
THE MINISTER WRITES ...



Dear All,

I hope you are well. I've been reflecting again recently on my understanding of God as a progressive Christian and I've found myself once more returning to the work of one of my favourite theologians, John Shelby Spong. If I may, I'd like to share once again one of his key thoughts about our experience of and response to God in his lecture titled '*Jesus for the non-religious*'. I respect that it will not be everything we might wish to reflect on and say about how we understand God but I think there's much here that's worth sharing and considering

and I hope it will be a blessing to you:

If God is the source of life, as I believe God is, then... God is present in you, and me, and in the whole created order. And if God is the source of life, then the only way you worship God is by living. Living fully. Sharing life, giving life away, not being afraid, wandering out of the certain into the uncertain, out of the known into the unknown.

If God is the source of love, as I believe God is, then the only way you can worship God is by loving. Not by being right, but by loving. By loving wastefully. You love because love is what you have to do, not because somebody deserves the love. You love wastefully.

If God is the ground of being, as I believe God is, then the only way you and I can worship God is by having the courage to be all that we can be, in the infinite variety of our humanity. No matter what the human difference is, you have something to offer in your own being. Nobody else can offer what you have to offer, and the only way you can worship God is by daring to be all that you can be, and not be bound by the fears of yesterday.

In these uncertain times, I pray that we will all experience the reality of God, find comfort and help in his loving embrace and seek as much as we can 'to live fully', 'love wastefully' and 'daringly be' all we can be and by the grace of God, offer all we can to others.

With much love,

Neil

THANK YOU

Tacket Street Boys' Brigade Old Boys' Association Annual Christmas Fayre raised £500 to be split between Christ Church and TWAM. We were able to host the Trefoil Guild Chocolate Stall and the Fair Trade staff. Thank you to all who supported us.

A thank you letter from TWAM

'Thank you for your generous donation of £250 to our work raised at your Annual Christmas Fayre. We also appreciate your support in collecting tools for our mission. Your support is empowering people living in extreme poverty, giving them a brighter future.'

The real effect of a single sewing machine can be clearly felt, not just on Elizabeth's .life, but on her daughter's , and on the lives of all women who share experience, ideas, and her skills with her. As Elizabeth sews her next skirt or handbag, she's ensuring a better future for her daughter, and taking part in her community.

It is you donation that has enabled TWAM to reach these peoples' lives, and your generosity that has empowered 'Elizabeth'. Thank you for being part of this transformation.

Giving communities in need tools to build a future for themselves. It was nice to read 'Over the Wall, our church neighbours column, in last Comment, from someone who herself acknowledged gifts of sewing machines and other items from TWAM, first hand, in her work in Africa.

Ron

TOGETHER FOR IPSWICH

The 'Difference' Course advertised for January has been postponed to March, starting 9th March for 5 weeks at the Salvation Army Hall in Woodbridge Road.

'Crown Him with Many Crowns' is a celebration of worship held at Burlington Baptist Church on 25th January at 6.30pm for food and chat and to learn about the varied Christian organisations in Ipswich; and at 7.30pm to 9.30pm for celebration, envisioning and responding.

See the posters on the boards in the Christ Church Hall, or ask Ann Fox for more details

PRAYER CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY

2nd February: As we hold our service for World Leprosy Day, we think of how Jesus welcomed everyone and cared for the sick. We thank God for all those who work with leprosy sufferers, bringing healing and support. We give thanks for advances in science that make better treatment possible. We pray for those ostracised and marginalised by their disease, that they may find acceptance and the healthcare they need.

9th February: This week we mark the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. We thank God for the perseverance of women scientists who have broken down barriers and forged a path for others to follow, and for their discoveries and contributions to our world. We pray for girls around the world who even today are denied an education and access to professions.

16th February: As we hold our Church Meeting today we pray for your guidance, Lord. Help us to be still and listen out for what you want us to do to sustain our fellowship and share your love with others

23rd February: By now, the first shoots of spring may be starting to show. Let our hearts be filled with joy for the wonderful world which God has created and hope for brighter days ahead.

CHURCH LIFE COMMITTEE

Our first event for 2025 is the Leprosy Mission Lunch on Sunday 2nd February and tickets are now available from Church Life Committee members at £6 adults and £3 children.

This will follow our cafe-style all-age communion service, at which Matthew Henderson from The Leprosy Mission will speak. Coffee on this occasion will be served before the service from 10.15am.

On Saturday 8th March 10am to 12.30pm, we will be holding a Fair Trade Big Brew in Christ Church Hall. Come and enjoy a cup of Fair Trade tea or coffee and a biscuit. We will be holding our popular baking competition, and are delighted that Jane Sago from the WI has agreed to judge for us again. This year it is a tray-bake. Sadly, since Traidcraft closed, several fair trade products are no longer available, but sugar, nuts, apricots, dates, bananas, chocolate, to name a few, still are so let your imagination loose! Jane asks that we present 6 slices from our bakes on a plate. There will be a cake stall. If you are able to bake a cake using Fair Trade ingredients where possible it would be much appreciated. Money raised will be sent to Transform Trade, formerly the Traidcraft Exchange, who provide financial help and advice to enable those in the developing world achieve a better standard of living, health care and education. There will also be a Fair Trade stall from the Fair Trade Shop in Upper Brook Street.

Christ Church has been a committed Fair Trade church for many years. While the climate crisis affects us all, our friends in the developing world have been particularly hard hit. Many are using their Fair Trade premium to help counteract the many problems this causes, such as planting trees to offer much needed shade and to prevent soil erosion, irrigation systems and water storage for when rains do come.

We look forward to seeing you.



January's talks have been as varied as ever. We started by hearing about Ipswich as a Heritage Harbour. This accolade for Ipswich, one of 14 ports, is not very well known yet, but lots of activities and developments are planned – all those who heard Cathy Shelbourne, the speaker, will want to look out for events this year to show off our maritime history.

An emergency alteration had to be made when Nick Hulme, the CEO of the hospital, had to go to a colleague's funeral. He is rescheduled to come on 20th February, swapping dates with Sandy Martin, former MP for Ipswich.

Sandy spoke cogently about the need for Britain to be part of Europe and why the referendum in 2016 set us on the opposite course. Grateful thanks to Sandy for being so flexible and for coming a month earlier than billed.

Rabi, a kind of helpline for farmers and farming communities, came next. Farmers have a job that is unique and deserve pastoral and emotional care as well as financial help.

Melanie Willis, the Office Manager of Ipswich Central is coming at the end of January to explain what Ipswich Central does and how it can enhance the town centre for all.

You can then imagine your way into better weather and outdoor pursuits in three of the four bookings in February.

Go on a virtual walk down the Suffolk Coast courtesy of Ian van der Ende, who will challenge us to recognise parts of the walk.

See how peregrine falcons are encouraged to thrive in our region, thanks to Peter Merchant. He writes: *'I will be talking about my years of experience as a local volunteer ornithologist with 50 years of recovering and rehabilitating birds of prey, trying to integrate a schedule 1 protected bird, the peregrine, into the difficulties of the industrial world, since they first arrived under the Orwell bridge in 2008. I now have 10 breeding pairs: several are in nest boxes I have installed in precarious places!'*

Go sailing with young people, from diverse backgrounds, arranged by the Cirdan Sailing Trust. Our speaker on 27th February will be Lyndsey Dennis, its office and business manager.

No need to book, or to belong, or to pay. Food is great and at incredibly low cost; the chat, company, warmth and entertainment are all free.

Ann

ECO CHURCH – CREATION CARE

Climate news continues to come thick and fast with the devastating fires in California the latest disaster to hit the headlines. While the Santa Ana winds and wild fires are a natural part of the ecology of California, the strength of the hurricane force winds and the time of year – the usual season for wild fires is late summer and autumn – is unprecedented and can be attributed to human induced climate change. Fires of this type and magnitude have never been experienced before during California’s winter.

While a few powerful people continue to describe climate change as a “scam”, it is significant that the churches are stepping up to argue for the changes that we all need to make if we are to protect creation and the planet for future generations. Out of control climate change would threaten our very existence. Specifically, most denominations have set ambitious targets for reducing their own carbon emissions. The URC, for instance, has resolved to “act urgently to reduce carbon emissions across the whole of church life in order to reach net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2030.” The Church of England and the Methodist Church have also set targets of net zero emissions by 2030, and the Baptist Church by 2035.

A Rocha, the organisation which runs the Eco-Church programme, has recently updated its survey, a tool which helps us to see the steps that we should consider taking. It covers everything from reducing our energy use, phasing out the use of fossil fuels, how we use our grounds, the food we eat and the products we buy to the place of creation care in our worship and teaching, how we engage with the wider community or environmental campaigns, the way we travel and live our lives individually. It is clear that caring for creation – nature, the environment and the climate – whether in church life or as individuals, is not for a few enthusiasts, but something we all need to commit to. 2030 does not feel very far away and, if we at Christ Church are to reach net zero by then, we have work to do!

Kate Helleur

Stop Press On 17th January the Met Office published figures showing that global CO2 emissions in 2024 did not come down but were the highest on record.

OVER THE GARDEN WALL

... from our neighbours at St Pancras



Dear Friends,

Christmas already seems a long way away but it's not too late to wish you all a Happy New Year! We had several events at St Pancras that were a little different, such as a Christmas day afternoon service for those not otherwise engaged and also a good number, mainly young, came on the eve of the Epiphany. There were questions about the story of the Wise Men and then Fr Joseph explained, and demonstrated, marking at the top of a front door:

20+C+M+B+25 signifies that just as Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar followed the star, our aim in 2025 is to follow the light of our Faith. Of course, we don't know that there were only 3, and the names are traditional and are not in Scripture! You may have seen the markings in Austria or in Bavaria, and they seem to be becoming better known here. I do it! After marking one door, three young people were crowned as kings then we all processed around the church, singing carols, to the crib where the kings offered their gifts. It was lovely and children were very excited!

You may perhaps have heard that this is a Jubilee Year. They happen every 25 years and the idea comes from the Old Testament. It started before the Christmas Mass from the Vatican and I was able to watch it. A special entrance door is opened during the Jubilee and then sealed up. I knew this but not that a key is put in to a special place near the door, to be used to open it 25 years later! This Jubilee Year is to be a journey of hope. Pope Francis has asked us to be signs of hope for others, by caring for our common home, and supporting our brothers and sisters who are experiencing war, hunger or poverty. I know your church demonstrates this care; all of us can join to bring the light of hope and the message of God's love to the world. The Scripture passage to accompany our reflection is Luke 4:16-21, when Jesus unrolled the scroll of Isaiah with the message that He was sent to proclaim liberty, recover sight to the blind, liberate the oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. How much this message is needed in our war torn world today. There are sixteen panels on the door in Rome with scenes from Scripture and, for those who cannot travel, doors around the world. Our diocese has one in Walsingham; I am sure a coach from Ipswich will visit it.

As I write, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will soon be upon us, with the dedication of St Mary le Tower church as a Minster. Celebrations include an ecumenical service of Vespers (from which Evensong/Evening prayer is derived). It is likely that it was last celebrated in that church about 500 years ago. The preacher will be Fr Luke, our Catholic Dean and priest at St Mark's in Chantry. As well as feeling pride in our town there is so much for us all to pray for.

Your Catholic friend,

Jean

DIARY DATES

Thursday 6th February Deacons' meeting (7.30pm)
Friday 7th February Church Life meeting (7.30pm)
Tuesday 25th February Prayer lunch (midday)

Emmaus Groups

Mondays at 10.30am in the Lounge
2nd & 4th Wednesdays at 7.30pm
1st & 3rd Thursdays at 10.30am in the Lounge

SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY 2025

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

Sunday 2nd February

10.45 am Leprosy Sunday All-age Worship with Holy Communion led by Matthew Henderson from the Leprosy Mission
This service will be followed by a Church Family Lunch to raise money for The Leprosy Mission

Sunday 9th February

10.45 am Family Worship

Sunday 16th February

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 23rd February

10.45 am Family Worship led by The Very Reverend Keith Jones.
Keith is the Dean Emeritus of York Minster.

Sunday 2nd March

10.45am Family Worship with Holy Communion