

THE MINISTER WRITES ...



Dear All,

Just think for a moment about a garden in early spring. What did we observe just a short time ago? The soil is still cool from winter, and yet tiny green shoots push through, even defying the frost sometimes! They don't wait for perfect conditions! Rather, they rise because life insists on being lived. Friends, Easter is that moment for us: life breaking through where we thought only death could reign.

When Jesus says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly," (John 10:10), he is not speaking of a distant, ethereal promise alone. He is speaking of life here and now - life that is full, just, and shared. The Easter story is not only about the miracle of Jesus' resurrection but also about the ongoing resurrection of our relationships, our communities and our world. Abundant life is not measured by wealth or status, but by the depth of love, the breadth of justice and the reach of compassion. The empty tomb is God's bold declaration that the forces of oppression, fear and exclusion do not have the final word. Resurrection is God's 'yes' to the dignity of every person, the healing of creation and the breaking down of every wall that divides us.

Today, we see resurrection when a divided community finds common ground. We see it when people of different faiths, cultures, and backgrounds work side by side for the common good. We see it when a person discovers their worth after years of being told they don't matter. We see it when a refugee family finds welcome and safety. We see it when voices long silenced are finally heard and valued. These are not just acts of kindness - they are signs of abundant life breaking into the world. Of course, we know the world is still full of Good Fridays - days of loss, oppression, injustice and grief. But the Easter story calls us to be resurrection people in a Good Friday world. It calls us to live as if love has already won, because in Jesus Christ, it has!

So this Easter, let us not only celebrate the risen Christ - let us rise with him! Let us be the hands that lift the fallen, the voices that speak for the voiceless, the hearts that welcome the stranger. Let us plant seeds of hope in every place where despair has taken root. Friends, the stone is rolled away. The garden is blooming. Life - abundant, inclusive, and unstoppable - is here. And we are invited to live it, share it, and multiply it.

With much love, *Neil*

An Easter Prayer

Loving God,

on this Easter morning, we celebrate the miracle of life, renewal, and hope.

May the story of Christ's resurrection remind us that love is stronger than fear,

that justice will rise even in the face of oppression,

and that new beginnings are always possible.

Fill our hearts with compassion for all people,

guide us in the ways of peace and kindness,

and help us to be bearers of your light in the world.

In the spirit of the risen Christ, who came to bring abundant life for all,

Amen.

PASTORAL NEWS

As Easter approaches, we welcome back our young people from university praying that they enjoy their break and return refreshed.

We praise God for the safe delivery of a new baby and the joy she brings to her aunt and great grandparents.

We continue to remember in prayer those who have had surgery and are now recovering and those with ongoing health issues. We pray for the recently bereaved.

We send Easter greetings to those who join us on Sundays via the video link.

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

Our Christian Aid Celebration will take place on Saturday 16th May from 10.30am to 2pm. We will be holding a plant sale on the front lawn. The church will be open for cakes and refreshments and there will be a barbecue outside at lunch time between 12pm and 2pm. More details to follow in the May Comment. With Spring just around the corner, when you start planting seeds or taking cuttings, please think of the Christian Aid event and plant a few extra for the plant sale.

Thank you in anticipation.

Church Life Committee

PRAYERS FOR APRIL

5th April - Easter

We rejoice today in Jesus's rising from the dead. Give thanks to him as our Lord and Saviour. He's alive, he is risen. What a friend, what a hope we have in Jesus. Let us pray for each other as we meet on this special day.

12th April: Emmaus groups resume this week after the break for Lent. We give thanks to God for this time of Bible study and fellowship. Let us continue in prayer for them and all the other groups meeting in Christ Church, sharing and witnessing together to God's love.

19th April: Thank you, Father, for caring about everything on our hearts today. We lift to you any known to us who are sick in mind, body or spirit. We think of the international situation dominated by news of death and destruction and pray for warring nations to seek peace and an end to suffering.

26th April: Continuing in Easter joy, we remember our church meeting today and the decisions that will be taken. Holy Spirit, guide us, lead us in everything we do here. We pray for all our witness to the town, that we may be both salt and light, attracting people to the good news of Jesus.

ECO-CHURCH CREATION CARE

Can the country afford the cost of transitioning to a low carbon economy?

A popular argument against measures to combat climate change – replacing our dependence on fossil fuels with renewables, for example – is that the costs are just too great and would adversely affect our economy. But a report published by the Climate Change Committee on 11th March, refutes this argument, concluding that achieving Net Zero is a more cost-effective path for the UK economy than continued reliance on fossil fuels.

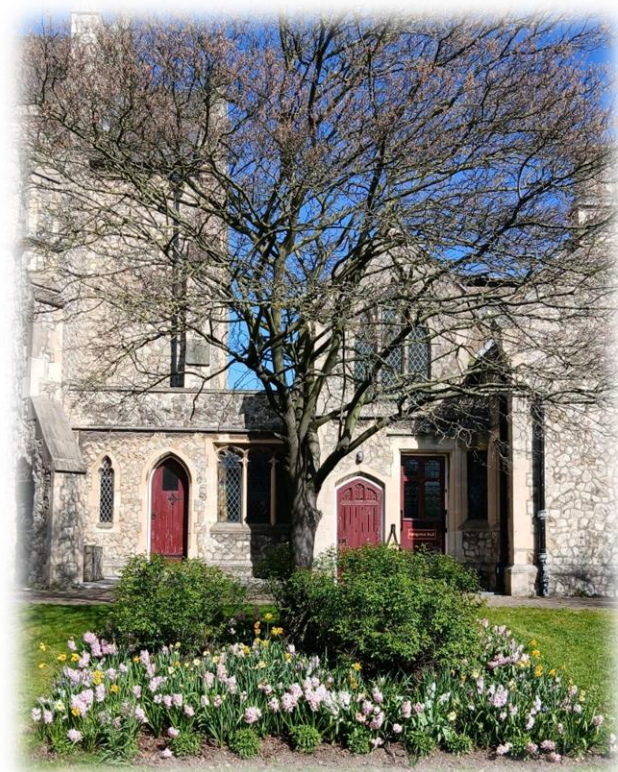
So what is the Climate Change Committee? It is an independent, statutory body, established under the Climate Change Act 2008, to provide advice to the government on reducing emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Nigel Topping, Chair of the Climate Change Committee, said “There has been a lot of public interest in the cost of transitioning to a low carbon economy. Going through an economic transition is exciting, but a sense of uncertainty about the future is completely reasonable. As such, it’s important that decision makers and commentators are using accurate information to inform debates. “

In all scenarios tested by the CCC, achieving Net Zero was found to be more advantageous for the UK economy than continued dependence on fossil fuels, bringing not only a net economic benefit to society but also greater health and well-being. Among its key findings are that, for every pound spent on progress to Net Zero, the benefits outweigh this cost by between 2.2 and 4.1 times. There is significant cost saving through avoiding the damage from severe, weather-related events; this saving alone is estimated at between £40 billion and £130 billion in 2050.

Current world events are also emphasising the dangers from being reliant on foreign fossil fuels. The CCC found that the cost of achieving Net Zero by 2050 is actually less than the total additional cost of a single fossil fuel price spike of the magnitude of that in 2022, driven by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. We do need clean, reliable, domestic energy.

So the question is not so much can we afford the transition to green energy but can we afford *not* to?

Kate Helleur





Our year of talks and entertainments is nearly at an end, as we meet from October (a Higher Education start of year!) till half term week in May.

In March we heard a West Indian perspective of living in England (from the Windrush Society); then we were inspired to visit the River Deben to see both winter migrant birds and the beginning of summer visitors. Suffolk Family Carers was the topic on 19th. This is a vital local charity which can ease the burden of carers for young and old. On 26th March we offered the opportunity for nostalgia with a talk about Radio Caroline and East Suffolk Offshore Radio. So: some talks to take to heart; some to be inspired by and some just to enjoy.

More of the same for April (variety, that is).

The Silburys – almost our house band, with David Stainer and friends, is coming on 16th April for us just to enjoy. We take to heart the talk from John Skoyles about EACH and the local children’s hospice, the Treehouse. A long while ago, Forum invited a speaker to talk about the Treehouse appeal, and I think we still have a paving stone with our name on it, as we contributed to the appeal.

Greg Woods, our publicity officer and regular attender, is giving us an insight into his former career on the railways, probably provoking reminiscences of our own past; and the Anglia Care Trust is designed to inspire us to help others in whatever ways we can.

We don’t charge a fee for any of these talks, but when appropriate we give all our retiring collection to the relevant charity, or a charity of the speaker’s choice. Over the years this has amounted to a considerable service to the community, so, thank you.

The food is sold at low cost (where else can you get a large main course for £3.50?), but this also still generates a profit, which goes back to church for lighting, heating and cooking. We have just bought a microwave, which we think will speed up our serving of food. It is obviously for use by all church organisations.

Please try us if you are not already a regular. Choose your themes or just come for the lunch and company. There will be news in next month’s Comment about two outings during the summer to which you are all invited.

Ann



When spring cleaning, don’t forget TWAM – Ron Baker will be happy to accept your donations. Please contact Ron for further information.

TRANSFORM TRADE BIG BREW



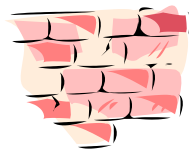
Christ Church held a Big Brew early in March, to celebrate 40 years of Transform Trade, formerly known as the Traidcraft Exchange.

Netty won this year’s baking competition and this is her plate of delicious chocolate brownies.



OVER THE GARDEN WALL

... from our neighbours at St Pancras



Dear Friends,

As I write we hear of destruction across the Middle East, and of a frightening meningitis outbreak in Kent. You will be reading this as Easter approaches, so I am trying not to be all doom and gloom!

Around thirty or more years ago, I spent Christmas out of the country for the first and only time. I was in Austria and I think it was on Boxing Day I got a phone call from my sister saying my beloved nephew Richard was in hospital with meningitis, the same strain as has affected the young people in Kent. The hotel managed to find me a flight next morning to a London airport, and Dr Heley picked me up. We decided not to phone but drive straight to Redditch hospital. We heard that a doctor had refused to come out to Richard on a Sunday but a nurse friend had told my sister to drive him straight to the hospital. By the time they arrived he was unconscious. When we got there he was on a life support machine. It was a terrible time. However, thanks, I am sure, to the skill of the hospital and very many prayers, he recovered. On NewYear's Eve I took his younger brother Andrew to see him. The nurses allowed him to bring a burger from the nearby McDonalds to Richard! This has been very much on my mind as we've heard of increasing numbers being hospitalised. Amidst darkness, light sometimes shines.

On a very different note, around 13 years ago, a lady called Barbara who lived just off the Woodbridge Road gave me £20 and said, 'That's for your charity'. When I got to Uganda, the Head of the school where our chemistry training was based told me that a Sister had given him a primary leaving certificate for a poor boy. I looked at it and found his results were better than any boy in the year, so I used Barbara's money for him to start school. Andrew's mum lives in one room with no water or electricity. She could never afford school fees so I paid the fairly small sum for five years. He wanted to be a doctor but had malaria during his A levels so his results were not good enough for a scholarship. A friend found the only Institute in East Africa that trains ophthalmic clinical officers. They offered him a place and three of us shared the cost of fees. One died last year and both Andrew and I watched the funeral online. Andrew was always in the top three in exams and was always the best practically, because he spent every holiday getting experience. Despite this, amidst much corruption, he failed to get a job and spent three years working full time but only paid for part of it. Last Monday, he started work in a government clinic. His future is secure. I phoned the other lady who had helped with his fees. We are both so happy. Wouldn't Barbara, now in Kingdom come, be thrilled with what her gift had achieved? When we give to a charitable cause, who knows what good can be achieved?

Happy Easter to you all.

Your Catholic friend,

Jean

SIMON OF CYRENE

Yes, I was present at the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. The soldiers forced me to carry the cross when Jesus fell to the ground on the way up the hill. My name's Simon— Simon of Cyrene – and I was coming into Jerusalem from the country that morning together with other Jews from my region of north Africa. Word had got out about the arrest and trial of the great rabbi and we had received a terrible report that, giving way to the demands of the crowd, Pilate had handed him over to be crucified and had released a murderer in his place. It was the Feast of Passover but could this really be true? Yes, I was there and watched from a distance as the soldiers drove the nails into his hands and feet. It was unbearably brutal. They had already whipped him to get up and stumble the final few yards to the hill of Golgotha where he had collapsed again under the weight of their blows and the venom of their curses. His crown of thorns now lay torn and bloody on the ground as the soldiers hauled him on to the Cross and set about their murderous torture. Then they turned their attention to the other two criminals who were to die with him. The Romans had introduced crucifixion as their chosen method of execution across the Empire. Yet what had Jesus done to deserve such a barbaric death? Now I have admitted I was forced to carry his cross but I was also profoundly sorry for him. The Synoptic Gospel writers don't give me credit for showing any sympathy but, please believe me, I was horrified at what I witnessed and I readily levered that heavy beam onto my shoulder when the soldiers pushed me towards it.

We Cyrenian Jews had a synagogue in Jerusalem and I wasn't the only one to have heard amazing reports of this Jesus of Nazareth and to have wondered if he was the one we were expecting. I couldn't bear to stay and watch Jesus die but I heard afterwards that it happened around the ninth hour with darkness covering the whole land. I went away and hid for several weeks for fear of the Jews who may have hated me for helping Jesus even though I was acting under duress. Many of them had come and sneered at him as he hung upon the cross. But then at the Feast of Pentecost, I plucked up courage to mingle again with my fellow Cyrenians and fellow Jews from all over the Mediterranean world. Suddenly there came a rushing wind and what seemed like tongues of fire and we were able to hear the disciples of Jesus (all of them Galileans) declare the wonders of God in our own languages.

We Jews from Cyrene could hear them speaking in our dialect but at the same time, by some miracle, Parthians, Medes and all the others could hear the same words in their languages too. It was Simon Peter then who stood up and addressed us all, telling us about how God had raised up Jesus of Nazareth from the dead and what we should do in response. That man whose cross I had carried was proclaimed as Lord and Christ! Peter's message was clear – repent and be baptised in Jesus's name for the forgiveness of sins. I had felt the pain of the cross drop from my body on Calvary. Now I felt a far greater weight of guilt lifted from my soul. Yes, I was there.

Tony

SERVICES FOR APRIL

All Services will be led by our Minister, Revd Neil Coulson unless otherwise stated.

Sunday 5th April Easter Sunday

8.45am Easter Breakfast with information service of Holy Communion

10.45am Easter Day All-age Family Worship

Sunday 12th April

10.45am Family Worship led by William Glasse

William is a URC Lay Preacher and Methodist Local Preacher

Sunday 19th April

10.45am Family Worship

Sunday 26th April

10.45am Family Worship followed by the Church Meeting

Please bring a packed lunch to eat before the meeting, which will start no later than 12.30pm.

Sunday 3rd May

10.45am Family Worship with Holy Communion
