholics put that teaching into action by providing a road map for change – and, in doing so, invited all people of goodwill to join him. While *Laudato Si* (Praise to You, 2015) implored the world to "care for its common home", *Fratelli Tutti* offers teaching devoted to the concepts of fraternity and social friendship based upon the example of St Francis of Assisi who "wherever he went ... sowed the seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters".

COVID encyclical

It is inevitable that this encyclical will be known as the COVID-19 encyclical – and Francis himself acknowledges in paragraph 7 that this 45,000 word tome was written during the first wave of the pandemic. But he sees the questions regarding the purpose and meaning of life that many asked during the lockdowns as an opportunity to reset a pattern of catastrophic systemic failures that has created an unequal and polarised world. As he states in paragraph 33:

‘...the pain, uncertainty and fear, and the realisation of our own limitations, brought on by the pandemic have only made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organisation of our societies, and, above all, the meaning of our existence.’

The pandemic has taught people and society that “no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together”. The coronavirus has presented the world with an opportunity for real systemic change – Francis suggests that to believe we can carry on as before is “denying reality”.



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The Answer's Yes!

Through *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis offers a new vision of society in which human dignity and the human rights of all are respected. He believes that actions based on the common good – the concept that everyone should be able to contribute meaningfully to society – must form the bedrock of politics and that people must acknowledge and respect everyone as their equal. Further that social and economic policy must be based on long-term planning rather than short-term populist soundbites.

Francis addresses this invitation to all people of goodwill – not just

Catholics. But he takes pains to point out such a transformation will not be easy. Rather, it will be a process without an endpoint, something to be continually worked at, an action rather than a goal. *Fratelli Tutti* is an encyclical which above all teaches that complacency is the enemy of a peaceful and just society.

Dark clouds

But in order to engage in action, the problem must be diagnosed so that people know where to direct their energies. There can be no doubt from the first chapter, “Dark clouds over a closed world”, that Francis understands the complexity of the crisis facing the world.

As well as the existential crisis that has led to the disintegration of communities and social relationships, he paints a grim picture of a world undergoing what he calls a “third world war fought piecemeal” which – along with hunger and human trafficking – presents a sustained attack on the dignity of the human person.

He also understands the need for nuance and contextualisation in

creating a new vision for humanity. So for example, there are oblique references to Brexit, the populist politics that have led to “hyperbole, extremism and polarisation becoming political tools”. He also observes the resurgence of racism, and the disintegration of inter-generational relationships - all of which demonstrate the innate individualism, lack of empathy and aggressive nationalism which lies at the heart of the global crisis.

Decisive commitment

The solution to this crisis “demands a decisive commitment” from individuals and from politicians and religious leaders in particular. Politicians need to reorientate their mindset away from individualism towards a commitment to the common good and what the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has termed “social love”. This is, he notes, “a force capable of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today’s world, of profoundly renewing structures, social organisations and legal systems from within”.

Politics needs to become a vocation of service, charity and generosity rather than a means to exercise power. Religious leaders need to engage in dialogue with one another in order to “reawaken the spiritual energy that can contribute to the betterment of society”, and to prevent the distortion of religious beliefs that lead to violence.

Ultimately, this is an encyclical which teaches that we are dependent upon one another to thrive and reach our full potential as human beings. As Francis puts it “if only we might

rediscover once and for all that we need one another, and that in this way our human family can experience a rebirth; with all its faces, all its hands and all its voices, beyond the walls we have erected.”

Maria Power

Maria is the Human Dignity Project Director at the Las Casas Institute for Social Justice, University of Oxford

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Contemplating Winter

Seasonal tips from a green-fingered reader



I have noticed very few butterflies in our gardens this year and this is backed up by the Big Butterfly Count results showing the lowest numbers for eleven years. Bees, including bumble bees, are not having a good time either. It may be coincidental but neonicotinoid pesticides have been more or less banned in Europe only recently and the UK is slowly following suit in imposing more severe restrictions, including a ban on their outdoor use. However, it won't come into force for another three months. Recent, well-founded UK research has shown a greater toxic effect on many insects than previously thought including blindness as a symptom.

About 1,500 different species of pollinators add £400 to £680 million per year to the economy via increased crop yields, besides which we will sorely miss them for their beauty. Let's hope for a better outcome next year.

On a more pleasant note the late flowering perennials are doing well this year and they extend the flower season right into November. My

chrysanthemums have started flowering just as many plants have started closing down in preparation for the winter. I recommend the shorter varieties as the taller ones will cry out to be staked as they come into flower. Some of mine have been culled from gift pots as rooted cuttings.

Here are some more recommendations for your garden: Agastache 'Blue Fortune'. White Japanese Anemone 'Honorine Jaubert' and the Michaelmas Daisies and other perennial Asters. Chrysanthemums are a great favourite and heights below 60 cm



Holly Blue - Still Holding Out

are best as they can flop about a bit when flowering. The big chrysanths are best left to the show people. Your dad may have bought some from time to time from that nice man with the allotment. The reddish leaves and blue flowers of the hardy *Plumbago* or (wait for it) *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides* is an autumn beauty. For something special in the hardy Sedums try *Sedum hylotelephium* 'Red Cauli' with its deep green leaves below flowers of scarlet. More shrubby than most and best reserved for the back of the border is the hardy-ish *Salvia* 'Amistad' . The flowers are a deep clear blue and it can be in flower from May until October.

Our recommended tree this month is at its best as a fairly large-leaved hedging plant and with its bright red new leaves in Spring *Photinia* 'Red Robin' will only require trimming back once a year as Percy Thrower advised with secateurs and not with clippers (no leaves cut through, you see, though it takes longer).

I only know of one hedge trimmed to a proper shape, wider at the bottom than at the top, in all of Bournville and that is opposite the fragment of the Forest of Arden that stands around the corner from the Bournville Garden Centre. I've spotted quite a few things on my daily mobility walk post-lockdown!

Vegetable growers may be a bit appalled at my encouragement of the butterflies, which may be fair



Salvia 'Amistad'

enough considering that they start off as voracious caterpillars. My recommendation would be to use the pyrethroid contact insecticides frequently or, of course , grow your Brassicas in a polytunnel with a close fitting door and netted ventilators. I am thinking of heading a campaign to get garden chemical manufacturers to list their active ingredients in BIG LETTERS on the label as it is a form of deception to use tiny writing in an obscure corner. Cosmetics manufacturers might consider listing *Aqua destillata* and *Aqua Pura* as Water as well, for that is what it is!

Please forgive me as I am getting to be a right old grumbler in my old age.

Stay young, stay well and stay safe.

Adam the Gardener

The Church in the Parish

We are a Church of England Team Parish serving all in Kings Norton through St Nicolas' Parish Church, Hawkesley, in partnership with the Methodist Church, and Immanuel District Churches.

**We believe that the church in Kings Norton exists
To be a worshipping transforming partnership in Christ
To live out God's radical hospitality for all
To be equipped for work in God's world**

During the Covid-19 crisis, we have had to suspend all our usual activities including many church services. That does not mean, however, that church has ceased to be active. Some of our services have moved online.

There is a regular 10.00 am service on Sundays at St Nicolas' Church at which 30 places are available. These have to be booked before noon on Friday by calling the Parish Office on 0121 458 3289.

If you wish to watch a service at home, you can do so every Sunday on the Church of England's website:

www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online

Sunday morning worship from Immanuel Church is streamed live on Facebook or Zoom at 10.30 am (facebook.com/Immanuel123Church).

A Family Service is broadcast live on Facebook at 9.30 am on Sunday morning (bit.ly/2K8KzTS). You can find stories and crafts for children on the same page.

Prayers for Druids Heath and other occasional recordings appear as podcasts on the parish website (www.kingsnorton.org.uk/audio).

You can join members of the Ministry Team for occasional morning and evening prayer on the parish Facebook page. (www.facebook.com/kingsnortonteam).

For more detail and any last-minute updates, see the weekly newsletter, which is available on the Parish Website.

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KINGS NORTON GOLF CLUB

50 years since leaving Wychall Lane

One of the many things that enhance the image of Kings Norton beyond the parish is its golf club. This month, it's 50 years since Kings Norton Golf Club moved from its original site off Wychall Lane (pictured below) to its current spectacular location in Weatheroak. Within the limits imposed by Covid-19, there will be celebrations, because it has been a remarkably successful move. Chairman Bob Cashmore tells us how, unlike many sports clubs, KNGC continues to achieve new heights.

Kings Norton Golf Club was founded in 1892 and evolved over the ensuing years so that by the 1960s it was a successful and respected club. But in early 1966, some disturbing facts began to emerge. Birmingham Corporation was under pressure to find space for new housing and had powers to make compulsory purchases. It was looking at the club's land: at best, its security of tenure would only last another ten years!

Though many members resisted the prospect, a move had to be considered. Discussions with Birmingham Corporation established that it indeed wanted to buy the course and allow KNGC three years to move out. The price offered was £680,000.



The die was cast at a special members' meeting in St Nicolas' Hall on 9 November 1966. More than 200 members attended. It was a stormy occasion and a number of members expressed fears that the character of Kings Norton would be changed irrevocably, but in the end the vote to proceed with the sale was carried by a large majority.

That was only the start. Throughout 1967, there were action groups and protests across the parish, leading to a public inquiry. Its initial judgment was that the move should be abandoned, but almost immediately the Minister of Housing, Anthony Greenwood, overruled it, saying that the Government Inspector involved had not taken sufficient account of Birmingham Corporation's pressing need for building land. The residents had no choice but to accept defeat.

The club proceeded to examine seven sites for the new course, including Druids Heath, Cofton Hackett and Beoley, but Weatheroak was always the preferred location, with its rural acres and the potential for the imposing Weatheroak Hall (below) to become the new clubhouse. In March 1968 the club agreed to buy a 150 year lease from the Bournville Village Trust for the Hall,



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along with nearly 200 acres of adjacent land. This would help achieve the club's innovative vision of a course comprising three 'loops' of nine holes each, 27 holes in all.

The last round on the old course off Wychall Lane was played on Saturday 31st October 1970. The following day, many of the same golfers played their first round at Weatheroak.

The club's vision was fully vindicated. In the fifty years since then, membership has grown to over 1,000 and the club has hosted many significant tournaments,

featuring such champions as Lee Trevino, Tony Jacklin, Max Faulkner and Seve Ballesteros. Weatheroak Hall, a few years ago the subject of a major refurbishment of its meeting and dining areas, fulfilled its potential, not only as a magnificent clubhouse but also as an increasingly popular venue for weddings, private parties and even fashion shows.

Through the sheer determination and hard work of the team at Kings Norton we successfully managed our way through the first Covid lockdown and actually increased our membership numbers. This appears to have happened because other sports became less accessible and people had time on her hands but, more than anything else, they were queuing up to join Kings Norton because of our reputation.

By September, we were full, so that new applications for membership are now on a waiting list. Of course, we are delighted but in a measured way: the continuation of the Covid crisis remains a serious threat to businesses of all kinds and indeed to our members, especially those who work. Further lockdowns could threaten our very existence, which is why we are being so careful to introduce and maintain measures that will keep our



members and their guests safe. We are following the government and England Golf guidelines to the letter in order to provide an environment where everyone can enjoy their sport and socialise safely.

We can only wait and see how all of this plays out but we stay confident because the foundation of our success is very solid indeed. Fundamental changes and important enhancements over the past three years or so have enhanced the reputation of KNGC across the Midlands and even further afield.

One of the most important changes has been in the standard of our course. 2020 has been an incredibly difficult year for golf course maintenance following the wettest winter on record followed by the hottest driest spring which simply baked the ground. Coupled with this we had directives from England Golf aimed at keeping staff safe which severely limited

the work that could take place on the course. Despite all of this, our 27 holes are quickly returning to their very best and we confidently expect that in 2021 we will be presenting a course in truly magnificent condition for our members and visitors to play.

Two years ago we appointed a new Course Manager in Neill Smith: he came to us with a great reputation and, perhaps unsurprisingly, he has achieved a dramatic transformation, backed by substantial investment in new bunkers and in equipment to help him optimise the condition of the course. He is so keen to help us to progress that he comes all the way from Ludlow each day!

Around about the same time that we appointed Neill, we also recruited a new Club Manager in Steve Dougan, who has made a significant contribution in organising the club's affairs more effectively, in introducing major initiatives that will help drive us forward and in improving our communication both internally and externally.

This has been a disastrous year for the hospitality industry and the impact on our Caterer Dave Guest has been huge but, through an innovative approach during lockdown, followed more recently

by taking up and then continuing the Government's 50% scheme, he has enhanced his reputation. On the other hand it could all be down to his excellent fish and chips!

Three years ago we decided to change the governance of the club radically. Now we have a Board of seven Directors, including the Club Captain, each with responsibility for specific aspects of the club's activities, such as the finances, membership, the course, facilities and marketing. The Board is authorised and qualified to make rapid decisions, the result being that we are much more responsive, which is vital in challenging times like these.

Other clubs are beginning to adopt a similar approach, but I'm proud to say that we were amongst the first. So once this awful disease is under control, we're determined to add even more lustre and success to the name of Kings Norton Golf Club!

(A book on the first 100 years of KNGC, 'The Road to Weatheroak' by Peter Ricketts, is an invaluable source of information.)

Bob Cashmore

STOP THE WORLD!

When, way back in April, I began reflecting on how the pandemic is affecting the lives of all of us I did not for one minute expect to still be writing about it as a new year is imminent. I fear a new wave of banana bread is on the way! Seriously, however, Covid 19 does not appear to be going anywhere in a hurry, currently taking a further, threatening hold.

Back in the early 1960's there was a show called 'Stop the World - I Want to Get Off!' For fans of the game *charades*, it was a book, a play and a musical, written by and starring Anthony Newley. Set against a circus backdrop, the show focused on Littlechap (there's a clue in the name there) from the moment of his birth until his death. For Littlechap, whenever something unsatisfactory happened he shouted 'Stop the world - I want to get off!' By marrying his boss's daughter he rose from tea-boy to becoming

very rich. Later he was elected to public office. Only in his old age did he realise that he always had enough in the love of his wife, Evie, and his family. He had to come to terms with his own selfishness when Evie died.

It is the response to those times when things are not good, pressing down, deeply wearing that have resonated with me recently. The words have been popping into my head unbidden as I yearn on occasion to climb under the duvet and not reappear, a feeling I am sure I am not alone in. Telling myself that I am made of sterner stuff, I crawl out and face a world where so many have far more deeply serious problems than I have. I am able to shop, go for a walk, picnic at a National Trust property and informally childmind my grandsons.

For this month's Covid trivia I refer to Spotify, which is a music streaming app. Spotify reports that, as the news becomes more



doom-laden, there has been a massive surge in the downloading of feel-good songs and much loved tunes. We're listening to more happy songs! According to an academic at Leuven University in Belgium, who has analysed 17 trillion song downloads (there's a story to be written about why anyone would do this) the overall favourite is ELO's '*Mr. Blue Sky*'. All together now ... 'Sun is shining in the sky, there ain't a cloud in sight ... it's a beautiful day, hey, hey'. Singing positive songs raises our spirits and that makes us better able to cope.

We were very blessed in September to spend a much-postponed week in North

Norfolk, at The Pleasaunce, a Christian Endeavour Holiday Centre in a house designed by Lutyens for Lord and Lady Battersea in 1888. It is situated by the sea at Overstrand, near Cromer, and the weather was warm and sunny. On the Sunday afternoon, the local community Arts Centre put on a super concert of classical music outdoors in the magnificent grounds, the lapping of the sea providing additional rhythm to the music. In the interval, we chatted to other guests on the terrace. Amongst the musings, we wondered if, in 50 years' time, t-shirts will be printed with 'Stay at Home and Carry On' in bold letters. Will future history students, when asked what period they are studying, say 'Oh, the Covid years?'

The memories of our holiday will sustain me through the coming winter and I try to take a daily *privilege stocktake*, that is, counting my blessings, as we think about the plight of others (see the October magazine). There are almost insurmountable problems which are affecting some of the

forgotten areas of life. This month it has come to light that an estimated 30,000 seafarers and marine personnel are stranded on open water owing to the Coronavirus restrictions. They have been stuck on board ships for seven or eight months despite the expiry of their contracts. Restrictions imposed by numerous governments in the wake of the pandemic mean that they cannot be relieved and repatriated.

We need to raise awareness with our own government through our MPs for a humanitarian resolution to this crisis. Designating seafarers as key workers would allow safe crew changes and sanction those who have been separated from home, first and foremost, access to health procedures. Living in cramped quarters for so long is also having an impact on their mental health, and a speedy return to their loved ones is needed.

We talk about the 'new normal', wondering what it will be like, but perhaps we should be praying for a new world. This

would be one without injustice, where seafarers would be respected and treated properly, where Foodbanks are no longer needed, where the poorest in society do not become poorer and more desperate when crises strike.

The movement Church Action on Poverty, joined by the Baptist Union, the Methodist and the United Reformed churches, has produced a report, *Reset of the Debt, A fresh start for families in Britain swept into debt by Covid-19*. About 6,000,000 people in Britain have been disproportionately affected financially and one in five families has had to borrow money just to pay for essentials like food and rent. The group is asking the government to create a Jubilee fund to provide grants for debt relief to ease debts accrued during lockdown in order to prevent homelessness.

However profound or mundane, what will we take away into 2021 from what feels like the eternal winter of Covid-

19? (Although, as one of the online memes has it, before I agree to 2021 I need to see the terms and conditions!) Despite the words and actions of an American president who has been hospitalised with it and should know much better, it is not nothing. Some have been in hospital many months. Many who have survived have been left with debilitating disabilities. We should rightly respect each other by wearing masks, distancing, washing hands (don't just rub the palms together but pay special attention to your fingertips and the web area between your fingers) ... and don't touch your face. This advice from various medical officers offers us a simple and effective way to prevent the spread of Covid and, eventually, to defeat it.

I asked in May what our narrative is to be. I think that it is worth considering this question again. Is it to be a story of a virus that brought out the worst in human nature, showing up our weaknesses, selfishness and frailties, a world

which fell apart in the face of disease? It is tempting to feel like that on our low days. We need to make it a tale of how people responded with their best, how the virus was a medical, not a social tragedy and how, faced with a challenge on a scale never before seen in our lifetimes, we met and overcame it.

As I emerge from under the duvet to face the world, I finish with the encouraging words of St. Paul in his Letter to the Philippians. Let us together pray for ourselves and for others, especially those particularly seriously affected by the pandemic.

'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 4:6-7).

Thelma Mitchell

Buttons!

The Thoughts of a Lay Minister

November is the month for remembering and remembrance: from remembering our own loved ones at All Souls', via our Memorial Service for those whose funerals we have held in the past year, to our commemorations on Remembrance Day. We all have different ways of remembering people in our lives. Sharing stories is an important part of that, which, of course, in many ways, has been very hard to do this year.

I was thinking about all this recently when I needed a button. Now, you might think it somewhat strange that needing a button made me think about remembering and remembrance. But, of course, my buttons are in my mum's button tin. I used to love playing with it as a child. It always felt like some sort of treasure trove and being allowed to play with it always felt like a special treat.



There were all sorts of buttons in the tin. It's an old yellow tin with a picture on the side and on the top of the lid of a lady in a long dress watching two gentlemen fishing. I can remember some of the outfits which the buttons came from. The big cream ones from mum's coat, the wood effect ones from dad's jumper, a naval one from my brother's uniform, and so on. Then there are the odds and ends that have also ended up in the tin. A shoe from a doll, a Battle of Britain 'Wings' appeal paper, a jigsaw piece and the piece of plastic from my toy stethoscope! What a

strange collection of objects, still kept together in the same tin, many years later. I experience a comforting wave of nostalgia every time I open the tin. I wonder if you have such a tin handed down from your mother or grandmother?

I love buttons. I love the shapes and colours and can quite happily rummage around in my own button tins for ages looking for what I want. (Yes, I have more than one).

Often, of course, the button I want isn't in the tin and I have to resort to buying new buttons. Buttons are also really tactile and make a fab noise when you put your hands through them, a bit like rain on the window.

Did you know that some people have a fear of buttons? It's called *koumpounophobia*. I have no idea

how you pronounce it though. Perhaps our esteemed Editor can help?. [*He can: Koom-poo-no-fo-be-ah. Ed.*].

There may be more obvious ways of remembering people, but sometimes it is the odd things that are particular to us or to our relationship that mean the most: photo albums, music, collections of postcards or tea cards (remember them?).

Have any of you made a memory box of the lockdown so that you can look back and remember the year that was 2020 when everything was turned inside out and upside down? Now that reminds me of another story...

Pauline Weaver



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FOODBANK NEWS

Things are changing for the Foodbank once again. By the time you read this, the clocks will have reverted to Greenwich Mean Time and it will be getting darker earlier in the evenings. This makes food parcel deliveries more challenging for volunteers, many of whom are relatively senior in years. Our deliverers come to the warehouse at rostered times through each of our days of operation, so that we limit the number of people at the warehouse at any one time, as well as limiting the number of vehicles in the relatively small car park. The other issue is that we have reached the limit of the number of deliverers we can accommodate. Somewhere between 12 and 14 deliverers can come at spaced times, but any more than that stretches the Covid19 restrictions and our car park capacity beyond the point of safety. About a dozen deliverers can

deliver 30-35 parcels, but our demand is steadily growing and so, therefore, is the number of parcels.

As a result, the management team and steering group have decided that we need to revert to client-collection, which sounds simple enough. But the problem is that the Cotteridge Church cannot accommodate our needs within their Covid19 risk assessments and our leases at the warehouse do not permit customers to come on site. We therefore need a new base for collection and we have 6 weeks to find it.

As a temporary solution, we have made a 5 month arrangement to work from Cotteridge Friends' Meeting House on Tuesdays and Fridays beginning on October 27th. We will review the situation regularly to

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ensure that it is workable and safe, and to plan ahead for Spring 2021, when we will have a better idea of the restrictions under which we will have to work.

We are deeply grateful to our Quaker colleagues for making a quick and favourable decision and also to our big team of deliverers, who have gone out come rain come shine to deliver parcels. It is a testimony to the whole team that there have been only a couple of delivery mistakes since March, both of which were spotted and rectified. It is also a credit to our senior management that we have

not missed a single day of operation even when the goalposts have moved several times in a single week.

We are very aware of the level of prayer and of financial and practical underpinning provided by all the churches who support the Foodbank. In the absence of an Annual Service this year, may I say a big thank you for all the support you continue to give.

(There is a PowerPoint presentation available about our work which can be sent to anyone who wishes. Please email or phone the Parish Office for details).

Sylvia Fox



Harry L Marks



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CONTACTS

If you cannot find what you are looking for here, you will probably find it on the parish website (www.kingsnorton.org.uk). Alternatively, please ask questions at the Parish Office, which remains open between 10.00 am and 1.00 pm.

81 The Green, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B38 8RU
parishoffice@kingsnorton.org.uk 0121 458 3289 www.facebook.com/KingsNortonTeam

THE MINISTRY TEAM

Team Rector	The Revd Larry Wright
Assistant Rector	The Revd Eliakim Ikechukwu
Parish Lay Minister	Pauline Weaver
Curate (Pioneer)	The Revd Catherine Matlock
Hon Assistant Priest	The Revd Jayne Crooks
Methodist Minister	The Revd Nick Jones
Readers	David Ash, Fay Fearon, Ruth Howman, Parisa Pordelkhaki
Lay Preacher	Steve Wright
Music Minister	Sylvia Fox
Pastoral Care Team Coordinator	Chris Gadd

THE CHURCH WARDENS

St. Nicolas' Church	Peter Hay & Julie Hill
Hawkesley Church	Jim Clarke
Immanuel Church	Sue Hartley

OTHER CONTACTS

Parish Administrator & P.C.C. Secretary	Judy Ash
Acting Finance Officer	Simon Hill
Safeguarding Coordinator	Annette Dickers
Regular Giving	The Revd Jayne Crooks
Flower Arranging (0121 486 2837)	Alison Blumer
Oasis (Sunday School) Tiny Tots & GPS	Pauline Weaver
Oasis (Sunday School) Immanuel	Nicky Moorcroft



Last year our parish took part in the Big Quiz Night, along with 26,406 other people across the nation and helped to raise over £250,000 for the charity Tearfund. Tearfund works with disadvantaged people in 50 countries throughout 4 continents. This year they are highlighting the story of Alaya, who lives in Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world. Alaya says: *'As a mother, I feel very bad. My child is crying, she wants food, but I don't have food... I don't have anything to give her, and I feel very sad.'*

Frequent flooding is bringing diseases like cholera and diarrhoea, which can be deadly for children. The floods keep damaging Alaya's home and washing away the little food they have. And her crops are failing again and again. This means

that for 11 months of the year Alaya and her family are hungry, surviving on just one meal a day.

So, this year, we are again supporting Tearfund's Big Quiz Night to both have some fun and to raise money for people like Alaya.

Date: Saturday 14th November 7.30 pm for a 7.45 pm start.

Because of the Covid pandemic the Quiz will be live online via the Zoom platform. We are asking for donations of £5 per person or £10 for a household team of more than one. **To sign up please contact the Parish Office for ways to pay and for the Zoom log in details.**

The Revd Jayne Crooks

A Cruel Mistress

The mistress I am referring to is the sea. She gave me many years of happiness and allowed me to visit many countries worldwide, with many memorable experiences too. But she could also deliver dramatic moments and some sadness and fear.



I recently came across a disturbing news item. I heard on the BBC World Service early one morning that a ship had flooded and sunk in the East China Sea. I could find no more news in the papers. Covid seemed to be the big priority. However, I

have since obtained more information on the Internet.

The ship was the *Yangtze Star* a vessel converted to carry live cattle from New Zealand to China where they are increasing their dairy capacity. The ship ran into trouble in the East China Sea when it was battered by a huge typhoon. Conditions on board must have been terrible for all, including the 6,000 cows. The vessel sank quickly. There was only one survivor and he was picked up by the Japanese Coast Guard. He stated that the ship's engine had broken down.

I feel sad at the loss of 42 crew members, not forgetting the poor animals. The ship had earlier come to the attention of the port officials in Napier, New Zealand for having a poor safety record and quite a lot of

animals had not survived its previous trips to China. I can empathise, as the sea can be cruel, through luckily not too often.

I can recall several instances when I was on a ship that was in danger. In big storms, one kept a cheerful façade and carried on with one's duties. But I am sure that many silent prayers were said by many of us.

Now to end on a more cheerful note. Last week, I was mowing my back lawn and stopped to kneel down to clean excess grass from the mower. I caught sight of Mr Black my semi-tame blackbird. He was up close and bobbing around to see what I was up to. God bless him and bless us all in these troubled times.

Eddie Matthews

PILGRIMAGE NEWS

Due to the unprecedented circumstances and renewed spread of the Corona virus pandemic, together with Brexit uncertainty, the organisers of the pilgrimage to **Assisi and Rome**, which was re-scheduled for March 2021, have decided to cancel the trip. We cannot risk the health and welfare of any in the group nor the possibility of a prolonged quarantine in either country.

We have not taken this decision lightly. After talking to some of the group recently, we think that the cancellation may in part be a relief because of the current uncertainties, as well as a huge disappointment, as it is to us.

Our pilgrimage to the **Lazarica Church, Bournville**, has also been postponed until further notice. The new date will be announced as soon as it is possible to meet and travel together safely.

Rev'd Larry Wright, Rev'd Gail Rogers, Thelma Mitchell

SEPT 2020

FUNERALS

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life." (*John ch.3 v.16*)

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17 th September	Doreen Humpage	75	SN.Cr.LH

SN : Service at St Nicolas' Church, **Cr** : Cremation,
CY : Churchyard

APCM NEWS

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 11th October, the following people were re-elected to the Parochial Church Council:

Chris Gadd, Clive Sweet, Gemma Richards, Jim Clark, Maria Miskin, Mark Sandilands, Liz Power, Elizabeth Chan, Sue Hartley, David Chadderton.

The parish elected Peter Hay and Julie Hill to serve as its Churchwardens, with Deputy Wardens Simon Hill and David Chadderton. Nathan Crooks was confirmed as Assistant Warden.

Photos of the meeting appear on pages 2 and 43 of this magazine. If you attended, in person or online, thank you.

Your parish church is open for public worship within certain limitations, all of which are explained on the parish website. Places must be booked with the Parish Office by noon on the previous Friday.

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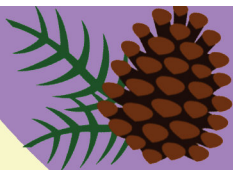
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The Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 11th Oct included an Oscars Ceremony to thank some of those who had gone beyond the call of duty in keeping the parish running during the early months of the pandemic.





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