

CHRISTIAN FOCUS



Summer 2020

Magazine of the Church in Abingdon –
A partnership of fourteen churches
www.church-in-abingdon.org.uk

ABINGDON CHURCHES IN LOCKDOWN: see page 25



ALSO:

World Day of Prayer

A Rocha Update

Supporting the Young

... and more

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DEADLINE FOR COPY FOR THE AUTUMN ISSUE IS 1ST AUGUST 2020

Please send copy to the Editor, preferably by email (benjeapes@gmail.com) in MS Word format.

A typical one-page article with no pictures is about 350 words, but we are happy to take longer contributions. We reserve the right to edit to fit space available.

Pictures are greatly appreciated. They should be sent as separate graphic files. Please contact the Editor or your church representative for alternative methods of delivery.

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POST-EASTER REFLECTION

Charles Masheder (St Helen's)



Dear Friends,

When I wrote for the Christmas edition, I was looking forward to meeting you, having arrived in Abingdon briefly beforehand. It was my joy to meet various people leading up to the middle of March, but then life changed! Will I be able to put names and faces together when finally we are able to meet again? Hopefully by the time you read this, a little of the lockdown will have been lifted.

Eastertide celebrates the re-meeting of Jesus with some of his closest friends after his Resurrection, although some failed to see who he was. In John's Gospel, on Easter morning, Mary Magdalen thought he was the gardener, and in the afternoon, in Luke's Gospel, Cleopas and his companion did not recognise him until he broke the bread. Later, when some of the disciples had gone fishing, Jesus was standing on the beach and it was John, the Beloved Disciple – but apparently not immediately – who recognised him. On the other hand there are other times when his disciples had no difficulty in recognition.

Sometimes we may have a difficulty in recognising God at work in various situations or in various people. We are in a highly unusual situation as a result of the spread of the horrific coronavirus. However, we can see how God is at work in people and has enabled them to bring good out of challenging situations. Paul in his Letter to the Romans writes, 'For those who love God all things work together for good', and in the same letter, 'overcome evil with good.' One of the Christian principles, I suggest, is to enable us to bring good out of evil. John in his Epistle encourages us to believe that wherever there is love, there is God. So let us thank God for all the acts of loving kindness that have happened during the lockdown.

See pages 25-32 for how some churches have been meeting the challenge of lockdown. Other lockdown thoughts and poems are scattered throughout this issue. – Ed.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2020

Margaret Langsford (Trinity)



The World Day of Prayer 2020 was celebrated in Trinity Church on 6th March. As I write this nearly four weeks later, it seems a century ago as the world has changed since then.

The Bible reading was John, chapter 5, vs 2 to 8a about the paralyzed man by the pool of Bethesda.

The title of the service was 'Rise. Take your mat and walk'. Now there are thousands of people around the world who would be overjoyed to do just that as they struggle with the Covid-19.

The service was prepared by the women of Zimbabwe. That country, whose name means 'House of Stones', has been struggling with numerous difficulties and unrest for many years as it tries to free itself from the legacy of colonial rule and strives to form a National Government.

The hymns we sang were very appropriate, i.e. 'For the healing of the nations'; 'In Christ there is no East or West'; and finally, 'Make me a channel of your peace'.

As usual we had a choir led by Sally Mears, who was beautifully attired in a Zimbabwean robe.

After the very moving service, led by a group of people from various churches, we had coffee and cakes and the wonderful opportunity to meet up and chat with friends in other churches, and make new friends too.

So, a big 'thank you' to the ladies of Zimbabwe.

A ROCHA UPDATE

Richard Riggs (Christ Church on Long Furlong)



You may remember the terrible accident last October in South Africa, in which a taxi went off a bridge into a river and three British visitors were killed. They were from A Rocha International, a Christian environmental movement which started 35 years ago and now supports A Rocha groups and teams in about 20 countries. Peter and Miranda Harris, the founders, and Chris Naylor the Chief Executive with his wife Susanna, had come to assess a new A Rocha South Africa project. Only Peter survived, with major injuries. He is back at home, in lockdown and on the long path to recovery, and a daughter and her family are with him.

Christ Church has supported the Harrises for many years. They were pioneers, at a time when most churches saw environment as a distraction, or even as some pagan heresy. But Peter and Miranda believed that this earth, a tiny part of God's wonderful creation, matters to him and that we are required to look after it. Start reading the Bible more closely and the natural world is all over it. The relationship is not a two-way one between God and people: it is three-way, between God, people, and all of creation. Even its best known verse, John 3:16, says in the original Greek, 'God so loved the *cosmos*...'

They started a bird observatory on the Alvor estuary in Portugal, studying bird migration. (A Rocha is Portuguese for 'The Rock'.) They welcomed all who came, friendships developed and a community grew, in which the Christian faith was a natural part of their work and relationships. Conservation was backed by sound research and teaching, and campaigning where necessary, with local churches and other organisations as far as possible. Visitors came from other countries, liked what they saw and wanted to repeat it in their countries. And so it grew, in a very cross-cultural way. The national organisations do a wide variety of work, depending on local needs.

It has been pleasing to see progress in poor countries, where people live close to the land and know how dependent they are on their environment. Often the land is degraded, due to climate change or farming methods that are no longer sustainable. Some rural communities need training in sustainable agriculture, and urban communities in how to produce food in very little space. In India they

found a simple way to deter elephants from crop fields. In Ghana there is a major campaign to try to protect the Atewa Forest from bauxite mining. An early project in Lebanon saved the Ammiq wetland from drainage. The first project in Britain was in Southall, transforming the Minet dump into the Minet Country Park. There are training workshops in Brazil, forest restoration in the Philippines, eco-tourism in Kenya. Some partnerships are with Christian missions who have found that caring for their environment is an essential part of their ministry. Plenty more can be found on the web site, arocha.org.

We are material beings, designed to be totally dependent on the living world. In the Genesis creation story, God pronounces his creation good and appoints the man to oversee it, like a steward. Jesus told parables about unfaithful stewards, who instead of looking after their master's property plundered it and helped themselves. There is an obvious parallel with how we treat God's world. We are creative beings, in the image of God, but do we use our creativity for good or harm? And what of Covid-19? This is written during the lockdown, and much of A Rocha's fieldwork and community work has had to stop, along with income from visitors and education.

This is not the first virus to mutate from animals to humans, and there will be more. This time it probably came from a bat or a pangolin – highlighting the illegal trade in wild animals. Is it a punishment from God? No, when God punishes you, you know it; this is just a warning. We cannot go on as we have been going, taking the natural world for granted and consuming so recklessly. The poor suffer from the excesses of the rich. The welfare of people and planet go together, and either we heed the warning or worse will follow.

Between Friday and Sunday
is Saturday,
Between death and resurrection,
is mourning,
Between uncertainty and
certainty, is faith
Between pain and celebration,
is hope,
Between loneliness and
community is love.

– Graeme McMeekin, Acting Scotland Director, Tearfund

SUPPORTING THE YOUNG: UPDATE ON THE ABINGDON BRIDGE

Laurence King



When the Prime Minister announced that we should all remain at home except for key workers, we realised that for the young people The Abingdon Bridge supports, our staff *are* their key workers! Furthermore, we also knew that to remain at home was going to present significant challenges for some young people, particularly where the domestic circumstances are already difficult.

However, we also realised that we had to protect our staff from the risk of infection. Therefore, to enable our counselling and healthy lifestyles work to continue, we have completely reconfigured our support service. All our young people were contacted to ask them if they would like to continue to have a link with us remotely via text, phone, email or social media. We have also invested in smartphones for all the staff so that they can work from home and continue with regular support for their clients. After just one week, it is working! We are getting some great feedback from clients and staff!

Our other significant challenge is that earlier this year, we had a massive increase in the number of young people needing our support. This led to a waiting list of 48 – it has never been as long as this. We have been able to respond to this by carrying out initial assessments online and we are beginning to reduce the waiting list. We are enormously grateful to our centre manager, Gary Hibbins, and all the staff for responding in such a positive way to what is a challenging situation for us all. The trustees are also working hard to support these changes and all planned meetings continue using conference calls very effectively.

Unlike some other charities, we have also been able to reassure the staff that we still need them. This is only possible because of the generous support of our friends.

Whilst this has put additional pressures on our budget, we continue to receive donations and grants. This is the only way we can continue to provide the quality of support we are able to offer young people, many of whom now find that they need us more than ever. If this is a time of year when you are able to make another donation to TAB, you now know that it will be put to immediate use.

*If you do feel able to donate to TAB, donations can be made via: <https://www.justgiving.com/abingdonbridge>. Previously published in *The Candle and the Window*.*

CHERRY TREE THOUGHTS

Jill Millgate

In this 'new normal' life we're now living through, I took this photo of a very familiar tree on 10 April – it stood alone and quiet in an almost empty carpark. I thought it would be good for everyone to see it again; that some things don't change – so I took up my pen for the first time in years – searched those little grey cells (of which there are very few) and came up with the following – hopefully you'll enjoy seeing and reading it!



The Cherry Tree stands, now all alone;
The sky blue above, and
Apart from the birds that still sing
Only the dead for company,
In these strange and challenging times -
When everyone is denied its beauty,
Its blossom, stunning, bright and vivid.
The branches sway in the breeze
There for all to enjoy,
If only there were eyes to see –
Where once the doors of the church
Were wide open, and chatter
And laughter filled the air and
Perhaps, just perhaps, the cherry tree felt ignored
When life was more normal –
But it delighted when people gathered underneath
To capture on camera the beauty in happier times.
The cherry tree – symbolic of Spring.
A time of renewal – a time for hope –
A time to grow.
Life goes on – God is in charge –
All will be well.

EYES ON 35 OCK STREET

This piece obviously was written before the current lockdown began. We look forward to seeing 35 Ock Street back in action when the restrictions are lifted. – Ed.



Through the eyes of the Administrator

Stephen Bodey: The administrator is privileged to have an overview of what happens at 35 Ock Street. In 1996, the house formerly lived in by the minister was set up to be a meeting place for the church and community. It is known simply as 35 Ock Street. The work is facilitated by Abingdon Baptist Church but it has always depended on the support of the Church in Abingdon. The volunteer staff come from nearly all the churches in Abingdon. We also have a few faithful volunteers who have no church connection, but we all follow the example of Jesus in serving our community and valuing everyone.

We provide refreshments on six days a week and light lunches on weekdays. Prices are very reasonable, so some people are able to come in every day. People come to find good home-cooked food, to meet friends, or to find one of us to talk to in a safe, welcoming environment. On most days one of the volunteers is a 'listener' who can sit alongside someone who is lonely, or looking for support. The café area has a toy box for small children and there is usually a display of art on the walls for all to enjoy. In the reception area you will find Traidcraft fair trade foods on sale, and books and cards for sale from St Andrew's Christian Bookshop in Oxford.

An aim of 35 Ock Street is for the premises to be used in helping groups who build up the community. For this, we try to keep the rooms well-presented and affordable. Apart from the church, there are at least twenty groups who have hired rooms in 35 Ock Street during the last year, some every week and others less regularly. The administrators deal with the booking enquiries, the booking diary and invoicing. Examples of work for the community that has been enabled at 35 Ock Street are: a Turning Point drop-in (alcohol and drug support); The Buck Project (supporting people to improve personal skills needed for employment); Abingdon Child Contact Centre; support sessions for carers; committee meetings for Christian Aid, The Arts Society and Town Twinning; social sessions for Archway and My Life My Choice; and an office for Abingdon Volunteer Drivers.

35 Ock Street is an important and much appreciated work that has been run by volunteers right from the beginning. The Administrator and Assistant Administrator

(Jan Hughes) organise the induction of new volunteers, and help all volunteers to maintain our high standards by providing training opportunities. The administrators also organise a rota for the sixty or so volunteers, which varies week by week depending on the time that the volunteers can offer. We are grateful for the support and commitment of them all.

Through the eyes of a Duty Manager

Geoff Pratt: I am one of the Duty Managers at 35 Ock Street, often on duty on a Friday. It's a varied role, including making sure the premises are ready for use, undertaking daily checks and necessary paperwork, welcoming volunteers, visitors and customers, dealing with money and anything else that occurs during the day.

My first job is usually to let a group into the church hall before opening 35 Ock Street (not forgetting to bring the bins in first). I'll check the diary, and any phone or email messages. There may be a course taking place in the Tomkins/Pendarves room upstairs, so that will need getting ready. Participants often arrive early, so I welcome them and show them where to go. Then there are several tasks in the servery area to do, which includes recording the fridge and freezer temperatures, switching on the dishwasher and some paperwork to complete. Soon it's time to welcome the other volunteers. Often I'm the only person from Abingdon Baptist Church on duty and it's good to get to know volunteers from a variety of backgrounds. On Friday mornings we welcome people with dementia and their carers who meet together for coffee and a chat in a relaxed and safe atmosphere. They are a lively and friendly group, and it's good that we can welcome them (35 Ock Street is considered as one of Abingdon's dementia-friendly venues). At 10.30 it's time to open the doors to the first customers of the day. Some come in every day and have been doing so for many years (we miss them if they are no longer with us); some come for the first time; others meet up with family or friends; and occasionally groups visit for coffee too.

During the day there may be phone calls or emails about room bookings or enquiries about the church to deal with. Sometimes there may be an unexpected event to deal with (no hot water, the till is stuck, or the dishwasher's playing up), but luckily these events are quite rare! Some of our customers will stop for a chat whether they've come for refreshments or just popped in to buy books, greeting cards or Traidcraft goods. There's never a dull moment – each day is different.

All too quickly, 2.00 p.m. is upon us – time to check the rooms, thank the volunteers, add up the takings and finish the paperwork. We're all keen to know how much

money has been taken, but we know that's not the most important thing – what's really important is that people have found a welcome, a real acceptance, and have been served in the name of Jesus Christ.

And as the café closes, members of Archway may be arriving for a twice-monthly social event for people experiencing isolation and loneliness. So as I leave it's good to know that another group of people will be finding a warm welcome and friendship in 35 Ock Street.

Through the eyes of a Listener

Hazel Partridge: The role of listener at 35 Ock Street is to welcome visitors and provide help and support if needed: to turn our everyday meeting places into crossing places. I oversee the pastoral listeners at Ock Street, who number thirteen, covering the weekdays from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. At present we have four listeners from Abingdon Baptist Church and the rest are drawn from the other churches in the town.

All listeners are carefully selected and undergo training, mostly from the Acorn Christian Healing Trust. References are taken up and safeguarding training is essential. The main role of the listeners is to WELCOME visitors and be ready to LISTEN and take a genuine interest in all customers, whether they are regular attendees or new to the café. Often visitors who haven't been to 35 Ock St before want to ask questions about the centre or the church or matters of faith. The listener must be sensitive answering their questions and not 'preach' to them.

Bible texts and prayer cards are available on each table. If someone is in distress and wants to share their worries then the listener can pray with them (in a quiet corner) and the person be assured that they will be prayed for regularly if a card is filled in.

Other people come to the café with friends for coffee or lunch, and obviously a greeting and smile is all that is necessary.

Some customers who attend regularly have a mental health problem or are very lonely. They can present with very challenging behaviour and occasionally we have to enlist the support of the police or PSOs. However the listeners are supported by the rest of the team and specialised training is ongoing as we meet several times a year to talk about specific issues that are relevant.

We pray that God will give us the grace and strength with whatever challenges we may face.

Through the eyes of the Catering Co-ordinator

Rachel Pollock: As Catering Co-ordinator, I have the responsibility to ensure 35 Ock Street does not resemble Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard! Early on a Monday morning one of our four early rising volunteers drives to Budgens (who kindly put together the main order) to collect these supplies for the week.

Each team (Monday to Friday) choose which homemade soup and quiches they wish to serve. We keep a daily record to ensure variety and also comply with allergen requirements. Bacon rolls, a Saturday special, are always popular. We have some excellent cake makers so there is always a choice – sponges and fruit cake being particularly popular! However, you can never tell what will appeal to people. Some days the quiches are all gone by 12.15 p.m., another day everyone is after toasted sandwiches and a panic call for another loaf of bread goes out. After service each day a member of the following day's team is contacted to let them know what extra fresh food is needed. Nothing is wasted. Any remaining jacket potatoes become twice baked next day after being mixed with cheese and onion and popped back in the oven for a while.

Our wonderful volunteers who work in the café come from a wide range of churches in Abingdon and the local villages. Although it is challenging to work with such a wide range of people, we have been successful in keeping our five-star local environmental health rating once again this year. Maintaining the same standards with so many different people can be quite a challenge and we have a training session at least once a year where we can discuss any concerns and ensure cakes are the correct weight and salads the correct size. Every couple of months Rodney and I take a trip to Booker to stock up with all the bulk items which we use like canned drinks, fruit juices, butter and napkins. We also keep an eye on the equipment we use and stock up on worn and broken items. Each week I prepare a list of food required for the following week which is then taken to Budgens.

Many special groups who take advantage of our café facilities include a craft group on Tuesday morning and a dementia group in the Turner room on a Friday. Wednesday lunch time can be very lively and quite a rush as food needs to be prepared by 11.30 a.m. for the parents and children who have been to Tots. If you like a quiet space, avoid the Turner room! I really enjoy working with so many different people and meeting the customers.

The Bible tells us about God.



Where is God?.....

....was the question posed to young people at All Saints Methodist Church.

This was their response, as a PowerPoint slideshow for meditation during worship.

He cares for us like a shepherd cares for sheep.



...and to fight for what is right.



We feel Him close when we pray.



We can ask God to help us in bad times ...



And when people care for us.



...when we're ill.



God helps us to help others...



GOD KNOWS

Minnie Louise Haskins (1875-1957)

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”

And he replied:

“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

So heart be still:

What need our little life

Our human life to know,

If God hath comprehension?

In all the dizzy strife

Of things both high and low,

God hideth His intention.

God knows. His will

Is best. The stretch of years

Which wind ahead, so dim

To our imperfect vision,

Are clear to God. Our fears

Are premature; In Him,

All time hath full provision.

Then rest: until

God moves to lift the veil

From our impatient eyes,

When, as the sweeter features

Of Life's stern face we hail,

Fair beyond all surmise

God's thought around His creatures

Our mind shall fill.



PATIENCE: TRINITYLEARNING DIY ASSEMBLY PROJECT AT ST NICOLAS SCHOOL

Nicola Williams (Trinity)



Back before the lockdown began, in March, which now feels a very long time ago, Taz and I went to St Nicolas School to help support a team of six 8-9-year-old (Year 4) children deliver an assembly to the whole school. The children had been trained through a series of TrinityLearning workshops.

The DiY Assembly workshops began with presentations from us on two Bible stories, from which the children chose the Parable of the Mustard Seed, to fit with the assembly theme of patience. Working over six sessions the children first learned the story so they could tell it independently:

‘Then Jesus asked: “How can we describe the kingdom of God? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed. The smallest seed in the world. One day someone plants it. After a while it grew and grew until it becomes the largest plant in the garden and all the birds of the air came to shelter in it.” – *Luke 13:18-19; also Mark 4:30-32 & Matthew 13:31-32*

They thought about which part of the story referred to patience and chose the phrase ‘after a while’. Thinking about this, and growing seeds, led to watching film clips of seeds growing (much faster than in real life!) from which the children developed a dance of plants slowly emerging from their seeds. The following week saw the team investigating examples of patience in their own lives by becoming roving reporters, interviewing each other for their patience examples. We talked about active patience, for example when you have to work hard to learn something difficult, and passive patience when you just have to wait for something to happen. Interestingly, most of the children’s examples seemed to apply a definition of patience as waiting for something whilst not being annoying to those around you! A valuable insight at the moment!

Finally the group both applied and illustrated patience by creating short stop-frame movies of a drawing of a seed growing into a tree. Working in two teams, each team had to draw and photograph around 45 images to create around 20 seconds of film.

The final assembly was a credit to the team's hard work throughout the project and hopefully left everyone with some useful thoughts and reflections on patience.

I include an excerpt of the group's closing prayer:

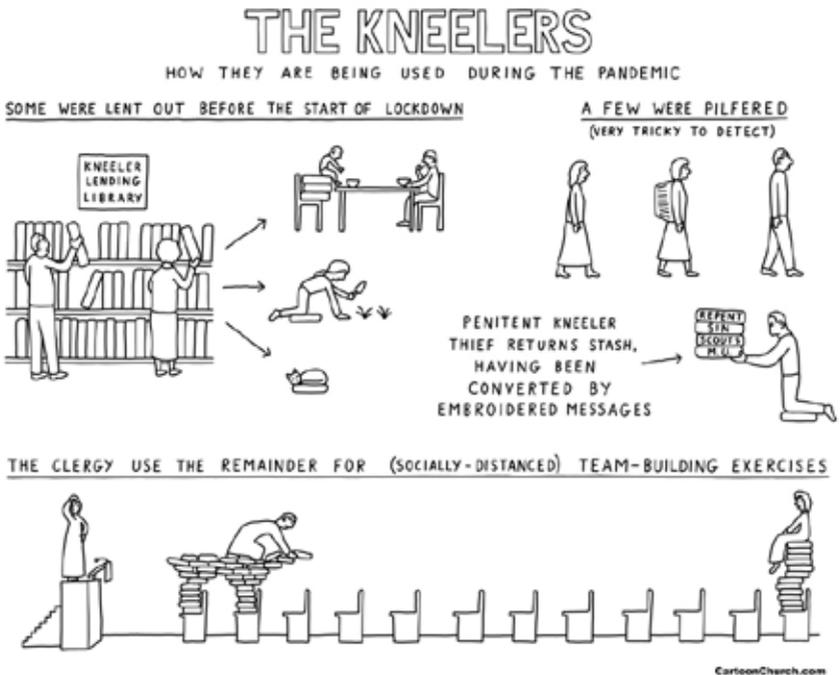
'Thank you for being patient. Help us to be patient more often. Sorry for when we have not been patient in the past. Thank you for letting us have patience in our lives. We will always love you in our hearts. Amen.'

TrinityLearning staff are currently furloughed in order to best preserve our grant funding to enable us to support schools at the time we think they will need it the most – on their return to classroom study. We are still monitoring email, phone messages and social media, so please do get in touch if you have would like to know more about our work, have some great ideas for us or would just like to say hello!

Email: nic.trinitylearning@gmail.com;

Website: <https://trinitylearning.org.uk>

We are also on Facebook: just search 'TrinityLearning' to find us.



TRINITYLEARNING IN REFORM

Eve Newton, Chair of TrinityLearning Trustees



Nicola Williams, TrinityLearning's Education and Development Officer (EDO), was excited and delighted to be contacted by Steve Tomkins, the editor of *Reform*, the URC's monthly magazine, asking to interview her. This was with a view to putting an article about our charity in a forthcoming issue of *Reform*. TrinityLearning received a prestigious community award from the URC in 2018 after Rosemary Perrow had been devoting herself to its development for 9 years, and the work was becoming well known in local schools and churches, as well as more widely in the UK. To share a top spot at the award ceremony in Nottingham was a terrific achievement, given all the great projects which had been shortlisted. And it was the award that brought Steve to find out more about TrinityLearning's work in order to disseminate it widely by writing an article in *Reform*. The article is printed below. What a great opportunity Steve was offering, and how fortunate TrinityLearning is to have the support and financial backing of the URC. (Together of course with the Methodist Church and other bodies.) A date and time were arranged for Steve to travel to Abingdon for the interview. Nicola invited Rosemary to come in order to share her depth of experience and knowledge of TrinityLearning's work. She also invited Petronella and me as Trustees of the charity.

When the day came there were problems with the train service and we wondered if Steve would make it; fortunately all was well and we were delighted to meet him. Given the building work going on in the Conduit Centre we decided the Minister's vestry in the church would be a quiet place to meet and where we were unlikely to be interrupted. After brief introductions Steve set up his phone to record our conversation. He was a good listener and apart from some questions to make sure he understood fully the points and descriptions we gave him, he said very little. It was clear he was at times very moved by what he heard about children's reactions and at one point, he wiped away a tear. At the end of an hour he thanked us all warmly and set off on his return journey to Kings Cross. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to revisit all the work of the last ten years and to realise just how much had been achieved, which can sometimes get lost in day to day routines. Once Steve had left, we wondered how long it would be before we heard from him. In the event about two weeks afterwards he sent the article which he had prepared, asking us to check it and let him know what we thought of it. The *Reform*

article, published in the April edition, is almost exactly as Steve sent it to us. We think you will agree he did TrinityLearning proud!

A CLASS OF THEIR OWN

Sophie (not her real name) seemed unlikely to get a work experience placement. She had severe autism and, at age 14, could hardly talk, count or read. Other problems included anger management. She hadn't been to school for months, but her mother wanted her to have a placement. So the school turned to TrinityLearning, the education support charity based in Trinity Church, Abingdon. Unable to find her anything else, the charity placed her in their own office. It was time consuming, requiring intensive planning and mentoring.

It was a challenge to find things to do says Rosemary Perrow, Trinity's Education and Development Officer (EDO) at the time. 'We made worry boxes for the Year Sevens starting in September. We talked. She met user groups, made tea and coffee.' On the fourth day, Sophie said, 'My mum says, What are you doing to me? I'm a lot calmer.' When she started back at school, she was talking and could be understood. The charity found her a weekly placement at a care home. 'The school told us we had absolutely changed that child's life,' says Rosemary.

Trinity learning began in 2009. The church had a Going for Gold grant from the United Reformed Church for a youth worker, but no youth, so they went to where the young people were, in local schools. Asking head teachers, staff and children which areas they most needed support in, the clear answer was wellbeing. Overworked, under-resourced and demoralised by Ofsted, staff were passing their own stress on to children.

The first project was calming Tai Chi for teachers. Soon Trinity's volunteers were taking groups of children out of the classroom to work on projects like an assembly or a local newsletter, distributed around the town. Over a decade, 300 children have produced 50 newsletters. Nicola Williams, the present EDO, says: 'We take kids who aren't confident writers and it gives them a boost. They choose their own topics and recipients. Every child gets it, so it's a high-profile success that changes the school's perception of them.' One child who could not write at all was trained in Photoshop, and used it to create a photo spread in the middle pages. It so impressed his school that they asked him to present an IT lesson.

Other projects include Toolkit for Happiness, which offers activities to children who struggle with wellbeing, including nature walks, planting, making things for others and thankfulness. They also teach their peers the skills they have learned.

Meanwhile, Trinity volunteers offer sessions in schools, sharing books with children which help them to talk about feelings and relationships and to develop emotional literacy. Training for this project, called Thinking Books, was developed for Trinity by the counselling service Relate, thanks to the 2018 URC Community Project Award, in which Trinity won joint first prize.

Every week at Kingfisher Special School, volunteers sing with non-verbal children, songs they choose by pointing or smiling at a card. 'There are children who have spoken their first words in response to Old MacDonald,' says Nicola. 'The school values it so highly that they've moved the timetable around to place more reliance on it.'

Other volunteers run Thinking Spaces in schools, offering workshop on remembrance, love and reflection. Huge teams of volunteers from 14 churches and other community organisations have created sensory and relaxation gardens in the grounds of three schools.

'It's gone from Trinity helping,' Rosemary says, 'to the churches helping, to the whole community coming together to help the schools. Which is great, because if you've been labelled as a failing school, you feel awful. Having so many people volunteering to help reaffirms the work teachers are doing and tells the kids that they are valued.'

Trinity's flagship project is Experience Easter. The church is transformed into a series of tableaux telling the Easter story. Volunteers take 60 children at once around, and do small group activities that help them to reflect on things like suffering, hope, praying and living on. 'It is not a run-of-the-mill Sunday school experience,' says Rosemary, 'but a way to enjoy and welcome reflection.'

A number of activities that started at TrinityLearning have grown and being taken on by other churches. Nicola says: 'Each of our projects is easily replicable by churches, even if whole operation is too much for most.'

A grant from the United Reformed and Methodist Churches allowed TrinityLearning to become a standalone charity, developing policies and procedures enabling them to continue working with children. Nicola is very grateful. 'It's very, very difficult to find funding for core costs like staffing. We get a lot of grants for specific projects, but if you can't find core work, you can't apply for those things. If the churches had not been so generous, this couldn't have happened.'

THERE ARE VIRGINAL SPLASHES OF WHITE IN THE GARDEN

Ruth Coward (All Saints)

It is the 'Bride' shrub ruthlessly moved last year from one part of the garden to another.

But it is Spring and it is flowering. The delicate splashes of yellow from the daffodils and forsythia bush, wave in the breeze. The tulips slowly push through the soil until they are erect.

Yes! all around signs of Spring are here. Signs of God's presence and the beautiful world He has made. The birds are singing, many of them the beautiful rippling cadences we associate with

Spring; the busy little hedge sparrows flit and squabble in the hedge.

Yes! Spring is here and all around us we experience the stirrings of joy and thanksgiving in our hearts.

But no! The busy road in front of our gates is empty, there are no noisy children passing on their way to and from school. What is wrong? Beyond the firmly closed gates strides an unseen enemy, an invisible killer, a death bringer we do not understand.

The beautiful garden again re-assuring of God's creativity and love holds back an unseen horror. Will our barred gates and high fence keep us safe?

But no! Two thousand years ago God acted in an invisible way, in a creative way of love – He sent his Son.

A Son who hung on a cross, a Son who suffered unbelievable pain and horror. A Son who, by His death left a terrified and bewildered band, but a Son who three days later defeated death and fear.

A son who is here today – right here – in the middle, the epicentre, of our present bewilderment and fear. A son, Jesus, who is here in our darkest hour.

A Jesus who is here bringing comfort to the elderly man, alone in the silent flat.

Jesus, who is with the doctors in a crowded ward, helping patients fighting to inhale the very air around them.

A Jesus in the crowded refugee camps in Syria where the people wait in fear for the arrival of the virus and certain death.

A Jesus with the weary doctor playing the piano at the end of his shift to sooth and calm the patients and colleagues.

He is there beside the priest sprinkling holy water over the rows of coffins in the empty church.

He is there with the woman dying alone, without her beloved family, in the chaos and panic of a crowded ward.

He sits by the exhausted delivery truck driver anxious to take supplies for empty supermarket shelves.

Jesus is with the stressed young pharmacist desperately trying to find the correct drugs for the anxious mother standing there.

Yes! The suffering Jesus walks in gardens full of breath taking beauty, gardens full of the promise of Spring, but He moves through our suffering, painful bewildered and terrified world.

He is there! He is there! He is there at the very heart of our suffering and fear. He is there!



HOW JEWS AND CHRISTIANS READ THE BIBLE: A TALK BY PROFESSOR JOHN BARTON AT TRINITY CHURCH ABINGDON, 27TH FEBRUARY 2020.

Neil Hancox (St Edmund's)

The talk was organised by the Abingdon Progressive Christian Network and concerned one of the themes that runs through Professor Barton's recent book, *A History of the Bible*.

According to Christians, the Bible tells the story of the Creation, Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden (the Fall), the subsequent sinful lives of men and women, and the redemption of mankind through the obedience of Jesus to his Father's will, resulting in His death and resurrection.

This account/interpretation, which is taken as applying to all people for all time, is ingrained in Western culture. The Old Testament begins in history and ends in fulfilment as described in the gospels. Christians have read the Bible in this way since the writings of St Paul. As such, this way of looking at religion and the Bible defines a coherent message, though I personally find that often the overall thread has been lost in the details.

The mainstream Jewish reading of the Old Testament is quite different. They hold that the Bible tells a story of providential guidance of mankind through history, and concentrate on the books of the Pentateuch and up to Chronicles, all read in short passages. Abraham, not Adam is the important early character in the narrative. He was expelled from the Promised Land when he sinned but eventually allowed to return. The prophets are not regarded as that important. Christians believe that prophecies refer to the coming of Christ whereas Jews interpret many of these as referring simply to royal births. The Bible is about how to live a morally good, faithful, life through the ups and downs of human existence. Thus the Jews and the Christians have different ideas of how people are involved in God's plan.

The books of the Bible are arranged in a different manner in the Jewish and Christian Bibles. The two faiths share much of the same material but order it differently. Initially, neither party had such fixed views as they do today.



Photo by Mick Haupt on Unsplash

In the second century AD Justin the Martyr claimed that the Jews altered texts to suit their message. There is no evidence of this at all but unfortunately this has led to continued mutual suspicion.

In summary, Professor Barton said that there is no correct way of reading the Bible; we should be free to read and interpret it as we wish. The rule of faith, the creed, is independent of the Bible.

In a question and answer session, Professor Barton said that Messianic Jews follow the Christian way of reading the Old Testament but practice the Torah as well. Regarding how we read the Bible in a secular culture, he said that the Bible is a source and does not say what to believe. There are different interpretations of Abraham's intention to sacrifice his son Isaac in the two cultures. Christians sometimes see parallels between the attempted sacrifice of Isaac and the death of Christ. More recently, Jews identify Isaac with Israel itself. In their interpretation of Exodus, both Jews and Christians agree on the emphasis on freedom. Jews believe that Adam sinned but, unlike Christians, do not give it a cosmic significance. The Jews do not regard Jesus as the Son of God but rather as a person who teaches good values and how to live a good life.

This was an excellent and clear lecture which I have attempted to summarise: the mistakes and misinterpretations are, of course, mine.

BEATITUDES

FOR A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO STAY INDOORS



FOR THEY HAVE PROTECTED OTHERS

BLESSED ARE THE UNEMPLOYED AND THE SELF-EMPLOYED



FOR THEIR NEED OF GOD IS GREAT

BLESSED ARE THE CORNER SHOPKEEPERS



FOR THEY ARE THE PURVEYORS OF SCARCE THINGS

BLESSED ARE THE DELIVERY DRIVERS AND THE POSTAL WORKERS



FOR THEY ARE THE BRINGERS OF ESSENTIAL THINGS

BLESSED ARE THE HOSPITAL WORKERS, THE AMBULANCE CREWS, THE DOCTORS, THE NURSES, THE CARE ASSISTANTS, AND THE CLEANERS



FOR THEY STAND BETWEEN US AND THE GRAVE, AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS SURELY THEIRS

BLESSED ARE THE CHECKOUT WORKERS



FOR THEY HAVE PATIENCE AND FORBIDANCE IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELM AND FRUSTRATION

BLESSED ARE THE REFUSE COLLECTORS



FOR THEY WILL SEE GOD DESPITE THE MOUNTAINS OF WASTE

BLESSED ARE THE TEACHERS



FOR THEY REMAIN STEADFAST AND CONSTANT IN DISTURBING TIMES

BLESSED ARE THE CHURCH WORKERS; THE DEACONS, PRIESTS AND BISHOPS



FOR THEY ARE A COMFORTING PRESENCE IN A HURTING WORLD AS THEY CONTINUE TO SIGNPOST TOWARDS GOD

BLESSED ARE THE SINGLE PARENTS.



FOR THEY ARE COPING ALONE WITH THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND THERE IS NO RESPIRE

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE ALONE.



FOR THEY ARE CHILDREN OF GOD AND WITH HIM THEY WILL NEVER BE LONELY

BLESSED ARE THE BEREAVED.



FOR WHOM THE WORST HAS ALREADY HAPPENED. THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE ISOLATED WITH THEIR ABUSERS



FOR ONE DAY - WE PRAY - THEY WILL KNOW SAFETY

BLESSED ARE ALL DURING THIS TIME WHO HAVE PURE HEARTS; ALL WHO STILL HUNGER AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE; ALL WHO WORK FOR PEACE AND WHO MODEL MERCY



MAY YOU KNOW COMFORT. MAY YOU KNOW CALM. AND MAY THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BE WITH US ALL. AMEN

TEXT: ZAYNE HANFRESI

CartoonChurch.com

FESTIVAL OF FAITH AND LITERATURE

Ben Jeapes (Christ Church on Long Furlong)



Hands up if you've had a door held open for you by someone who has been quoted – accurately, too – by Dan Brown in *The Da Vinci Code*?

The man kindly holding the door for me was the Rev. Martyn Percy, Dean of Christ Church: the event was the 2020 Bloxham Festival of Faith and Literature, held every other February a few miles south of Banbury. It's essentially for Christians of all stripes with any kind of love for reading, writing and poetry, and if you're one of those then I want to commend it to you.

This year had a particular theme of The Power of Love. The festival lasts for two days but sadly I could only manage one. In the sessions I went to: poet Malcolm Guite and artist Roger Wagner shared how poetry and portraits help them see God's love for his creation; A.N. Wilson talked about his novel *Aftershocks*, inspired by the story of Christchurch Cathedral in New Zealand after the earthquake; the Rev. Sam Wells, who always makes me feel slightly scolded whenever I hear him on 'Thought for the Day', also managed to make me feel inadequate as he described condensing the 360,000 word Bible down to a 20,000 word novelised version; in conversation with Bishop John Pritchard, Alan Hargrave and Madeleine Davies, who have respectively lost a child and a mother, talked about the book that each has written on the painful topic of bereavement; and Martyn Percy spoke on how our mission and ministry all too often fall short of expressing God's overwhelming love.

If I'd had time, I could have gone to hear people talk about the love poetry of George Herbert and R.S. Thomas; Rhidian Brook (another 'Thought for the Day' name) on talking and writing about faith today; the different kinds of love which can be found across the Shakespearian canon; walking the Camino; and more, including one I *really* wish I had had time to go to: novelists Catherine Fox and Michael Arditti on 'Love Writing: How to avoid winning the Bad Sex Award'.

The festival is held every two years, so the next should be in February 2022. Its website is <https://bloxhamfaithandliterature.hymnsam.co.uk/>.

And Dan Brown? He liked a line Percy once wrote: 'The Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven'. That is about the one thing Dan Brown and Martyn Percy can agree on ...

LOCKDOWN – A ‘LIVING SIMPLY’ MOMENT?

Angela Waterhouse (St Edmund’s)



St Edmund’s church received an eco-award from CAFOD (Catholic Fund for Overseas Development) as a Live Simply parish in 2017, and is striving to live up to the Live Simply objectives (as described so radically by Pope Francis in his book *On the Care of our Common Home*) of Living Simply, Sustainably and in Solidarity with the poor, as a parish as well as individuals – an uphill task at all times!

Whilst praying that we look beyond our own preoccupations during lockdown, it also seems good to reflect that, practically speaking, for us at home in our everyday lives, lockdown is a Live Simply moment!

We are being made aware of the interconnectedness of all things and all people. We are perforce Living Simply. We are enjoying clean air. We are taking a break from fossil fuel use. More of us are taking to cycling. More people are cooking from scratch and eking out food resources. Children and adults are being creative with whatever we have in our homes. We are not indulging in unsustainable fast fashion. We are not dashing across the world to find leisure, but appreciating our own environment in all its fresh detail and in the changing seasons.

Amidst all the suffering, fear and anxieties, these are moments to be grateful for. Could we pray in gratitude for this opportunity to take pause? We – or those of us in the fortunate position of having a green space and a lack of pressure – have some time to appreciate our immediate environment more, to care more about each other within our communities, to be satisfied with Enough.

With this prayer inevitably come the following ones: to pray for persistence to take new lockdown habits into our future lives; and to pray for courage to influence our politicians, local as well as national, to change what will be the normal of the future.

Because we will need to persuade those who shape our society that our streets, now free of congestion, should be reconfigured for bikes and pedestrians (as is priority in Abingdon’s twinned towns in other European countries); that the people we clap on our doorsteps need more than applause but a valued and decently-rewarded place in our society; and that we are ready to accept measures that will protect Creation in all its interconnectedness.

ABINGDON BAPTIST CHURCH IN LOCKDOWN!

Jill and Ian Millgate (Abingdon Baptist Church)



Wow, what a learning curve it's been! Like many churches an urgent priority was to decide how worship was to continue. At first we felt we were stumbling along!

- Week one: a pre-recorded audio service only.
- Week two: an attempt to run a live service through Microsoft Teams – but quite a few found it complicated to join.
- Week three and onwards: we discovered Streamyard, for bringing together online contributions by various members from their homes, and through this system we livestream every Sunday morning to both YouTube and Facebook; it then continues to be available on both platforms. We also upload an audio version onto our website, after the event. It's still a bit challenging, especially using music, but it's getting easier as the weeks go on! And much appreciated.

On Easter Sunday morning we held a virtual communion service – led by our minister Steve. Everyone was encouraged to have bread and wine ready to participate at the same time, even though not physically together. To us it felt unusual but surprisingly moving, as we celebrated the presence of the risen Christ with his people.

A handful of audio versions of the service are burnt on to CDs and hand-delivered (keeping social distancing of course!) to those not 'connected' in any way!

Alongside this quite a few of us have learnt how to run meetings remotely. We wonder how many of us had heard of Zoom before all of this?! So, we have had worship planning meetings, virtual house groups, a Zoom coffee, chat and prayer session (to be repeated) and the Leadership Team are expecting to have a remote meeting in the near future. We also hear that our uniformed organisations are making good use of technology to keep in touch.

We're making good use of Facebook. We already had a page for church information, and we've started a Facebook group for sharing thoughts, prayers etc. We chose to keep this as a private group / safe environment so that people

could feel more comfortable to share as they might do in person at church. Our children's work is now largely by Facebook. There are two new private groups, one for ABC Tots and the other for Family Church through which Sunday teaching is delivered with plenty of activities to do to keep the adults – I mean children – occupied!

Our usual weekly update ABC Life and our monthly Contact magazine and Prayer Guide continue. We feel they are even more important now than before the lockdown, so we are trying to include more reflections, prayers and articles of interest than perhaps we would have normally. The last two Contact magazines have been the longest we've ever produced! They are now largely circulated electronically with a couple of dozen copies posted to those not online.

Last, but not least, is maintaining good pastoral contacts. House group leaders and deacons have their lists to ensure that everyone is remembered, but also lots of people are regularly phoning each other, and we're trying to keep in regular contact with the 35 Ock Street volunteers. Strangely, it almost feels as if we are communicating more (and with people we may not have spoken to on a regular basis) and realising how important conversation and human contact are.

ABC building may be closed – but ABC is still open for business!



Steve Millard on YouTube.

PRAYER FOR A PANDEMIC – FROM A KIRK IN ORKNEY

May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors
Remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or
making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools
close
Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips
Remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic
market
Remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
Remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country,
Let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around
each other,
Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our
neighbours.

Amen.



ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH IN LOCKDOWN

**David Duce, Sue Sheppy and Louise
Heffernan (St Michael's)**



When lockdown was announced we hadn't quite realised the dramatic effect it would have on us as a church. It was hard to believe that we could no longer worship in the same physical space. How could we continue our worship and continue our fellowship? The clergy of the three churches – St Helen's, St Nicolas' and our own – have videoed elements of the Sunday services and it is heartening to see familiar faces and hear familiar voices reading, leading our prayers and preaching when one is cut off from human companionship. They have also produced a thought for each day which goes into the Abingdon Blog.

Members of the congregation have been kept informed by a weekly newsletter, as David Duce explains:

'At St Michael's our website and weekly pew leaflet have been adapted to provide information and links to online resources. When same-time, same-place worship is not possible for the vast majority of people, we turn instead to same-time, different-place and different-time, different-place options. It was clear from the start that many cathedrals and dioceses, as well as some churches, would have the resources and capability to live-stream and record services. We provided links to a few of these as a 'starter pack'. The diocese helpfully has a central list of churches supporting worship in this way. Pattern and structure are important when under lockdown so we provided links to resources for daily prayer, ranging from the official Church of England apps and online resources for Morning and Evening Prayer to a simpler pattern of daily prayer written by a church in Reading.

A few people at St Michael's are known to have joined the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield, who are live-streaming and recording their five daily offices and Mass that are the framework of their community life, to keep Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Liturgy in a form familiar to us. In essence we are invited into their home to join in their worship in their enormous church. The Easter Liturgy offered an experience it would be hard to find in a parish setting – the lighting of the New Fire and Paschal Candle started at 5.30 a.m., followed by the traditional vigil, renewal of baptismal vows and celebration of the Mass of the

Resurrection ending around 7.30 a.m. All on a beautiful West Yorkshire morning with the sun streaming through the east windows as Mass ended.

But there is one aspect of this focus on online resources that continues to be troublesome – the separation created by the digital divide between those who have access to the technology and those who don't. For the latter we have tried to maintain contact by providing printed materials, but one is only too acutely aware how inadequate this is compared to resources available online, for many of which there just isn't even a paper equivalent. Though hats off to those cathedrals and dioceses, for example, who do provide printable equivalents that can be made available to those without access to the primary resources and also to the Diocese of Oxford who are now providing audio recordings of the Church-at-Home Sunday Eucharist accessible by telephone.'

In addition to Sunday services and midweek masses, St Michael's has meditative meetings and dance which in normal times take place in the church and are centred around the labyrinth. Sue Sheppy writes:

'Our Circle Dancing and Moving into Stillness groups are proving to be a real source of strength and encouragement. Every Thursday at 11 a.m., we light a candle in our own homes and dance to music from CDs or YouTube, using instructions for steps from our teachers, Mary Williams and Elizabeth Mitchell. We have also been exchanging video clips, prayers and poems that are sustaining us all at this difficult time.

Material for Silent Reflections is still being sent out each month for people to use in their own homes.'

However, while the lockdown has provided us with opportunities to worship online, there is no doubt that it has hit hard those living alone who do not have access to the internet. We are very well aware of these people's needs. We have a strong sense of community in our church and make sure that we keep contact with each other, especially those living alone, through phone calls and texts, and occasionally by hard copies of pew leaflets and newsletters being posted through letter boxes, where people have no access to the Internet. On the practical side, some members of the congregation are shopping for the more vulnerable.

CHRIST CHURCH ON LOCKDOWN

Ben Jeapes

(Christ Church on Long Furlong)



Lockdown has probably increased the average person's experience of video conferencing beyond anything they could have dreamed of before.

The two Christ Church sites, Northcourt Road and Long Furlong, have combined resources on Sunday mornings for a single service that combines livestreaming and pre-recorded videos. For the first Sunday of lockdown – what you could call 'lockdown lite' – it was broadcast from the church on Northcourt Road, with everyone carefully following social distancing guidance and not coming within two metres of each other. This meant that just about everything – the prayers, the reading, the sermon, the music – could be done live.

Soon after that the UK went into full lockdown and even that kind of service became impossible. We now seem to have found the new pattern for worship. The leading is done live from the home of one of the clergy. Songs, prayers, readings and other material are pre-recorded and dropped in at the appropriate place. We are especially blessed in having in our congregation someone who does this kind of thing for a living.

Christ Church has always been good, I think, at helping members of the congregation with particular talents to step forward and bring them out. Our lockdown services have only accentuated this. Often responsibility for, say, the prayers will be given to a particular family that week, and they are able to involve the children with different voices, or maybe find a new way to tell the story. Different hymns are played by different musicians from their homes in different styles. The Easter Resurrection story was told from different locations around our Children's Minister's garden, and also animated with cardboard cut-outs – that was a real triumph.

The services are broadcast on YouTube, so can be watched on a computer or – if you have the right leads and your TV is sufficiently modern – on the TV itself, to take advantage of a bigger screen and decent sound. The first Sunday, I clicked the button to go full-screen. On following Sundays I've learnt to leave the picture at its default size, because that way you can then see the chat stream scrolling up the side of the screen. Church members can give greetings to each other, make

suggestions for prayer and so on. I feel it has built a sense of community like never before. After services, individual housegroups have been getting together by video link to share coffee and chat.

Meanwhile, during the week, many housegroups are still meeting for their regular weekly meeting – also over video, of course. Thankfully the Holy Spirit has no download rate and doesn't depend on a good data connection. Since Easter we've also had a lockdown church lunch, a lockdown church quiz and a lockdown tea party, amongst other things

At the same time as all this, the church is well aware that not everyone has access to the kind of technology required to do all this. The different groups and networks within the church have been expanding their reach via phone calls and texts to make sure that all are included: at the very least you can get to hear someone's voice even if you can't see them in person. And the Abingdon Foodbank is based on Christ Church premises in the Northcourt Road dairy yard, so while the rest of the buildings have been locked up, the Foodbank is busier than ever. Man does not live on bread alone ... but does nonetheless need bread.

Will I miss any of this, once lockdown is over? Well, frankly, no, of course not. I'm longing for normal service, and services, to be resumed. I'm missing the spontaneity of bumping into someone over coffee at the end of the service and getting to chat and who knows, making a new friend.

But, there is no point in just yearning for it to be over and meanwhile shutting our eyes to the good that can come from it. I think we are learning lessons in all this which will stand us in good stead. Without in any way doing down or ignoring the very real suffering that this crisis has caused, and the individual tragedies of those who have died, let our eyes be open to the blessings that would not have come forth without this, and let us carry them forward as and when lockdown ends and we establish our new form of normality.

LOCKDOWN

Brother Richard Hendrick OFM Cap

Yes there is fear.

Yes there is isolation.

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes

But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other

across the empty squares,

keeping their windows open

so that those who are alone

may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland

Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know

is busy spreading fliers with her number

through the neighbourhood

So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples

are preparing to welcome

and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality

To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.
To Love.
So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing.

Originally published on Brother Richard's blog, <http://brorichardblog.blogspot.com/2020/03/lockdown-brother-richard-hendrick.html>

ANSWERS TO SUMMER OLYMPIC ANAGRAMS (PAGE 36)

1. Athletics; 2. Tennis; 3. Weightlifting; 4. Wrestling; 5. Archery; 6. Football; 7. Gymnastics; 8. Softball; 9. Water Polo; 10. Equestrian; 11. Sailing; 12. Pentathlon; 13. Triathlon

SUNDAY CHURCH SERVICES IN ABINGDON

Abingdon Baptist Church

Ock Street, 10.30am

Abingdon Community Church

Thameside School, Cotman Close,
10.30am

Abingdon Vineyard Church

Preston Road Community Centre,
10.30am

All Saints Methodist Church

Appleford Drive, 10.30am and 6.30pm

Christ Church

Northcourt Road (Church of England),
8.00am, 9.30am, 11.15am and 6.30pm

Christ Church on Long Furlong

Long Furlong Primary School, Boulter
Drive (Church of England), 10.00am

Our Lady & St Edmund of Abingdon

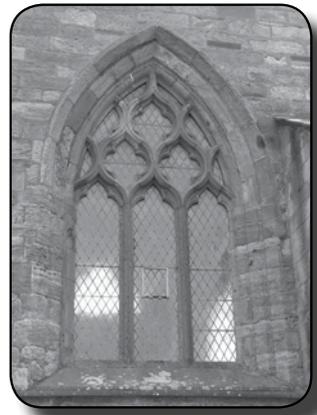
Radley Road (Roman Catholic),
8.45am, 10.15 am and 6.30 pm

Peachcroft Christian Centre

Lindsay Drive, 10am

Religious Society of Friends

Abbey Centre, Audlett Drive, 10.15am



St Helen's Church

West St Helen Street (Church of
England), 8am (alternating monthly
with St Nicolas), 10.30am and 5.30pm

St Michael & All Angels Church

Park Road (Church of England),
9.30am

St Nicolas Church

Market Place (Church of England),
8am (alternating monthly with St
Helen's), 11.15am

The Salvation Army

West St Helen Street, 10.30am

Trinity Church

Conduit Road (Methodist and United
Reformed), 10.30am and 6.30pm

SUMMER OLYMPIC SPORTS ANAGRAMS

To make up for the cancelled 2020 games, here are the anagrams of 13 Olympic events. Answers on page 34.



1. That slice A _____
2. In nest T _____
3. Lighting if wet W _____
4. Girls went W _____
5. A cherry A _____
6. Loft a lob F _____
7. My cat sings G _____
8. Flat slob S _____
9. Low or tape W _____ P _____
10. Quite earns E _____
11. I signal S _____
12. On the plant P _____
13. North tail T _____

Anagrams downloaded from www.historyonthenet.com. Copyright 2012 historyonthenet.com. Cartoon from <https://www.clipartmax.com/>.