

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

PARTNERSHIP MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2020

80 PENCE



One in Christ - Together in Mission

CHRIST CHURCH HANDBELL RINGERS



See article on page 11

CHRISTMAS CRAFT SALE AND COFFEE



**Saturday 14th November
at the home of
Janet and Noel Hunt,
20 Bouverie Avenue
2.00 pm - 4.00 pm**

This will be subject to government guidelines.

The local craft fairs that many of us would usually attend have been cancelled for this year. We hope to sell our hand-crafted cards and wooden gifts in aid of the Partnership Project from home instead. Please keep the date and check the November magazine for further details. Advance orders are welcomed.

In aid of the Partnership Project

Your Contacts

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WORKING TOGETHER WITH OTHER CHURCHES IN OLD TOWN

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Partnership Letter

Christ Church Vicarage

Dear Friends,

Season of Creation

As we develop together as Eco congregations across our Old Town Partnership, Harvest Thanksgiving and Creation-tide have an increasing significance. These days, from 1st September into October, have been designated the International Season of Creation. This year, the global reach of Covid 19 has revealed anew our shared human nature and the interconnectedness of our lives, economies, healthcare systems, food chains, energy and transportation systems.

The pandemic has also demonstrated that this complex web is rooted in the earth and limited by the earth's capacity to sustain our economic and ecological needs. The unjust effects of climate change are a consequence of our inability to find a sustainable balance of this web.

As we celebrate Harvest Thanksgiving across our Partnership and prepare, God willing, to welcome Martin Palmer back to inspire us from the Celebration Earth perspective on Friday 23rd October, may we also unite as one family in Christ celebrating the good gifts of creation and the bonds we share with each other and every living creature on earth, *Genesis 9 verse 10*. Can I encourage you to have a look and a listen to Doxecology, a wonderfully creative resource which has just been published by Resound Worship;

<https://www.resoundworship.org/projects/doxecology>

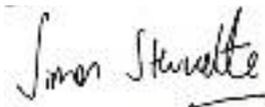
It brings together doxology (praise) and ecology, giving much needed new worship language to the church. There are 13 new songs on the themes of Creation Ecology and Christian hope which firstly, celebrate the wonders of Creation, secondly, acknowledge our failures and thirdly, anticipate a glorious restoration in Christ.

Let us pause this Harvest, remembering in our worship God's world is still a place full of wonder. The earth shares its abundant generosity offering shelter and sustenance to all its inhabitants. Our response here in Old Town Swindon, as earth residents, should be equally generous, recognising our share in our

responsibilities. Please meditate around this ecumenical prayer which is at the heart of the Season of Creation materials.

May this prayer lead us into practical action as developing eco congregations across our Partnership.

Every blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Stenette". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Creator of Life,

At Your word, the Earth brought forth plants yielding seed and trees of every kind bearing fruit. The rivers, mountains, minerals, seas and forests sustained life. The eyes of all looked to You to satisfy the needs of every living thing. And throughout time the Earth has sustained life. Through the planetary cycles of days and seasons, renewal and growth, you open your hand to give creatures our food in the proper time.

In your Wisdom you granted a Sabbath; a blessed time to rest in gratitude for all that you have given; a time to liberate ourselves from vicious consumption; a time to allow the land and all creatures to rest from the burden of production. But these days our living pushes the planet beyond its limits. Our demands for growth, and our never-ending cycle of production and consumption are exhausting our world. The forests are leached, the topsoil erodes, the fields fail, the deserts advance, the seas acidify, the storms intensify. We have not allowed the land to observe her Sabbath and the Earth is struggling to be renewed.

During this Season of Creation, we ask you to grant us courage to observe a Sabbath for our planet. Strengthen us with the faith to trust in your providence. Inspire us with the creativity to share what we have been given. Teach us to be satisfied with enough. And as we proclaim a Jubilee for the Earth, send Your Holy Spirit to renew the face of creation.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ. Amen.

FAMILY EVENTS

DEATHS

We extend our sympathy to the loved ones of

CHRIST CHURCH

Sep 2 Godfrey 'Jeff' Arthur Jefferies, 86 years
Sep 12 Parvaz Masih, 55 years

IMMANUEL

Aug 10 Stanley George Burton, 95 years

FLOODLIGHTING

Aug 25 In loving memory of my deeply loved husband Alan Cole on our 64th Wedding Anniversary
Oct 1 To celebrate the Diamond (60th) Wedding Anniversary of Jenny and Tony Selwood.

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 email: parishoffice@christchurchswindon.co.uk or phone 01793 522832 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 by providing your name, the first line of your address and our postcode.

SPARE MAGAZINES

Due to lockdown and our churches having been closed, we have several copies of the church magazine from the last few months. If anyone is missing back copies, please get in touch with Caroline Pitt who will be pleased to let you have them. Tel. 521732
email: carolinempitt@gmail.com

Immanuel

Harvest Appeal



This year's planned Partnership Appeal, which we were supporting to raise money for a school in Desai, Nairobi, has been postponed until 2021 due to the Worldwide Covid 19 pandemic. Your World Concerns Committee however feel there is a desperate need to ensure that our depleted Emergency Fund, topped up each year through the use of gift aid

envelopes during the Harvest Appeals, is added to and thus available to serve as an immediate and direct response to any of the disasters that occur each year.

We only have to look at the very recent disaster in Beirut where a massive explosion caused the deaths of more than 150 people and wounded 5,000, to realise how unexpectedly these events can happen.

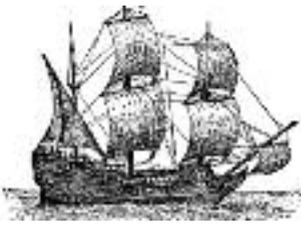
People's lives unfortunately will be devastated throughout the world by natural and man-made disasters within the coming year. These may take one of many forms: earthquakes, tsunamis, flooding, wars, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, typhoons, cyclones, droughts, monsoons or famines. Many of these disasters will occur in countries that are unable to bear the cost or have the resources to cope with such events.

It would be good if you feel able to support the increase in the Emergency Fund by giving generously and show Christian love to those less well off in the world. Any money recovered through the use of 'Gift Aid' envelopes will be added to the total raised.

Immanuel World Concerns Committee

Good News!

As you know, each Sunday we take the name of the people who join us for worship in case any health problems arise of which we would have to notify. After six Sunday Services, we have not heard of any matters whatsoever. Let's keep going in a positive way. Thanks to you all. *Robert*



Celebrating the 400th anniversary of the voyage of the Mayflower

Songs of Praise, URC participants

The programme on BBC1 on Sunday 13th September was all about the Mayflower and included contributions by Stephen Tomkins, Editor of REFORM magazine and an historian who has recently written a book to mark the 400th Anniversary of the voyage of the Mayflower. and the new General Secretary of the United Reformed Church, the Rev'd. Dr John Bradbury. Dr. Bradbury explained the significance of the occasion in the life of the Free Churches. The stained glass windows of the Minster Church of St Andrew, Plymouth looked amazing. There is also an exhibition which includes quilts designed and created by individuals, groups and schools from across the South West and from America on one of the four themes of the Mayflower 400: Leaving Home, Life at Sea, Journey's End and Life in the New Land.

New carbon calculator tool for churches

A new free online tool has been launched to help churches monitor their environmental impact. The 360° Carbon calculator enables United Reformed churches to assess and track the carbon footprint of their buildings and activities across different areas: energy, travel, food, waste, water and other expenditure.



The URC is committed to acting urgently to reduce carbon emissions across the whole of church life with a target of reaching net zero emissions well before 2050. Under its Environmental Policy, URCs are encouraged to consider environmental issues in their use of buildings, land and energy, and in their worship and teaching; to help church members to make lifestyle changes; and to engage in political and community action around climate change.

The tool is provided by the Christian charity, Climate Stewards. It has been developed in conjunction with A Rocha which runs the Eco Church scheme in England and Wales. More than 220 URCs are registered with this programme. Eco Church now asks that churches use 360° Carbon to measure their carbon footprint as part of their qualification for an award. ■

Christ Church with St. Mary's

Christ Church with St. Mary's Annual General Meeting

Our postponed AGM has been rearranged, God willing, for Sunday 25th October, 11am in Christ Church. We invite all members of the parish to join us. You will be very welcome.

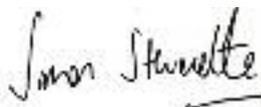
Our Annual Report for 2020, including our financial accounts for 2019 is available on our website. If you would like a copy sent to you, please contact the Parish Office.

If you have any questions, or would be interested in offering your practical support, please contact Pam Bridgeman or Jim d'Avila our Church Wardens, or Andrew Yeoward, our Treasurer. For the past year we have not had a PCC Secretary and Ailsa Palmer and Christine Senior have stepped in as joint Minute Secretaries. I am grateful to them all and to those members of the PCC who will be stepping down after their period of service.

Please join me in praying for God's guidance on the election of our new PCC for this next period.

I thank all members of our congregation at Christ Church and St. Mary's for their prayers, encouragement and financial giving in support of our developing mission and ministry in our Old Town Swindon Parish, our Swindon Deanery and our Bristol Diocese. I so appreciate their partnership in the Gospel.

Every blessing,



CANCELLATION

Friends of Christ Church Christmas Market 2020

The Trustees of the Friends have reluctantly decided not to run this highly successful event originally scheduled for 21 November 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

ORGAN RECITAL: There will be an Organ Recital at Christ Church, given by our Director of Music, Tim Eyles, on Friday 2nd October from 1.00 pm to 1.30 pm

HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?

At Christ Church with St Mary's we are looking forward to a major 8 week preaching and worship series from October to the beginning of December: "How then shall we live?" - an exploration of our theology of Eco-church. We are very grateful to Phil and Sue Mansfield for their creative work and inspiration in preparing materials on behalf of the staff team. If you would like a full copy emailed to you, please let me know. Thanks Simon.

In various ways we will explore in our worship, preaching, children's material and Home Groups what it means to be an eco-congregation and an inter-generational Christian learning community. We will do this through a sermon series on key Bible stories, through welcome and learning in our Home Groups, by providing opportunities for our congregation to grow in Christian confidence and by encouraging us to read the Bible in a year through a very helpful resource www.bibleinoneyear.org

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JOHN!



On September 28th John Stevenette (Simon's dad) celebrated his 90th birthday. John now lives with Simon and Nicola and in normal circumstances I think there would have been a big celebration at the vicarage with all the Stevenette family, but with current government restrictions that is not possible. However, we all send him our love and wish him well on his 90th birthday.

Frederick Buechner
Quote of the Day



NAVE

The Nave is the central part of the church from the main front to the chancel. It's the part where the laity sit, and in great Gothic churches it's sometimes separated from the choir and clergy by a screen. It takes its name from the Latin *navis*, meaning "ship," one reason being that the vaulted roof looks rather like an inverted keel. A more interesting reason is that the church itself is thought of as a ship or Noah's ark. It's a resemblance worth thinking about.

In one as in the other, just about everything imaginable is aboard, the clean and the unclean both. They are all piled in together helter-skelter, the predators and the prey, the wild and the tame, the sleek and beautiful ones and the ones that are ugly as sin. There are sly young foxes and impossible old cows. There are the catty and the piggish and the peacock-proud. There are hawks and there are doves. Some are wise as owls, some silly as geese; some meek as lambs and others ravening wolves. There are times when they all cackle and grunt and roar and sing together, and there are times when you could hear a pin drop. Most of them have no clear idea just where they're supposed to be heading or how they're supposed to get there or what they'll find if and when they finally do, but they figure the people in charge must know and in the meanwhile sit back on their haunches and try to enjoy the ride.

It's not all enjoyable. There's backbiting just like everywhere else. There's a pecking order. There's jostling at the trough. There's growling and grouching, bitching and whining. There are dogs in the manger and old goats and black widows. It's a regular menagerie in there, and sometimes it smells to high heaven like one. But even at its worst, there's at least one thing that makes it bearable within, and that is the storm without—the wild winds and terrible waves and in all the watery waste, no help in sight.

And if there is never clear sailing, there is at least shelter from the blast, a sense of somehow heading in the right direction in spite of everything, a ship to keep afloat, and, like a beacon in the dark, the hope of finding safe harbor at last.

Originally published in Whistling in the Dark and later in Beyond Words.

© Frederick Buechner Literary Assets

**Gilbert and Sullivan Evening
Friday 9th October, 7.30 pm (Doors open at 7.00 pm)
at Christ Church**



**We plan to show the
Pirates of Penzance DVD
by the
Swindon Gilbert and Sullivan Society.**

Tickets must be booked in advance from Christ Church website:
www.ccccswindon.co.uk. No charge, so please ignore the website message
from Paypal that says it is not working! Numbers limited to 70.

Please wear your face coverings and bring a cushion for your comfort!
We are not allowed to sing.

Retiring collection in aid of church funds and the Prospect Hospice.

Details from Caroline Pitt, Tel. 521732.

**Friends of Christ Church - Lecture by Martin Palmer
Friday 23rd October, 7.30 pm in Christ Church.**

‘LEARNING FROM CELEBRATION EARTH’

In view of the restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus, we are not sure
whether this lecture can go ahead. If not, it might be done remotely. We will
let you know, via your church newsletters, what is happening nearer the time

Don't 'go it alone'

If you are helping others at this time, remember to still leave space
and time for yourself. Going the extra mile for other people all the
time will only ensure one thing; your collapse. Work in teams. Even
the Good Samaritan did not attempt to help the injured man all on
his own; he brought in the innkeeper. By sharing the problem, they
solved it!

Handbell Refurbishment

Since July 2016, a small band of handbell ringers has climbed the 46 steps of the bell tower to play handbells every Thursday evening. Some of us migrated from other handbell groups, some were church bell ringers, some complete novices but all with a love of music. Using a collection of hymns, classics, and traditional songs transcribed using numbers rather than staff notation, we have gradually improved our ringing skills and made friends along the way. We normally play at church events so you may have heard us (but not this year, sadly).

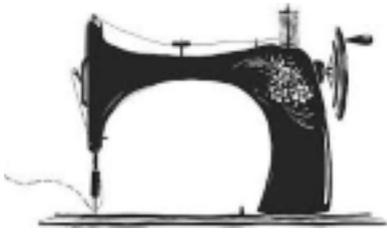
The church's collection of 28 bells comprised two distinct sets of bells. 18 bells that had been in the bell tower for many years, were slightly out of tune, had loose clappers and handles and the brass no longer shone despite our elbow grease with the polishing cloths. When Eric Sutton joined the group, he brought his personal collection of 10 bells with him and following his death in May 2017, his widow Joan, allowed the church bellringers to buy his bells at a modest cost for which we are very grateful.

Improving the condition of the old bells had always been one of the group's aims so after a concerted effort of fundraising, we managed to commission the work to be done. An enforced break caused by Covid, has meant that we haven't missed the bells while they've been away and with thanks to Bernard Stone who has done all the work, we now have 28 splendidly refurbished bells. In addition to replacing worn out clappers, springs, pivots and handles, Bernard managed to retune 3 of our 6 duplicate bells to give us some of the sharps and flats we were missing. This will enable us to play a greater variety of music when it is safe to resume our ringing.

Interestingly, Bernard discovered that one bell (no. 12F) was made by George Symondson, a London founder, when he operated as a sole trader between 1814 and 1830. We knew the bells were old but we're not sure how such an old bell has come to be in the collection. When we are able to restart ringing, we will be even more aware of the heritage we hold in our hands.

If you are interested in learning more about our group or think you might like to join us, do get in touch, we would love to hear from you. Contact Jane Humphreys on jane.humphreys538@icloud.com.

On a lighter note-----A Path well trodden!



When I was a little girl living behind my father's shop, I was always puzzled by one particular customer who frequented the shop over and over again. She would come one day for her rations (these were the days of food rationing) but in addition she would visit the shop for one item and then come again for yet another item. I remember saying to my father, "Why doesn't she make a list of everything she wants and get them altogether?"

Well, I was reminded of her over the past week or so as I have been treading the same path to a certain shop many times. It all started with a sewing project I decided to do because I wanted to make use of the vast number of machine embroidery stitches on my sewing machine. I would make a garment similar to one I already had and liked. I had some material which would look good with some embroidery on, so I thought I would use that but then decided it was too fine, hence my first visit to the Sewing shop to buy some new material.

Next I was going to cut a pattern from the garment I already had but that was proving a little tricky so I went back to the sewing shop to get a pattern. I found a pattern, just what I wanted, but it was not in stock and had to be ordered. The pattern duly arrived and I laid out the pieces on my material only to discover that I didn't have enough material so back to the sewing shop to buy more.

Cutting out was the next task and then I read that I needed some fine interfacing so (yes, you guessed it) back I go to the sewing shop! I had tried out the embroidery stitches I was going to use but decided I would use machine embroidery thread instead of the usual thread so my next visit to the shop was to buy this thread, only to find that the one I had chosen was so fine I could hardly see it and my machine didn't like it either. Back I went to the sewing shop for different thread.

Further reading of the pattern revealed that I needed some bias binding but, at this stage, I felt I had trodden the path to the sewing shop too many times so I cut my own bias binding from spare pieces of material.

Perhaps the lady who frequented my father's shop was just like me, she didn't read the recipes fully before starting to cook!

Margaret Williams

A visit to the dentist in Covid times



I have been to the dentist today and having read and obeyed all the instructions given to me prior to my visit, I felt quite biblical! I was told to arrive on time, not too early, not too late, don't bring a coat or a bag with you, just come as you are, stand at the door and telephone the receptionist to say you are outside, then wait to be invited in. No money was to be taken (payment had to be made on line). I felt like one of the disciples being sent out by Jesus: "Take nothing for the journey, except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals, but not an extra tunic." *Mark 6 verses 8,9*

Margaret Williams

and a cartoon for Covid times...



Bath Road



Methodist
relief and
development

An afternoon (or evening) with All We Can and partners

Last Thursday afternoon, Jaipreet Kaur, Philanthropy Manager of All We Can (the new name for the Methodist Relief & Development Fund) hosted a “webinar” (Zoom meeting online) for supporters in the UK to meet staff of partner organisations abroad. Penny and I were among twenty or so couples and individuals listening to, and questioning, staff of READ (Rural Educational Activities for Development) in India, and of MeDRA (Methodist Development & Relief Agency) in Zimbabwe.

After an introduction by Graham Lodge, CEO of All We Can, Sudhir Kumar Nayak, Kulu Odsha and Marjulata Sahu of READ, with Junior Vitoyi and Taviro Washaya of MeDRA spoke of their work and the problems caused by Covid-19, and of how All We Can is helping them.

On both continents, lockdown stopped day-labouring and agricultural work, including harvesting; also markets were closed, so basic food became in short supply. Movement was restricted and domestic violence increased. Schools and colleges closed, with many classes online, which is fine for urban areas and wealthier people, but less so for rural areas and for the vulnerable who lack internet access. Health Centres are often closed, but All We Can has supplied sanitary kits for its partners, with their local knowledge, to distribute. As with us, but more so, social gathering is forbidden and face-masks obligatory, while jobs have vanished overnight. Both READ and MeDRA have had to reduce effort on future development and focus on the current needs of the population. Development pre-supposes survival.

Towards the end, by which time it was approaching midnight in India, we in the UK were able to pose a few questions to our friends in India and Zimbabwe, before general farewells, and we all left the meeting.

Looking back over the afternoon, it was a little worrying that most of those involved in the UK seemed to be in the ‘vintage’, if not ‘veteran’, age-bracket, which could bode ill for future fund-raising by All We Can (though it could be that the group was partly self-selected, but still...). ➤

All We Can's policy of working through local partner groups showed its strength, as in discussion the partners could work out what was really most needed by local people, and All We Can could respond appropriately. In Zimbabwe the basic need for food is now overwhelming, and among India's poorest the need for work and daily income, alongside protection from the virus, are paramount.

We are greatly blessed to know these dedicated workers; we will all need open and generous hearts to support them.

P.S.

Since our Zoom meeting with All We Can, Sudhir Kumar Nayak (Head of Programmes at Rural Educational Activities for Development [READ, All We Can's partner organisation in India), whom we met on that Zoom gathering, has unfortunately tested positive for Covid-19, and is undergoing treatment in hospital. This brings to light the severity of the situation in India, and the impact it has on those we support and work alongside.

We are asked by Jaipreet Kaur of All We Can to join in praying for Sudhir, and pray that he recovers from the virus and returns to his wife and family.

Penny and Robert Manders



18th - 25th October

'It's Our World, Let's make It better'

The coronavirus crisis has seen huge changes in most of our lives: sadly, tragedy for some and hardship for many, but revelations for us all. Measures were put in place with a rapidity we had been told was impossible when we were discussing the climate emergency; people have not only adjusted their own lifestyles drastically but rallied round to support the vulnerable in their communities.

A Green Recovery?

Can we build on these signs of hope to work for a future which is not just "back to normal"? Many are arguing against the idea of going back to what we thought was 'normal' but was destroying the natural systems of the world we depend on. So let's make this the moment to choose a new way of living where we come together to take care of each other and our world – Let's make it better. Let's explore ideas to 'build back better' and take action to help make it happen. ■

Good News!

I am pleased to share the news that our Circuit, in spite of these challenging times, gave our church a big vote of confidence with a grant of £3,000 towards our carpet refurbishment project. This takes us a massive step forward and, all being well, new flooring sometime in the New Year.

Stephen Sparkes

LIFE AS A PREACHER DURING COVID

Along with many preachers, I have experiences I can relate after 20 years “on plan”. My appointment on Bath Road on 9th August is now on my list. During COVID, preachers are asked to use face covering, so I donned my visor, and although it was a hot day, I soldiered on through the worship.

It didn't start too well when it took me three matches to light the candle, this now being the responsibility of the preacher. Immediately things deteriorated when I tried to blow the final match out after lighting the candle, I tried blowing through the visor, with the inevitable lack of success.

During this hot time, I needed a drink from the bottle of water I had brought. Again, trying to do this through a plastic visor on two occasions was not fruitful... you would have thought I would have learnt from the first time.

It has come to my attention... and did at the time... that the whole process was funnier than the comedy sketch I was part of during one of Barbara's concerts. On arriving home, I received what I expected... Brenda thought it was hilarious but did suggest I take a straw next time!

Well, preachers do not need face covering now as the rule changed just after that. I firmly believe that the Government heard of my issues and thought they should change the rule before worship started to become less of a time of praise and prayer and more a comedy show.

I think most people who know me would say it was pretty typical as the real world does defeat me at times. I hope I don't fall off the stage next time I preach,

Eric Hewitt

Gwen Knight has been joining the Stratford-on-Avon Wednesday afternoon service via a conference call. On one occasion, the following hymn was read by the speaker and she wanted to share it with others.

*The world we thought we knew is changing fast
And longingly we cling to what is past -
That settled life which made no great demand,
A foretaste of the hoped for Promised Land.*

*But as for you, dynamic pilgrim God
You do not linger on the path well-trod,
But ever lead your pilgrim people on
To risk an unknown future with your Son.*

*The challenge of catastrophe and change
Will lead us well beyond our former range
Exposing us to things we do not know
Demanding all the love that we can show.*

*You take the stuff of chaos, fear and dread
And make a path that we must bravely tread
To follow where your gracious footsteps lead
And share your work to meet each other's need.*

Words © Rosemary Wakelin, composed during the Coronavirus pandemic.



The Rev'd. Rosemary Wakelin

Rosemary is a Methodist minister who has never quite managed to retire. By the age of seven she says she already knew that she wanted to be a minister. At the time, she had to be told by her mother that “they don’t have ladies”. It wasn’t until after her husband Paul died in 1979 that she took up the call to ordained ministry, having already spent many years as a missionary wife and teacher.

With Paul, a doctor, Rosemary worked as a mission partner in Sierra Leone, and then in Kenya in the wake of the Mau Mau uprising.

“It was sometimes difficult because there would be ex-Mau Mau members who would still be carrying guns. They would flag me down when I would drive once a week 40 miles to Meru to pick up supplies and I’d give lifts to soldiers with three kids and a Daschund also in the car.”

Back in the UK, and making a long, slow recovery from amoebic hepatitis, Rosemary and Paul settled in Norfolk: Paul as a GP, Rosemary as a teacher at a hospital, with children living with Downs Syndrome, and then in state schools.

Just before Paul died, he said to Rosemary, “At last you’re going to be free to do what you’ve always wanted to do’, to become a minister, which she did in the same year as her elder son Mark became President of the Methodist Conference in 2012-13.

On the cusp of retirement in Norwich, she took up a new challenge, to be the Methodist chaplain at the prison for sex offenders in the city. She discovered that as, “a small, completely defenceless woman” (she is just 5’2”), “you alter the chemistry of the place when you go in” and she has made relationships that she thinks would be more difficult for a man. She says of the prisoners, “they’re not just their crime – and a lot of them are grown-up abused children”. And she has found herself enacting the fundamental belief described in her hymn: One human family God has made, and all for each to care. ■

Methodists launch Year of Prayer

The Methodist Church has launched a Year of Prayer online to help bring more people to faith. The short weekly online service takes place each Tuesday lunchtime at 12.45pm via Zoom and is also live-streamed via Facebook. It will be led by people from across the Church.

Trey Hall, Director of Evangelism and Growth for the Methodist Church, explains: “This Year of Prayer is a special time, a called-out time, for the whole Church. The world can feel like it’s falling apart – not only due to COVID, but also due to systemic injustice, racism, to climate change, to political instability. And if we as the Church are going to respond in any meaningful way, we need more than ever to pray, we need to call upon God for healing and renewal and wisdom.”

The Year of Prayer is considered an important step in the new strategy adopted by the Methodist Conference to be an inclusive, evangelistic, growing, justice-seeking Church. It wants to focus resources on helping people explore faith, in starting hundreds of new churches and in serving communities experiencing marginalization. ■

SIX LITTLE STORIES WITH LOTS OF MEANINGS

sent in by one of our readers

1. Once all villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer, all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella. **That is faith.**
2. When you throw babies in the air, they laugh because they know you will catch them. **That is trust.**
3. Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning, but still we set the alarms to wake up. **That is hope.**
4. We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future. **That is confidence.**
5. We see the world suffering, but still we get married and have children. **That is love.**
6. On an old man's shirt was written a sentence 'I am not 80 years old; I am sweet 16 with 64 years of experience.' **That is attitude.**

Have a happy day and live your life like these six stories.

Remember - Good friends are the rare jewels of life, difficult to find and impossible to replace!!



The Penny Bun

When Bernard Oxborrow gave us his book 'Maple Leaves' to read for use in our series 'The Way Things Were', we spotted the following and asked him if we could use it as some time in the future and he gladly gave his permission.

He said: "I remember a cake shop near Fair Green where we always looked at the window displays when passing by. My two older sisters got me to go in and ask, 'How much are the penny buns?' I must have been pretty thick to do it, but I can still see the expression on the lady's face of shock, disbelief, disgust, her mouth open, but she was speechless. At least I had sense enough to realise something was badly wrong and I did a quick bunk"



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