

**Swindon Old Town Partnership of Churches
Anglican - United Reformed - Methodist - Est. 1969**

PARTNERSHIP MAGAZINE

JULY/AUGUST 2020

80 PENCE



The canal at Wichelstowe

Your holiday will probably be different this year but we have lovely countryside on our doorstep that we can enjoy.

Wherever you go,
we wish you a
happy and safe
holiday.



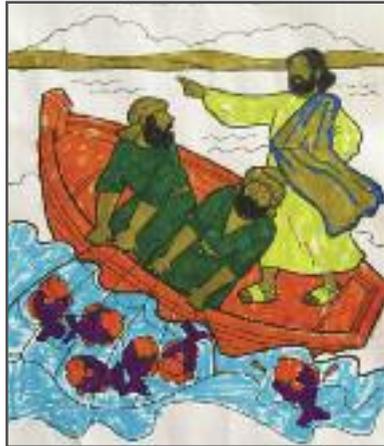
Fishing with grandad on Lawn Lake

One in Christ - Together in Mission



James Lewis's
colourful front door

Jesus says, 'Folow Me'



Juan was the winner of the
Genesis group colouring competition.



Janet
French's
tasty take
away is a
boon to the
mother with
hungry
mouths to
feed.



Dragonflies in Brian and
Karen Harris's garden.



A Damselfly in
Janet French's
garden.



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Partnership Letter

The Manse
147 Drove Road

My apologies to Bath Road readers who have already seen this.

Dear brothers and sisters,

I have been short all my life. Whilst I do clock in at 5'6", I am alongside some great people, or maybe not. I checked the heights of some famous film stars and their heights change on different sites. Tom Cruise goes from between 5'5" and 5'7". Anyway, I am taller or as tall as Daniel Radcliffe, The Fonz, Bob Dylan, Richard Dreyfuss, Dustin Hoffman, Al Pacino and Groucho Marx.

Through life I have had to put up with some names and remarks, some hurtful, others that can be laughed off. I have had to put up with high shelves in shops, dangling feet on wide sofas, having always to take trousers up, high pulpits and lecterns and people in crowds obscuring my views.

I know this is not really earth shattering. Mind you if you do some research, there is the proof that most company CEOs are over average height and that if you made a 5'11" man go through life at 5'6" he would earn £1500 a year less on average.

Literally I live with it. I can't do anything about it as I was born like this. Mind you, at least because I was short no one wrapped me in barbed wire, dragged me behind a car and then lynched me. No one refused me a room in a boarding house, a job or a seat on a bus. No one stopped and searched me or arrested me because a short bloke was seen acting suspiciously in the neighbourhood. No one stopped me voting or killed me when I asked why I could not vote. No one shot me while I was out jogging. No one stood on my neck until I died.

How is that?

Well, it is because I was born short, not black.

What is happening in America is not that black people are looting and rioting, it is that black people have had their lives, their past, their present and their

future looted for over 400 years. It is that black people have been rioted against for just as long. Read about the Greenwood massacre near Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921.

We do not support lawlessness, but do we understand frustration, segregation and oppression? Or has our silence against these things been 'lawlessness' in itself?

The vast majority of demonstrators of all ethnicities are peaceful. Many police are walking with them, talking with them and taking the knee with them, because they too are weeping.

James Corden said, 'How can the black community dismantle a problem they didn't create?'

John Wesley fought against slavery, ahead of his time. In 1774 he published *Thoughts on Slavery* in which he wrote, 'If therefore you have any regard to justice, (to say nothing of mercy, nor of the revealed law of GOD) render unto all their due. Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion! Be gentle towards men. And see that you invariably do unto every one, as you would he should do unto you.' (*Thoughts on Slavery by John Wesley*) It was primarily through reading the words of Wesley in this short publication that John Newton came to see that slavery was indeed a crime.

John Wesley influenced many of the major players in the fight against slavery in 18th Century Britain and America. In fact, his very last letter was sent to a young politician named William Wilberforce, who would spend much of his political life fighting for the abolition of the slave trade. Written February 24, 1791 at age 88 from Balam, England, six days before his death, this last letter of Wesley's was addressed to William Wilberforce. Wesley had spoken out forcibly against slavery, repeatedly referring to the slave trade as the 'execrable sum of all villainies'.

Our Methodist 'Four All's' are FOR ALL. We read in Galatians 3:28 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

Let us not be unaware that such injustice exists in this nation too. It is not everybody else's problem.

Sisters and brothers, there may not be a lot we feel we can do, but there is. We can speak out against injustice and racism, we can say we care, we can show we care, we can pray for hearts to be changed and proclaim the gospel of love for all God's people.

As Pastor Niemoller wrote: 'First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out; because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out; because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out; because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.'

But we speak out, not only for our safety, but for the justice that lies at the heart of our faith, at the heart of the kingdom of God.

A policeman knelt for bigotry, let us kneel for justice.

Amen.



We support the black members of our church family at Bath Road and our brothers and sisters wider afield. The wording on the heart reads: 'Though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ.' Romans 12:5.

FAMILY EVENTS

DEATHS

We extend our sympathy to the loved ones of

CHRIST CHURCH

April	26	Carl Jones, 52 years
May	4	Peter Leonard Waylen, 93 years
May	19	Mary Eveness, 75 years
May	31	Leopoldo Manuel Yanez Perez, 91 years
June	3	Mary Mabel Stoneham, 94 years

MMANUEL

May	28	Shirley Philomena Pullen, 83 years
June	3	Catherine Mary Gibbs, 51 years

FLOODLIGHTING

If you would like to sponsor the floodlighting of Christ Church in celebration of a birthday, wedding anniversary, special occasion, to advertise your Company, or in memory of a loved one, the minimum gift per evening is **£30.00**. Cheques to be made payable to 'Christ Church PCC'. Please write to the PARISH OFFICE, COMMUNITY CENTRE AT CHRIST CHURCH, SWINDON, SN1 3HB at least a week before the date of the floodlighting. GIFT AID: If you are a UK taxpayer and wish Christ Church to reclaim the tax, you may Gift Aid your donation.

OUR PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

DESAI MEMORIAL PRIMARY SCHOOL, KAWANGWARE, NAIROBI

Our target £10,000

When we launched the project at the beginning of the year, Coronavirus hadn't impacted the world, but by the end of March we were in Lockdown and this has meant that we haven't been able to organise any fundraising events. Mike Welsh, the Headteacher of Goddard Park Primary School brings us up to date with the situation in Kawangware.



The Desai Memorial Primary School in Kawangware, Nairobi normally hums to the noise of 430 children who are eager to take part in lessons that will change their lives. Bryan is nine and HIV positive. He is number one in his Class and has remained alive because each month

Truphena Manga, the Headteacher, travels to a pharmacy to collect his anti-retroviral drugs that will keep him alive. Bryan is an orphan and lives with a neighbour's family. Desai is the only school that would accept him with his condition.

Kawangware is one of the poorest and toughest slums in Africa. It is a similar size to Swindon with families seeking out survival in the corrugated tin (mabati) ten feet by ten feet shacks. (Photo above).



There is often only one long drop toilet for 15 families (pictured on the right). Water has to be bought and there is little health care. Life is very hard. Even so, people work all hours to scratch out a living. There is no welfare state and mortality is high. ➤

Desai is a beacon of light. Children attend for 3 to 14 years and then take the Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination. All lessons are in English. The lessons are hard as Truphena expects every child to achieve from this rare opportunity for the poorest to go to school. Thousands never get the chance. Gaining a good KCPE pass enables children to gain a job and a chance in life. Some go on to Secondary Schools that are for 14-18 year olds.

All the teachers in Desai live in the slum area. They are poorly paid but are trained by experienced staff and then years later leave to go into the State system. It is an approach that could be rolled out throughout the world's slums where few children have access to schools. Although State schools have free tuition, they charge for much of the school experience, including books. Most families in the slum area cannot afford these charges and children miss out. We raise funds in Swindon to keep Desai alive. It is a pebble in the pond, but it is our pebble in this world.

The Pandemic has yet to hit Africa in the same way as in Europe. This has been fortunate, but many analysts think it is only a matter of time. In Kenya, there is a daily curfew from 7pm to 5am. Everyone has to wear a facemask in a public place. All Schools have been closed. It is understood that if and (probably) when the Covid-19 virus takes off amongst the slum communities there will be mass deaths as the rudimentary health system would quickly be overwhelmed. There is no hospital in Kawangware. It is served by a few local clinics where you have to pay for everything from the simplest procedure. The loss of tourism and other core industries has hit Kenya hard. The slum families who struggle with daily life and survival are in an even worse situation now.

I am keeping in touch with Truphena. We make sure that the teachers and their families are in good health and spirits. She keeps in touch with as many children as possible. Truphena says it is like life has been put on hold. The children are suffering by not being in school. None of them have access to online learning. It is vital that schools reopen and the children return to this unique learning community serving the poorest of the poor.

Mike Welsh

Headteacher Goddard Park Primary School, Swindon.

Bath Road



Daniel Vatcher cycles across the width of Cambodia..... from his bedroom!

Well Daniel has done it with two days to spare - 361 miles in 29 days and raised a huge £881.00 towards his target of £4,000 for what was to have been his trip to Cambodia but, due to the pandemic, the country has now been changed to Kenya. A really big "Thank you" to everyone who has sponsored him.

Although Daniel is sad not to be travelling to Cambodia, he feels that Kenya will be just as rewarding and exciting. He hopes to take part in building a school and digging watering holes for elephants, and he might even get to go on a safari which he feels will be amazing. Along the way he hopes to gain confidence, learn new skills, meet different cultures and grow spiritually.

If you'd like to donate you can do so either at his JustGiving page, or you can post a cheque (or cash through the door) to: 11 Chedworth Gate, Swindon, SN3 1NE

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/daniel-vatcher-kenya2021>

Thank you all so much.
Stay well and safe.

Sharon Vatcher

Eric Sparkes tells us about his very special day...

My 80th birthday treat with Gillian in the Care Home Garden



I must share with you this lovely photo of Gill, taken on my 80th birthday on Monday 25th May. a glorious Summer's day.

The day has been such a treasure to lock away and started with lots of cards, many personally delivered, magicked up with shops closed, self-made or through Internet personalised ones and video versions plus thoughtful e-mails; meant for

me but also with my Gill very much in mind I am sure.

Then I was surprised late morning when church friends turned up en masse to stand outside my fence with balloons and banner to sing Happy Birthday etc with Noel on the trumpet and Janet on clarinet. Neighbours also looked out to enjoy the happy scene. I choked up a bit thinking how much trouble friends had gone to show such open kindness.

Then another happy time as we all chatted away for about an hour, safely at a distance, and realised how much we had missed meeting at church. Fortunately the traffic in our Close was quiet for once; a benefit of isolation at home. After that, I spent a quiet time, at a distance, with Gill in the Care Home garden, the first time I had seen her in the flesh for 10 weeks. The day finished with me enjoying a champagne tea at my son Stephen's home with my family. I sat at the bottom of the garden while they all happily chatted away.

It was wonderful to see folk happily enjoying time together. Covid has helped us to realise the true value of life, and one another.

God bless,
Eric

Shirley Cripps writes about nature on her doorstep...

During this period of lockdown, I have been taking a walk around Shaftesbury Lake but, much to my regret, I no longer have a camera to record the wildlife.

I have been watching the life and times of the Canada Geese goslings and it has been fascinating seeing them grow from small bundles of bright yellow and white fluff to birds that are nearly half the size of their parents now. Canada geese get a bad press for being noisy and messy, but you can't help but love them.

The lake is a fairly small body of water, with an island in the middle, but it holds such a wealth of wildlife. There are several families of birds 7, 9, and up to 14. Mostly they stay together in a crèche under the watchful eye of parents or babysitters. Last week I counted 40 goslings on the bank of the lake, all on top of each other, no social distancing here.

One morning I walked around the lake, listening to the bird song, interspersed with the raucous honking of the numerous adult geese. I saw 29 goslings, 4 very lively mallard chicks with their families and, in a quiet corner, 2 swans with 7 cygnets basking in the morning sun.

Speaking for myself, it's a shame it takes a pandemic for us to get outside and really notice what is in our backyards.

Keep safe and enjoy your surroundings. ■



Looking at the Messy Church ideas, James Lewis followed the idea about travel in Bible times and made a chariot for his bear, using a cardboard box, paper plates for the wheels and some waste pipe for the axle, and it will actually roll along.



Jean meets the Royals

Many folk will remember Jean and Tony Hull who worshipped with us for several years until Tony, who served in the Royal Navy, died in February 2017. Jean stayed on for a while but as she had served as a nurse in Queen Alexandra's Royal Navy Nursing Service, she was able to go to a Royal British Legion Home, Mais House, Bexhill-on-Sea in Sussex.



As part of this year's VE Day celebrations, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge visited the Home via a video link, and Jean, as the youngest inhabitant, despite remembering VE Day as a child, along with the oldest person there, was videoed on TV talking with their Royal Highnesses. Shirley Cripps saw and recognised Jean and alerted many of us so we saw her in 'catch-up'.

"Hello" magazine then ran an article about all the Royals VE Day 'visits' and Jean appeared in one of the photographs.

Gwen Knight has been in touch with Jean on the telephone and she tells us that Jean has been able to move from her original room, which looked out onto the car park, down to a ground floor room where she has french doors out onto the garden. She can see many different flowering shrubs and usually some of her own pots of flowers, but they will have to wait until next year when garden supplies are more available.

Although Jean misses us here in Swindon, it is good to learn that she now feels very settled living at Mais House, knowing that it was the right thing to do as she has help available whenever she needs it, especially when her arthritis is particularly painful. She was delighted to hear from us and sends her best wishes to all.

You can watch her talking to the Royals here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwYT-4nnPYs>

VIRTUAL GUIDING

by Kara-Jane Senior, Leader at 8th Swindon Guides and Rangers

Like many Girlguiding units and Scout troops across the country, 8th Swindon Guides and Rangers, who in “normal” times meet at Bath Road Methodist Church, have taken weekly meetings online to continue providing a space for members to come together, develop skills, and have fun. Social interaction like this is even more vital during these times of physical distancing but we’ve had to be very creative in order to keep up the diversity of activities that we are used to, and keeping things interesting, challenging and adventurous.

In the two months that we have been meeting online we have done quizzes, scavenger hunts, bingo, origami, parlour games, yoga, a virtual escape room, and worked towards the Girlguiding programme and challenge badges. One of the benefits of online guiding is that the Guides can be muted whilst a leader is explaining an activity!

At the end of April our unit participated in a virtual camp organised by Northumberland Scouts, called Camp at Home, which claims to have been the largest camp ever with over 95,000 people all over the world camping “out” on 30th April - 1st May. Participants either pitched a tent in the garden or constructed a den indoors to spend the night in - one den came complete with a duck pond nearby.

We joined up with 3rd Wroughton Guides and ran classic camp activities both evenings online including a virtual campfire, complete with much out of time singing (mostly due to video delays); a craft activity (origami jumping frogs), a virtual hike (up and down the stairs), and a wide game. Campers also cooked dinner and a typical camp breakfast in their own time, and got creative and crafty to make their own campfire. It was an unusual camp for unusual times, but thoroughly enjoyed by all!



We’ll be continuing online as long as we need to in order to keep our members, and wider society safe, whilst providing a fun and supportive space for our members. ■

A tribute to M. J. Cammish

by an ex-pupil Martin Robins in what would have been Matthew's centenary year.



Matthew was born on the 11th June 1920 in Filey, Yorkshire. From humble beginnings he used his gifts for others. He used the scripture as his guide through life. In a Gospel that bears Matthew's name, we read of a parable known as the Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25: 14-30. This parable is an excellent example of how Matthew Cammish used his talents and encouraged others to do the same.

MJC possessed extraordinary abilities. He was a five talent man. What is striking is that his life was devoted to encouraging the one talent man to use his ability and not waste life.

He could have reached much higher levels in his career but chose to help the less advantaged. His astute observations of life can be seen in his sermons, which were of the highest standard. but these were often preached in small village chapels. He spent as much time studying for the few as for the many. The man who opened his front door to a lady who would become a renowned premier was thrilled when an unknown lady in a village chapel thanked him profusely for meeting her needs. He used his talents wisely in the service of the highest powers.

A contemporary at Dean Close School, Cheltenham wrote :

Facing a task unfinished,
That drives us to our knees,
A need that, undiminished,
Rebukes our slothful ease,
We, who rejoice to know Thee,
Renew before thy throne
The solemn pledge we owe Thee
To go and make Thee known .

MJC did just that.

Well done good and faithful servant - enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

On the 11th June, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Matthew's birth, Martin asked for it to be included on the Daily Telegraph Announcements page along with the following quote from Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'
'He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again.'

We are about to get a Rainbows group

Bath Road has a proud tradition of supporting the Scout and Girlguiding movements since their earliest days. We are therefore delighted that the 4th Old Town Rainbows have chosen our church, having had to vacate their existing location. Their activities will take place early on most term-time Friday evenings. All being well this will start from September, catering for girls aged 5-7.

News from the Read family ...

Greetings from Worcester! It's hard to believe that it is almost 5 years since we moved from Old Town but are still in touch with various folk and enjoy receiving the partnership magazine each month.

We just wanted to share with you that our daughter Sarah has become a doctor this week and will be moving to Chester shortly to start work at the Countess of Chester Hospital where she will be based for the next 2 years. This is the culmination of 5 years at medical school in Liverpool, interspersed with a degree in public health medicine! Due to the current situation she has already worked for 8 weeks pre graduation, which was a bit of a baptism of fire (and included a week off with the virus but thankfully without symptoms!) but good experience too. Sadly, graduation could only take place via the internet on zoom so we will have to wait until next year to celebrate more formally at the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool. Thank you for all your support, prayers and encouragement along the way.

In other family news, our son Thomas has just completed his third year of four at Nottingham university studying computer science. We are both still working at the hospital here which has been very strange in the current crisis and challenging at times, but is slowly improving now. We are very blessed to have a lovely garden and view of the Malverns from our house which has been a great place to relax.

With our very best wishes,

Kathryn and Adrian

.....
: Happiness comes through doors you didn't even :
: know you left open. :
.....

Immanuel

Cathy Gibbs - 1969-2020

On the afternoon of Wednesday 3rd June Cathy completed her earthly journey at the too young age of 51. Peace had come to her after a long struggle when it had not been easy in any way.

Cathy was born on the 16th March 1969 in Nairobi, and within her first years she lived in Western Australia and New Zealand and then came to England. She grew up on a farm and loved caring for the animals, cows to milk, hens to be looked after, potatoes to plant, ponies to care for - Cathy had her own pony called Prince. Once she fell from Prince and cracked her skull, but recovered from this. And as she grew up there was music, and to most people music is what people think of when thinking of Cathy.



Cathy was determined to be part of the health system and went to Manchester to train as a physiotherapist, this being another of Cathy's contributions to better the lives of others.

Cathy and Simon were married for about half their life, and Simon said they met at the Covenant Community Church in Manchester. 'We went to the same house group and she would give me a lift home afterwards on the back of her bike.' They shared great holidays, particularly the three cruises which allowed Cathy to rest as well as travel.

Cathy's involvement in the life of Immanuel Church, leading Young Immanuel and the impact she had on the lives of young people continues to be remembered with thanks by those same young people. Cathy was a great asset to Immanuel choir both in regular Sunday worship and when they travelled to sing at other churches and cathedrals, and took part in the Celebration 70/40 CD. Geoff Gleed said, "I feel sure that she is now singing in the heavenly choir and is already seen as a great asset there."

A special mention of Cathy's participation in the Swindon Music Festival for so many years. Caroline Pitt said, 'She has been so supportive and helpful and I have learnt a lot from her. She was a very good musician and understood what she was doing and was able to explain it to a novice.' And then Caroline included an incomplete list of her repertoire and trophy winnings which "only" extends to four pages! Janice Thompson writes, "I had a delightful time working with her on many Lieder and 20th Century songs, also Handel, which she loved, as well as lighter music for her summer performances in Queen's Park".

As we all know, Cathy's health deteriorated over the last period, and even then she kept strong, caring, and developing a "weird" sense of humour. Times got hard, and complicated for her and the ones she loved. We think very specially of her husband Simon, Cathy's parents Jane and Brian, her sister Ruth and her husband Chris and Jes and Dan. Jes is taking care of Fudge - the very special hamster Cathy had.

Finally, I share a photo Cathy sent me on March 20th. She found this gesture on her outing on Walcot Road and was very touched by it. She thought a child might have made it with the stones found on the pavement, and it expressed to her a true deep meaning as it was just about the time we were entering the world of Covid 19.



We give thanks to God for the life of Cathy, how it touched the lives of so many different people, and that Cathy now is at peace, free from pain.

Robert H Jordan



Sharing Good News: The Harbour Project is one of 230 charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. It provides support, advice, practical help and friendships to asylum seekers and refugees in Swindon.

Marjorie Jennifer Sutton (Madge)
13.10.1936 - 19.5.2020

Madge was such an amazing woman, and I know for a fact she would not like me using the word "amazing", because part of who she was included deep humility. She was kind and friendly and welcoming.

Madge's faith sustained her in life as something quite natural, but not always easy. I remember a few times, when visiting her, we chatted about the questions and searches she had gone through, and yet how she knew she was never alone on this life journey.

If there were two things I would highlight of her faith journey, these would be her commitment to prayer, and this meant an active participation in the Immanuel Prayer Group; she never forgot those moments people had shared with her and asked her to pray for. The other would be her dedication as a lay preacher, visiting churches that were always so pleased to invite her back again and again. Her faith shone in a humble way and she had a deep impact on the life of those she met.



In an email to me, the Rev'd. Andrew Francis wrote, *'Madge was a lovely person whose increasing dementia meant that she could be best cared for in a nursing home midway between her Home Counties-based son Ian and now Cambridgeshire-based Janet. Madge was a wonderful servant of God's Church both before and during her many years as the Lay Preaching Commissioner of the NE Wilts District. It was always a privilege to hear her lead coherent and creative worship, building friendships with congregations and Ministers as she sought to support them in their ministries and listen to her counsel in District Pastoral Committee.'* And I am sure we would all say 'Amen' to this.

It was a privilege to know Madge and am convinced the many of you who knew her would agree. We give thanks to God for her life and pray she may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Our thoughts and prayers for Ian and Janet and the family at this time.

Robert H Jordan

URC launches resource to help renew community engagement as we emerge from the pandemic

A new URC resource has been launched to help people explore how they can respond to the current needs, opportunities and injustices in their local neighbourhoods.

It is hoped that “New reality, same mission” will act as a stimulus to renewed community engagement by individuals and local congregations as lockdown eases.

The resource is complementary to the acclaimed booklet produced last month by URC Synod Moderators, “Ready for the new normal”, a discussion paper for a pandemic recovery and resumption plan, and uses questions in that paper as its starting-point. It was developed by members of the URC’s Mission and Discipleship teams, working with several Church related Community Workers and the Director of Church Action on Poverty.

The authors say, ‘Mission has been described as finding out what God is doing and joining in’. The pandemic has highlighted existing injustices in society and brought many new challenges. It has also prompted communities to pull together and shown the value of bold, collective action for our wellbeing. As the lockdown begins to ease, churches and communities will find themselves in a range of different situations. Many challenges and possibilities will present themselves.

“While the impulse to get stuck into ‘doing something’ may be hard to resist, it is important to begin by trying to understand the new reality and reflect on its implications. How have people been affected? What is going on in our communities already? Where is God at work? What have we to offer? And how, therefore, should we join in?’

The booklet offers a process for exploring these questions of community presence and engagement and social justice in the ‘new normal’ and developing new priorities for mission and ministry. Reflection is also invited about the kind of society and economy that we want to rebuild after the pandemic.

It features examples of how churches around the country are already an active presence in their communities in many different ways and points to resources and organisations that can provide advice and support.

Derek Estill, Moderator of the URC General Assembly, commented, ‘New reality, same mission’ is a great strap line to help us focus our attention on ►

finding new ways to walk the way and live the life of Jesus in our post-lock-down society. This booklet is a wonderful accompaniment to the “Ready for the new normal” booklet recently published. I have no hesitation in commending it as an affirmation of and encouragement to respond positively to the new reality of community needs by putting our Christian faith into mission action alongside those in need, seeking equality and justice for everyone irrespective of colour, race, gender, faith or no faith.’

A webinar and a series of short films from people reflecting on how society might be different after Covid-19 will support the booklet.

URC LEADERS SAY THAT WE MUST ALL BE ‘ANTI-RACIST’ FOLLOWING THE BRUTAL KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD.



The following statement and prayer comes from Karen Campbell, the United Reformed Church’s Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries, and the Moderators of the URC General Assembly, the Rev’d. Nigel Uden and Derek Estill:

‘I have come that you might have life in all its fullness.’ Jesus Christ said this more than 2,000 years ago. But when will that fullness of life be afforded to all people – irrespective of the colour of their skin?

The United Reformed Church has no hesitation in adding its voice to the outrage and dismay expressed following the brutal killing of George Floyd. Floyd is the latest in a long line of black people killed in the USA by police officers – those whose sole authority comes from the motto “to protect and to serve”. ■

Christ Church with St. Mary's



We are incredibly proud of and grateful to Annie who is raising vital funds for our Children's Ward at Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust by running a mile every day for a month!



Annie has already been on quite a journey after being diagnosed with a bone infection in both legs and has now finished her treatment.

Annie's Mum told us that she wanted to fundraise because the nursing team who she saw there every day were so



fantastic (even in March and April when they were also dealing with Covid19) and because she thought they needed new toys!

Annie is a member of Christ Church Sunday School and her Mum, Dorothy is the daughter of Ailsa and Mike Palmer.

If you would like to support Annie, please click here:
<https://brighterfutures.charitycheckout.co.uk/pf/actionannie>

The Rt. Rev'd. Vivienne Faull, Bishop of Bristol, writes...



The appalling death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police and the subsequent *Black Lives Matter* protests have brought the issues of racism, oppression, inequality and injustice once again into the spotlight, where they

should be. These are issues that the Diocese of Bristol, like many organisations, has been aware of, discussed and attempted to address. However, while we have taken some positive steps, it is clear that we have not done enough.

The protests in Bristol and the destruction of the statue of Edward Colston mark a moment in the city's history. As Bishop of Bristol I will now act with a renewed sense of urgency and determination to:

- Acknowledge and repent of the Church's past involvement in and benefit from the slave trade;
- Challenge and address institutional racism, listening to and learning from the experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people;
- Recruit and support more Black, Asian and minority ethnic clergy, staff and volunteers;
- Make our churches truly welcoming to everyone, taking responsibility for the need for profound cultural change in our Church;
- Work with others in the Diocese of Bristol and the Church of England to bring these things about.

This work won't be easy but we must be relentless in our commitment to bringing about change. ■

Dear Friends,

Thank you for all your ongoing support, prayer and encouragement for the Christian ministry we offer our Old Town parish. I am especially thankful this week for all the gifts we receive from our sisters and brothers from across the world. Let's remember in our prayers our vision to be a church for all nations, to celebrate that we are the rainbow people of God to pray through the vital issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement campaigning for social justice.

Below is a personal response from my colleague the Rev'd Dr Cathy Ororonkwo Vicar of St. Barnabas, Gorse Hill and All Saints, Ferndale, also Bishop Viv's commitments as our Diocesan Bishop.

Please let me know how you feel we should respond at Christ Church with St Mary's within our Old Town Partnership.

God bless you.

With our love and prayers.



Black Lives Matter

**A personal response by
Dr. Catherine Ororonkwo**

The events that have unfolded since George Floyd's very public killing have caused me to catch my breath, pause — pause, and exhale.

As a writer I often find myself penning a poem to process my thoughts and feelings in response to confronting issues. The rawness of my poetry at this time reflects the place of pause I find myself in as I catch my breath.

But in writing these poems, I realise that not a thousand words nor a single word can fully articulate my strength of emotion. Like a wound that is constantly scabbed in my day-to-day lived experiences, the reality of life as a black woman is magnified again and again when public events like the George Floyd case occur. ➤

As a person of colour, I've experienced a range of emotions in the last few weeks: tired, crushed, angry, frustrated, bewildered. My parents lived with racial injustice. I live with racial injustice. And, if things don't change, my daughter's generation will live with racial injustice.

It's incredible that, in 2020, we still witness persecution and aggression against people of colour. Black and brown skinned people have endured decades of injustices. In recent history we note: the deaths of Stephen Lawrence and Mark Duggan (among countless others), the Grenfell Tower disaster, the Windrush scandal, an increase in knife crimes among black youths, and the higher impact of Covid-19 deaths on key workers from BAME backgrounds. How many more black and brown lives have to be lost before we work together – black, brown, and white – to see a real change in society?

In this place of pause, I reflect on the Church's response. I've been encouraged by the Archbishops' and Bishops' statements expressing solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. But statements and tweets are not enough, in that for the Church to communicate a commitment to diversity, the Church needs to examine its own systems, structures and leadership. It is vitally important for Christians and churches to intentionally show up and shout out at this juncture in history.

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, we observe that Jesus came to be a voice for the voiceless and to transform the lives of the oppressed and wounded – as Christians we know that every life matters, deeply. And thus, black lives must matter too!

When black lives are systemically devalued by society, through institutionally racist systems and structures, there should be an outpouring of outrage in our communities. Even if our churches are majority white, many of these churches are located in (or in close proximity to) communities where our friends, neighbours, shopkeepers, bus drivers, taxi drivers, nurses, cleaners, care workers, and other brown and black skinned people live and work. But even if we live in a remote white-only village, if we want to live in a society that offers human flourishing for all people, this issue affects us all. When Christians stand together to say "Black Lives Matter", we offer a Christ-model that teaches we are all made in the image of God.

Because every life has value in God's eyes, and because we are called to be God's love and compassion – that walking towards the pain of 'the other' – there are a number of ways in which we can respond to racial injustice. ►

- Pray:** We can be intentional in praying against the unjust structures and systems which impact people of colour adversely.
- Examine:** We should examine our hearts and our conscience, being honest about our unconscious biases and the position our privilege grants us.
- Engage:** We can engage with the discourse (no matter how uncomfortable it feels), do the work by increasing our knowledge and educating ourselves on the issue of racial injustice.
- Challenge:** We should challenge racist and derogatory comments (even those said jokingly or flippantly) because indifference and complacency is an evil that is destroying the fabric of our society.
- Stand up:** We can stand up against all forms of racism, whether covert or overt, including societal injustices that result in socio-economic and health inequalities.

Jesus models for us how God loves justly, and how we, as Christians, can love publicly in a world of inequality. Together we can leave a legacy for the next generation, a future where black and brown skinned people feel safe and valued in society. ■

Poem by the Rev'd. Dr. Catherine Okoronkwo

Rage rises,
tongues of flame
sear bones, sinew and muscle
wrapped in brown skin,

limbs writhe against batons,
lips swell with beatings,
eyes bleed, jaw cracks
wrapped in brown skin,

shackled, starved, raped,
gouged, hunted, choked,
lynched, poked, injected,
stripped, drowned, expelled,
trampled, airbrushed, kneed,
medicated, gassed, gunned

down
down
down

years of white
knuckles and heels
kick up dust clouds
in cotton fields, ghettos, tower blocks,

brown skin burns,
turns flesh to dust, dust, dust,
fills nostrils, clogs windpipes

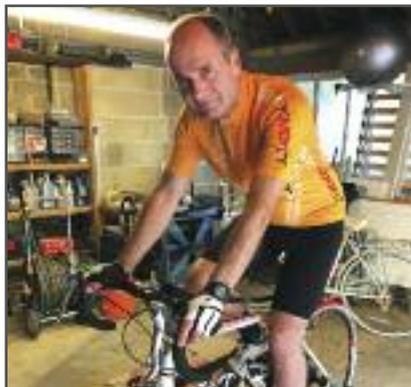
Until I can't breathe.



Bishop of Swindon raises £1,780 for Christian Aid

Three months after a serious cycling accident, Bishop Lee cycled 120 miles during Christian Aid Week to raise funds for Christian Aid which will be used to support the world's poorest communities such as those in Eastern Africa now facing threats from Coronavirus in addition to climate crisis, conflict and locust swarms.

He did this on a stationary bike in his garage. The route, a virtual one, passed by the Cathedral, the Bishop of Bristol's house and through each of the seven deaneries.



New Dean of Bristol - Canon Mandy Ford



Mandy is currently Canon Chancellor at Southwark Cathedral and Director of Discipleship and Ministry for the Diocese of Southwark.

Mandy trained for ministry at St Stephen's House in Oxford, and subsequently studied for a PhD in ethics and biblical interpretation. She began her ministry on a housing estate in central Leicester, working with young people excluded from education. After curacy she remained in parish ministry in Leicester.

Mandy has been in her current role since 2014. She is passionate about seeing people grow in confidence in their faith and enabling clergy to be leaders in mission.

Canon Dr Mandy Ford will become the 43rd Dean of Bristol and will lead the life of the Cathedral community, both in prayer and worship, as well as in its service to the city of Bristol and the wider Diocese of Bristol. The cathedral community includes the staff team, congregations, volunteers and the Cathedral School.



NOT BACK TO NORMAL – PLANNING FOR A BETTER FUTURE

I wish to thank Martin Palmer for his interesting talk. My husband Gregor listened too, so I invited him to write up the thoughts that Martin had stimulated - see below in *italic*. We talked them through, even bringing in our children Laura and Scott, since even at a tender age they already have concerns over the environment and most certainly the greatest stake in it.

I too reflected on Martin's exhortation to celebrate and how we can learn to celebrate differently, and to celebrate different things, by learning from other cultures. Put simply, environmental responsibility need not be one perpetual downer. During the pandemic I have been grateful for Zoom, not only to bring into our lives new influences, like Martin, but also to keep in touch with distant loved ones.

I would like to thank Martin Palmer for his massive contribution over the years to the environmental cause and for the inspiring insights he offered us. Thank you Simon for organising the webinar. It is one of many revelations I have received since becoming confirmed last year. Putting together this piece, as you have asked, is another milestone in my journey into a deeper understanding of faith.

I heard on Friday evening that St Francis of Assisi went all East Enders asking us to 'Shut it!'; I think he meant for us to listen. So I reflected on the words from that morning of Sinead Burke on Desert Island Discs, 'None of us are free until all of us are free'. I translate this to mean: be true to ourselves.

There is a carrying capacity for the planet, for nature, for humankind within that nature. We do not know what that sustainable limit is. Perhaps we don't need to know, rather we should reflect upon how, just as with the Chernobyl exclusion zone, we can give back the space for nature to be nature and to provide for us. That is not to give up on a modern technological civilisation, but just to recognise that too much of a good thing can be harmful. We don't matter to nature; the planet will get by without us just fine. We protect nature for ourselves, not only out of necessity but also for its magnificence. ►

It is the best of humanity in all its glorious eccentricity that we should also wish to nurture. This starts with the self, being selective in what one does, ceasing to consume. I am minded to try to be austere in terms of consumables but rich in terms of relishing the human experience: chew your cultural acquisition by learning a language before you get on a plane for that holiday abroad. Stretch out the longevity of products, slow down the physical churn, as the simplest path to gaining more from less.

A recent study claimed that a small affluent segment of society is responsible for disproportionate consumption. Note, many amongst this group are likely to provide significant wealth back to society through taxation and donations, a model of success to organise the whole of society towards? This sets the consumption norm. However, if we are truly free, then we can choose to miss that meeting, avoid that travel to work, miss out on that latest much-hyped to your children, blockbuster film. We can be absolutely keen at conformity for conformity's sake.

I once wondered whether I could ever have an original thought, so I set about trying to connect two points either side of a line on a page, but without crossing the line. Eventually, I imagined every line to be a right-angled 100 toothed zigzag and that if my focus got smaller and smaller my path could come closer and closer to the line. Ultimately, my focus would become so sharp as to see the gaps between the molecules themselves, by which point my momentum would carry me through and I would spin out the other side of the line as I scaled up - like threading the eye of a needle I suppose. So, no joy there, no originality, just an old truth! But it did cause me to appreciate how often we swallow managerial mantra without examining it. And, also, there is something benign about such conjecture if it perks up an acceptance of novelty, an embracing of other.

Now if we could make people free to choose, and they examine our lives, our approach, and it is good, fulfilling, then perhaps that drive for success in material terms, that we have been fed since Roman times, will seem less appealing, less all-consuming.

Erica McDonagh

This is the link to Martin Palmer's talk:

<http://www.christchurchswindon.co.uk/images/martin.mp4>

Swindon Town Football Club

We are delighted to celebrate with Swindon Town their success in the Division 2 Championship this season. We are grateful to Brian and Karen Harris for flying the Club flag outside Christ Church. I had a photo taken there with Chris Smith which is on our Facebook page. Please pray for my continued ministry as football club chaplain and for all the social work which is being done through the football club to bless our community through these challenging times.



I took part in a virtual meeting with Chaplains across the country this week and received many encouraging ideas which I can put into practice within my context.

A year ago I presented a paper at the Windsor Clergy Consultation, reflecting on twenty eight years of being a football club chaplain, six with Bristol Rovers and twenty two with Swindon Town. Here is a section which I hope will encourage you to continue to pray for my ministry at Swindon Town as we consider how we can use sport to share our Christian faith in our town and further afield.

A reflection on speaking about God through Football Chaplaincy as a Parish Priest.

I have had a life-long passion for sport and have often used this interest as a bridge for Christian ministry. Abbé Paul Couturier, a Roman Catholic Priest, once said, 'If we are to unite we must love. If we are to love we must meet.'

For me, a continual question is what does it mean to meet with God and with each other? While I am no engineer, I am a natural bridge-builder. Bridges connect, walls divide. How can I build a bridge which connects me with my fellow human beings? How can I break down a wall which divides me from others?

This is the heart of my Christian vocation as a Parish Priest; to love God and love human beings. This is what I signed up for as a Christian when I was baptised and confirmed and when I was ordained in 1987. A Bible verse which speaks to Football Club Chaplains is 2 Corinthians 5: v 9, 'So whether we are home or away, we make it our aim to please the Lord'. ➤

May I suggest that a Sunday is a 'home' match, people come to join me in church and basically, within reason, do what I ask: sit, pray, sing, stand, and listen sometimes! Away from church, when I visit the football ground, a school, a business as a Rotarian, that is the 'away' match.

Jesus was clearly very at home in the Synagogue but also out and about with the people in the market place making relationships, building bridges of trust and understanding. Jesus passionately believed in the incarnation that God was with him, Emmanuel, in building the Kingdom of God wherever he was.

I need to, we need to, as Christian leaders, be similarly at home when we play away. Put it another way, in the New Testament, 3 or 4 times the word 'ecclesia', the church, is mentioned, in comparison to 96 times when 'kingdom of God' is mentioned.

I believe that we need to keep the church organisation small in our vision so that the kingdom of God is large and growing in our prayerful priorities and expectation. The kingdom of God is about turning away from the wall, looking out at and walking into God's marvellous view. As Bishop Tom Wright said, 'God is working in every scene of life'. God is working in politics, business, the environment, science, culture, education and, for the purposes of my essay, sport.

Sports chaplaincy has grown enormously in Britain over the last 30 years. In terms of statistics there are 500+ chaplains in various sports across the UK. In English football 69 of the 92 clubs in the Premier League and English Football League have chaplains, with some of these clubs having more than one, giving 82 chaplains across the 92 clubs. There are also now chaplains in women's football and in non-league football, giving another 60+ chaplains across English football. On a wider canvas there are 151,000 sports clubs in England with an average 84 adults and 90 children in each; giving a total of 25 million people.

Sport plays a vital part in popular culture in Britain. Over the last ten years, leading up to the Olympic games in London 2012, there has been a growing awareness in the Church of England about the importance of sports ministry as a vital part of Christian ministry today. The Bishop of Nottingham, the Rt. Rev'd. Tony Porter, coordinates this and organised an annual conference for Diocesan representatives to share best practice and to learn from each other. In addition, the charity Christians in Sport is also a great encourager in this area. ►

As a football chaplain I am part of and accountable to Sports Chaplaincy UK whose strapline is 'Serving God through excellence in chaplaincy'. This then is the foundation or theory on which sports chaplaincy has been built and grown rapidly over the last 40 years in Britain.

The sports chaplain is expected to provide ongoing pastoral and spiritual care, by permission, to those of faith or no faith, for the holistic well-being of all involved in the community of sport. The role of Chaplain is to be servant hearted, striving to be pastorally proactive and spiritually reactive. A sports chaplain aims to serve all people involved in the Club irrespective of position, beliefs or lifestyle.

There are five key values which Sports Chaplaincy UK expect chaplains to uphold:

- * **Presence:** It is all about being there, being a difference. Incarnational, 'the word became flesh dwelling among us. Let your light shine'.
- * **Excellence** In everything we say and do because we serve an excellent God. Servanthood: not looking to your own interests but the interests of others.
- * **Relationships:** Compassion, identification 'all things to all people'. Love your neighbour as yourself.
- * **Confidentiality:** Being trusted and a safe port of call.
- * **Humility:** It's all about Jesus, not our ego. At times it can be humiliating.

There are minimum standards, such as commitment to prayer, pastoral gifts, accountability, rigorous adherence to safeguarding, consistent attendance at sporting organisations outside of an event or match. Commitment to ongoing development which all helps to demonstrate credibility which is fundamental for a Sports Chaplain.

The role of Sports Chaplain will vary greatly, depending on the role defined by the Club as it is very much a permission-led activity. Regular visits to training and attendance at sporting events help to develop relationships with the Chaplain, endeavouring to act with discernment and sensitivity. ►

Many Chaplains also undertake traditional functions for their sporting organisations, such as Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals, scattering of Ashes ceremonies, historical events, Carol services. In doing this they can provide clubs with an important link to engagement with the local community.

Football Chaplaincy has made me a more informed parish priest. It keeps me praying, reading, networking and asking questions. Continually it challenges me about being a passionate disciple of Jesus Christ, standing up for him when times are hard.

I am grateful for all the people I have met at Bristol Rovers and Swindon Town, and for all I have learnt from them. Above all, I am grateful for the countless opportunities I have had to speak about God, the Christian faith and Sports Chaplaincy, not only through the Clubs themselves but also through the local media and in the wider community around Bristol and Swindon.

The Rev'd. Canon Simon Stevenette

Mary Eveness **20th September 1944 to 19th May 2020**

We were sad to hear of Mary's death on the 19th May, exactly one year after the date of her confirmation by Bishop Viv on the 19th May 2019.

A few years ago Mary and John came to Christ Church to renew their wedding vows and Carol Simmons our Parish Clerk writes...

"I met Mary a few years ago when she and John renewed their wedding vows. I did all the admin with John as she was too ill to come to the office with him. John asked me to be there on the day they renewed their vows so I could meet her. She was truly stunning - she didn't look ill at all despite having come out of Prospect a few days before. She was dressed up in a lovely suit with a hat and corsage and just looked gorgeous. We had a chat and a hug and they went in. John came to the office afterwards to have another chat but I never saw Mary again..."

Our thoughts are with John and his family at this sad time.

The Bible Course – presented by The Bible Society

Are you, like me, bewildered and daunted by The Holy Bible? I know that whenever I opened this wonderful book, I struggled with what I was reading and quickly put it back on the shelf. To this end, our Home Group which, until Covid-19, met at Christ Church Vicarage, kindly opened up by Simon, now meets online through Zoom.

As a Group, consisting of myself, my sister Jackie, Annette and Richard, Ian, Erica, Phil, Greg, Steve and Dee and not to be forgotten, Simon(!) decided to undertake the Bible Society's Bible Course. Some members of the group were confirmed last year so they brought fresh insights.

This consisted of eight sessions, which we completed on a weekly basis. We worked through all 66 books, from Genesis to Revelations, detailing the main characters e.g. Adam, David, Moses, etc and various events, the Exodus, the birth of Jesus and his subsequent death. We did, however, struggle with Revelations – no matter how well-versed anyone was with the Bible!

The course entailed watching two videos each week, separated by 25 minutes discussion time which included up to three questions on the book currently being worked on, plenty of interaction and time for personal reflection – which could be shared with everyone else or not, depending on personal preferences. Along with this there was a “homework section” i.e. Daily Bible Readings for the following week – not as daunting as you would expect. We began and ended with a prayer.

Personal reflections from our Group including from Simon, “It was the first time I have taken part in an online course with 12 people over eight weeks. I am grateful to the Bible Society based in Swindon for making this course in an imaginative way. I felt privileged sharing this experience with many of our members, some of whom were confirmed in the Partnership last year. I praise and thank God that everyone has grown in faith and the various ways the meetings were led in their own inimitable style. I strongly agree that the course was clear, visual and encouraging. I hope and pray that others across the Partnership will take advantage of reading their Bible, to explore and treasure what God has given us through his living word.”

Another member, Richard, felt that there were positives and negatives with the course – as with other courses. He was encouraged by the excellent level of attendance on a week by week basis. He feels that Zoom may have had

some influence as we were able to see and talk to each other. He felt that the content was at a sufficient level to enable a sense of journey through the books without losing the implicit message of each book of the Bible. He agreed that there was a well-balanced interaction, debate and video input. Richard thought that this format was ideal for teasing out the challenges and faith questions that some people may have. He felt a summary at the end of each session may have had some added value. Again, like Simon, he thought it was a great course with excellent content.

Jackie really enjoyed the course and felt truly inspired by the Bible. This is something she intends to read with a fresh mind, knowing each book better than she did previously. She feels closer to Jesus and is mindful of the disciples' role in connection to Jesus and spreading the Gospel.

We came away with a phrase at the end of the course:

“The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed.
The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed!”
(Augustine)

Sandie Rule

The Re-opening of Christ Church

Christ Church recently reopened its doors for two hours a day for personal prayer and reflection following permission and advice both from the government and from the Church of England.

For many, the church is a place to seek peace and pray for or remember loved ones, so not being able to open our doors to those in need has been particularly difficult.

Careful thought and planning went into how this could be safely managed, both for visitors and those volunteering to welcome them. An appropriate cleaning regime has been introduced. Visitors are asked to remain in defined areas of the church and there is a one-way route to allow for social distancing.

The burial grounds and Remembrance Garden remain open to visitors.

Virtual church services have continued each Sunday – these can be accessed via the church website www.christchurchswindon.co.uk.

For information about Christ Church opening hours please contact Simon Stevenette (01793) 529166 or Simon@christchurchswindon.co.uk.

Clap for Key Workers

I was listening to a commentator on the radio who was discussing the many reasons why as a society we clap, or not. For example, to show encouragement and thanks or appreciation on the one hand and physical pain or disability and lack of self-confidence on the other. Pointing out that with our recent Thursday evening clapping there were no right or wrongs and many different reasons why people were or weren't joining in. Following the clapping and gong banging in our street, there increasingly followed a time of catching up with neighbours and checking they were alright.

Janet and I don't have gongs to bang but we do have musical instruments. Just like the clapping, music is also used in 'normal' society to emphasise different emotions encouragement, uplifting, inspiring and to say thank you. We were a little apprehensive the first week, but as the clapping subsided so we started to play from the end of our drive, "Somewhere over the Rainbow". Unknown to us, a neighbour who is a nurse had lost a colleague to Covid that day. When we expressed how sorry we were, she replied, 'No, no, it was perfect, it was as if you were playing to her, thank you.'

In the following weeks we also played, "Abide with me", "You'll never walk alone", "Ode to Joy", and on the last week "Bring me sunshine", before returning to where we started, with "Somewhere over the Rainbow" once again.

The clapping and music may have stopped, but let's not forget that most, if not all, of the emotions are still there. They just have nowhere to be openly expressed in a 'group' environment.

Noel Hunt

Remembering the man who founded Barnardo's

It was 175 years ago, on 4th July 1845, that Thomas Barnardo, the humanitarian and philanthropist, was born in Dublin. He founded Barnardo's, a charity which continues to care for vulnerable children and young people. He opened his first home for boys in 1870 and soon vowed never to turn a child away. Most Victorians saw poverty as shameful, associating it with poor morals and laziness, but Barnardo refused to discriminate. He made sure boys were trained and found them apprenticeships.

When Barnardo died in 1905, he left 96 homes caring for more than 8,500 vulnerable children, including those with learning difficulties. Because he believed that children should ideally grow up in a family setting, in 1887 he introduced an early form of fostering – boarding out children to host families. ■



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Jane Templeton took this photo on a walk along the Wilts & Berks Canal



The wildflower garden at Bath Road Church which, thanks to David Sinclair's efforts is looking so good.



The magnificent Laburnum tree in the garden at Bath Road Church.



Caroline & Daniel Pitt's clematis.

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