

October 2021

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TRINITY TIMES



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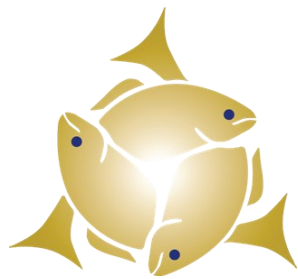


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This magazine includes articles about school life under Covid, Climate Change, news from our CMS partners and an article by Paul Suter about the charity *Children on the Edge*”.

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Remember we love to receive articles and photographs for the magazine which can be sent to the e-mail address below. However, we reserve the right to edit anything that is sent to us and the editor’s decision is final.

Please note that views expressed in Trinity Times are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Parochial Church Council.

The next magazine will be the **November 2021** edition

The copy date is 15 October

If any item is left until the very last minute, or received after the copy date, there is no guarantee that it will be able to be included in the magazine.

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#HolyTrinityonsocialmedia



Front cover :- Blessing the Bags Service

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Associate Vicar



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Associate Priest

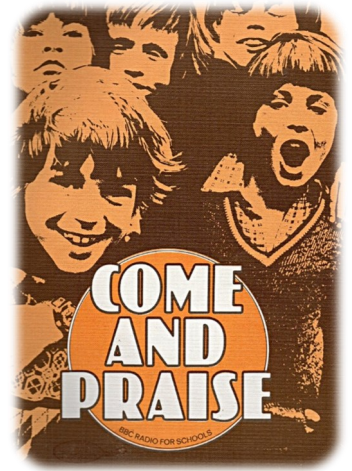


Phil Harper
Children & Families Minister

AUTUMN DAYS

Harvest always makes me think of one particular song. As I was at junior school in the 80's our hymn book in assembly was *Come and Praise*. A book compiled by the BBC to be used with the radio assemblies they provided. It contained such classics as *Who put the colours in the rainbow*, *Think of a world without any flowers* and *One more step along the road*. But the song that comes to me every Harvest is one called *Autumn Days*. It poetically describes the various highlights of Harvest and autumn beginning with:

“Autumn days when the grass is jewelled
And the silk inside a chestnut shell.
Jet planes meeting in the air to be refuelled.
All these things I love so well.”



I'm sure some people are humming along to the song already. As a child singing it, a few things always struck me. Firstly, I've never seen a jet plane being refuelled in the air and why is that a particularly autumn thing, do they not need refuelling at other times of the year? But despite my best efforts to question, I was always lured into the warm fuzzy feeling the lyrics create of autumn "the winter's moon with frosted rings", "scent of garden when the rain's been falling". Yet, as the weather now changes,



moving from summer to autumn, and I walk outside trying not to slip on wet pavements with leaves turning to mush, or manically de-ice the car so I won't be late for Morning Prayer for the third day in a row, the reality of autumn doesn't really match the lyrics to the song. How often do we look to the past with rose-tinted glasses, to golden ages that may not have existed as we thought.

Harvest Festival may make us think of farmers with rosy cheeks bringing in a sheaf of corn, a basket of perfect shining apples. Yet the reality was hard back breaking work for long hours. When they gave thanks at Harvest they had a lot to be thankful for, not just for the food but that it was finally over. A world away from us picking up an extra tin at the supermarket to take to church, or even if we have a garden selecting a few prized beans and marrows.



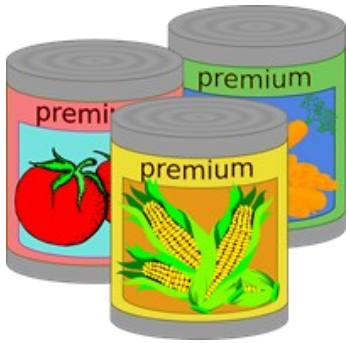
Yet what I admire about Harvest, is the church's ability to let the festival evolve and change, something churches aren't often praised for. We haven't kept it as an outdated service, pretending that we've spent all hours of daylight tending to and harvesting our Harvest offerings. Instead, we acknowledge the change in lifestyle and the change in the need, bringing tins for the Foodbank rather than vegetables with a limited shelf life. Increasingly Harvest is also an opportunity to recognise the ecological crisis which is unfolding and our responsibility as stewards of this planet.



There may still be a pang in our hearts for a bygone way of celebrating Harvest, but the evolution means that it is relevant to where we are now and can inform our faith as Christians living in the 21st century. When we look back on things, especially at the moment to a world pre-Covid and a church pre-Covid, we have to be wary of the rose-tinted glasses, as the past easily becomes a lost land of perfection, and people forget the niggles, the challenges and displeasure.

We have allowed Harvest Festival to evolve, and I pray that we may do the same with other parts of our lives. We have a living faith with a growing developing relationship with God, not a religious version of the Black Country Museum frozen in time.

Cont...



As Harvest is an opportunity to give thanks, so let us give thanks for what we do have instead of what we don't have, or to quote the chorus from the not so perfect *Autumn Days*.

"So I mustn't forget
No, I mustn't forget
To say a great big thank you
I mustn't forget."

Phil Harper



NEW BEGINNINGS



Some bags

It was wonderful to begin the new school with our now traditional Blessing of the School and Work Bags. If you don't know by now, in the Church of England if you do something once it's new and different, do it twice and it's a tradition. I think this is the fourth time we've done it so it is

certainly ingrained into the calendar. This year more than any other it took on a greater value for those taking part and bringing bags for blessing. For children there was a lot of uncertainty and anxiousness on what school would be like this September and I'm sure a similar feeling for a lot of adults in their lives.

As a sign of some good news in October we are hoping to re-start the Stay and Play group at the Ken Kennett Centre on Tuesday mornings and Trinity Tots on Thursday afternoons in the Parish Centre. I don't have an exact date for re-starting yet, but if you or someone you know is interested in coming with their child, just email me (phil@stratford-upon-avon.org) and I can let them know the date.



Trinity Tots



The end of the service

For these groups to take place, I need some help. If anyone would like to join the team helping these groups to run please speak to me. As we become a more intergenerational church family this is a wonderful opportunity to reach out and engage with other generations. It's been a difficult time for parents with babies and toddlers, especially those born in the lockdown as there has been a limit to what interactions can take place. Parents are desperate to have a way for their children, but also themselves, to have contact with others. This is especially true in Stratford where parents and other family may not live locally, or even in this country. If you could help, even occasionally to welcome, make a drink and chat to the parents please speak to me.

Phil Harper



SUNDAY SERVICES IN OCTOBER

Holy Trinity Church

3 October - Trinity Eighteen

10am - Parish Eucharist - *An Inclusive Household*

5pm - Choral Evensong for FOSC

10 October - Trinity Nineteen

10am - Parish Eucharist - *Harvest*

5pm - Choral Evensong

17 October - Trinity Twenty

10am - Parish Eucharist - *How to read the Bible - 1*

5pm - Holy Communion (BCP)

24 October - Bible Sunday

10am - Parish Eucharist - *How to read the Bible - 2*

5pm - Taize Service

31 October - All Saints'

10am - Parish Eucharist - *A Household of Saints*

5pm - All Souls'

St Helen's, Clifford Chambers

3 October - Trinity Eighteen

9.30am - Harvest

17 October - Trinity 20

9.30am - Holy Communion



All Saints', Luddington

10 October - Trinity Nineteen

9.30am - Holy Communion

24 October - Bible Sunday

9.30am - Holy Communion

31 October - All Saints'

9.30am - Patronal Festival



WORSHIP NOTES October

Harvest, Scripture and Saints



The season of **Harvest Festivals** is upon us. Luddington enjoyed their festival service on 26 September and there will be special services at **Clifford Chambers on 3 October at 9.30am** and **Holy Trinity on 10 October at 10am** (followed by a Harvest Lunch).

Donations for the Stratford Food Bank will be welcomed at these services - please see the weekly bulletin for details on the sorts of items required. As we give thanks to God for the ways in which we are so abundantly blessed, we also recognise the damaging effect that our human activity has had on our world and especially the climate. Our thanksgiving will be empty if it is not accompanied by a commitment to do something to care for creation.

To coincide with Bible Sunday we are taking two Sundays at Holy Trinity at 10am to focus on "How to Read the Bible":

17 October The Rev'd Peter Privett, from St. Andrew's Church Rugby will be giving the talk. He is a leading practitioner in Godly Play and has a great deal of experience in ministry with children and families.

24 October is Bible Sunday and the second in our series, "How to read the Bible".

31 October is the feast of All Saints'. At 9.30am Luddington will celebrate their patronal festival. There will be a special service at 5pm at Holy Trinity to remember those whom we have loved but who have died. We will be offering a special invitation to those families who have had a funeral through this parish in the past few months.

Finally, there will be a special service of **Choral Evensong to celebrate the work of the Friends of Shakespeare's Church on 3 October at 5pm**. The visiting preacher is Becky Clark, Church of England Director of Churches and Cathedrals and Secretary to the Church Buildings Council and Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England.

Patrick



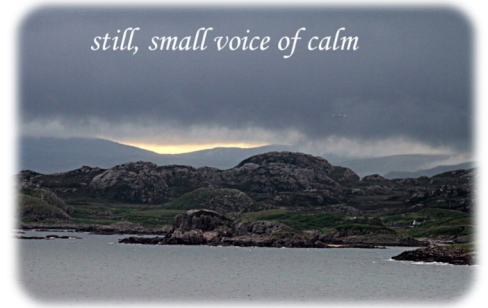
“O Still, Small Voice of Calm”

A new series of monthly articles by our Director of Music Douglas Keilitz

Today’s society calls humans to be noisy. Aside from all the mechanical noise of cars, planes, and anything industrial, we are bombarded daily with the noise of media...television, radio, cinema (that is, when we could go to cinema), and even the printed word can be noisy with exclamation marks (!). We are lured into this world and participate by talking, so much so that we begin to think the *only* way we can participate is by talking.

In his poem *The Brewing of Soma*, American Quaker poet and Massachusetts native John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-92) writes of a Hindu drink consumed by worshippers, bringing “sacred madness” and “a storm of drunken joy”...a reference to the revival meetings being held at the time. He appeals to his reader to find a quieter way and finishes his poem with this stanza:

*“Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm.”*



As we enter autumn and months which get progressively louder all around us, we need more than ever to quiet ourselves to hear that still, small voice of calm...God’s voice speaking to us. At Holy Trinity, there are opportunities we may wish to partake in more often to hear that voice: in our quiet and prayerful preparation period before each service as God speaks to us during the organ voluntary (more on that next month); at the moment of remembrance during an All Souls’ service as we contemplate those who have gone before us; in the many periods of meditative silence at the monthly Taizé service; and perhaps in Advent evening services during the eight days preceding Christmas in the Chancel, an especially-peaceful way to approach the Nativity of Christ as opposed to the commercialized shopping frenzy of secular society.

Words are important: communal prayer, sermons, and even the simple greeting of the Peace all have their place, and God is there. But, God is present in silence, as well...and that voice can be more powerful when God doesn’t have to compete with all the noise of the world. Let us take as much opportunity as possible to be still...and to listen.

*“In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee.”*



School life under Covid19

Mrs Jo Herrero, Head of Holy Trinity Church Primary School, reflects on a difficult eighteen months



First lockdown: March 2020

I have a poignant photo of the staff which was taken in the last days before the first lockdown. We have smiles on our faces that belie the concern and worry we all felt at that unprecedented time. It's true that it was a scary time, but we remained positive, and determined. Some faces are missing from the photograph as on a daily basis more staff had come into contact with Covid cases or had developed the dreaded cough themselves. This was echoed by the reduced numbers of pupils dropped off on the playground each morning. I thought it was important to take the photograph that week: I told staff it was a time that would become an important part of the school's history. And I genuinely believed we had one of the most important jobs in the country at that time. To teach our children and support our families throughout the pandemic was a job we should do with pride and to the very best of our ability. After the events of 2020 and 2021 we can all look back at that photo now feeling proud of our whole school community. The children, the parents, the staff, the church (through the support of Patrick and Phil) - everyone approached the time with resilience and love. We all supported each other.

Teaching in the first lockdown at school and online:

From the very first day, we aimed to provide a rich curriculum that was as close to what pupils would cover in school as possible. It was not long before teachers were leading live lessons on zoom, even in the very first lockdown.

Trinity TV

We also realised that it was important to speak to pupils and parents as directly as possible. We set up our own TV channel, giving it the name 'Trinity TV', using Facebook as a platform because it allowed us to stream live. Although this was a really distressing time it also became a time for families to enjoy and celebrate spending more time together. Through 'Trinity TV' we encouraged families to take part in projects, such as recreating a famous portrait (we would show them the next day live when they sent them in) or take part in a virtual Shakespeare festival. We even encouraged families to learn some country dancing at home, following a live class that we showed them! We understood that keeping everyone positive and remaining in regular contact (we also sent regular letters as not everyone accessed Facebook) was just as important as ensuring pupils had the right technology.

Holy Trinity Hotel and extended opening

By June 2020 the government had announced that pupils in Reception could return to school in classes of no more than eight pupils and also Year 1 and Year 6 (again with much smaller classes). The pupils had to remain in their own small group bubbles. We felt that it was important to have Year 5 back as well and for every child to have had the chance of being back in school before the end of the summer. But because of the small number of pupils allowed in one class we did not have enough room in school! However, I had a brain wave when one day as I drove home, I passed the Doubletree Hilton hotel which was closed to guests at the time but in the midst of preparations for reopening. Having contacted the our local MP Nadhim Zahawi who then contacted the hotel manager it was quickly arranged that our Year 5 pupils would have the chance to learn in what we called 'Holy Trinity Hotel'. The children absolutely loved it! Daniel, the manager, was so very helpful and accommodating. I think the Stratford community has been so strong through all of this and having people like that to reach out to has made such an incredible difference. Our local MP even attended one of our hotel school days.



Our role in the community

Making sure the whole family is okay has become increasingly important. This is one of the reasons we had so many more children in school during the second lockdown (close to 200) because for some families living and working situations had become so hard to manage. Providing food to families that needed it was also essential and in some cases we delivered this ourselves. Teaching live on zoom meant we could check if the families were okay. If we didn't see the children on screen we would phone up the families to check everyone was alright. If no one answered after a couple of tries someone based at school would go and visit the house to make sure everyone was okay.

Connecting beyond Stratford and the classroom

We tried to turn virtual learning into a great new opportunity wherever we could. We connected with artists, scientists and historians who lived in different parts of the country who delivered lessons or gave talks. On Twitter, classes followed the authors of the books they were reading who would regularly comment on their work! The school engaged in a home sculpture project where one example was picked up by none other than Anthony Gormley and shared on the BBC One Show! In some ways virtual teaching opened up the world to us, although, there is no doubt, we were all desperate to have all of our pupils back with us in school.

Zoom also provided the opportunity for teachers to work with children individually. In the younger classes some pupils had individual daily reading with a member of staff. In the older classes debate club and book clubs continued as well as a number of friendship groups. We also offered some special timed socially distanced opportunities. For example Year Sixes had a time slot where they could come and visit school to change their books at a special Wednesday library.

Looking to the future:

I am sure that September 2021 will come with fresh challenges and unexpected moments, but the Holy Trinity school team will face this with determination and enthusiasm. I am incredibly proud to work for such a fabulous school and community.



Congratulations to long-time members of our congregation, Sam Bridges and Hannah Hawley, who were married in Holy Trinity on 14 August. The service was conducted by our former vicar, Martin Gorick, who is now Bishop of Dudley.

FROM THE REGISTERS - AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

CHRISTENINGS

22 August Douglas Edmund Webb
5 September Alfred Gabriel Pirkis
12 September Talulah Belle Hammocks
19 September Arthur Hill
26 September Harry Williams
26 September Amelia Williams

WEDDINGS

3 September Tim Owen and Jeanette Davey
4 September Shaun Overbury and Lisa Davis
4 September Ashley Ware and Kayleigh Malone
10 September Lawrence Kendall and Juliet Heyworth
10 September Alexander Scott and Anna Jalowiecki
25 September Keith and Tina Hillyard (renewal of vows)

FUNERALS

16 August Sheila Margaret Maiden
16 August Daphne Joyce Conway
19 August Robert Caleb Burrows
24 August Hazel Lesley Elson
24 August Charles Edward Clifford (Ted)
13 September Kathleen Vera Symonds (Kathie)



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North Transept Restoration

Restoration work started on Monday 13 September to replace the eroded stonework on the North transept. This includes replacing the cross on the apex which is now leaning. All work is planned to be complete by year end.

This work is fully funded by a generous donation from the Friends of Shakespeare's Church.

Mike Warrillow





TRINITY LADIES

It was so good to re-start Trinity Ladies on 15 September. To welcome back members and to greet new members was a real joy and we hope that all our members will continue to support the group in the coming months and years. On 20 October Mr Nick Birch from Avon Boating is coming to speak to us about the life of Marie Corelli. I am sure that we have all heard of Marie Corelli but do we know much about her actual life? Hopefully Mr Birch will enlighten us. The meeting will start at 2p.m. as usual and finish about 3.30p.m. to 3.45p.m. New members are very welcome so please come and join us.

Gina Lodge
Chair

HOLY TRINITY BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

The next meeting of the Support Group will be on Wednesday 27 October. We meet in the Parish Centre at 2.30p.m. until 4p.m. If you have lost a loved one and feel that meeting other people who are in a similar position to yourself would help you at this difficult time please come and join us. Just come to the Parish Centre at 2.30p.m. There is no need to make an appointment; we will be very pleased to see you.

Gina Lodge
Bereavement Co-ordinator



Roy Lodge's article in our last edition was so thought-provoking that I feel obliged to respond!

Readers will remember how he argued that the outpourings of emotion amongst Team GB in the Olympics demonstrated the end of the English "stiff upper lip" and a much healthier approach to getting in touch with our feelings. There is a lot in this. I suspect that many of us, during lockdowns and the other strange events of recent times, have been forced to be more honest with ourselves about our feelings. And it can be very healing to hear another person, such as an athlete, utter the cry of triumph – or the opposite – which part of us wants to utter but feels inhibited.

But this, I suggest, is not the whole story. There is, as a well-known Bible saying reminds us, a time and a season for everything. A time to get in touch with our feelings, and a time for simply doing one's duty with a stiff upper lip. I accept that the latter may have done some harm in our English culture. But that does not mean that there is no place for it. And maybe today the pendulum is swinging a little too far in the direction of emotion?

Consider the parable of the surgeon, who found herself having to undertake a life-saving operation on the man who killed her child in a road accident. What should her priority be? Medical ethics is quite clear. Do your duty as a surgeon first, though it will mean the stiffest of upper lips. Only then you may (and should) get in touch with your feelings – which could lead to the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Or consider the true story of the Salvation Army officer who came to believe that forms of worship based heavily on generating emotions were not necessarily the most reliable way to find either God or ourselves. He wrote a book called *Our Rebel Emotions*, exploring this insight. And that led him into the Church of England and its sacramental life, as he recalled that Jesus did not say "*Get these feelings* in remembrance of me" but "*DO this* in remembrance of me." Nobody would claim that emotions don't matter at all in our spiritual life; far from it. But worship, like so much of life, starts with the old advertising slogan "JUST DO IT". I can think of quite a few Sunday mornings when I have needed that stiff upper lip! But "just doing it", if it springs from faith, is far more than simply "going through the motions"; it is the scaffolding for our spiritual growth, as individuals and as a community, which our Lord in his wisdom gave to us.

Many of my generation were brought up in a stiff-upper-lip culture. And we may be glad that cultural changes have done so much to relieve us from it. But perhaps too, at times, it has been more vital than we know in terms of providing that scaffolding and enabling us to do our duty first and grow spiritually second.



To everything there is a time and a season. For many people, perhaps for our culture as a whole, this may be a time for getting in touch with our feelings, and we can be grateful to our athletes for helping us to do this. But if we lose the other dimension – the call to do our duty irrespective of our feelings, even at the cost of a stiff upper lip – we may find that "our rebel emotions" get the better of us.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HOW TO ADAPT TO IT

by Kevin Bond

In this short note I am going to talk about Climate Change, what it is likely to do to the world within which we live and how our lives will need to change and adapt to the new circumstances which we are already seeing around us. Resilience will become the key term.

The International community began to see how our world was changing around us some years ago and Rachel Carson's seminal work, ' Silent Spring ' was the wake up call to arms for many concerned people. It has taken nearly sixty years of change to the climate, for a tipping point in public concern to occur and, I suspect, history will show that the activities of Greta Thunberg became the spark which lit political fuses around the political West. How can it be that a fourteen year old girl motivated so many young to tell their parents/ grandparents that we are leaving them a set of problems which could turn out to be the end of humanity?



Scientists are telling us currently that it is unlikely we will hit the Paris Accord target of limiting mean temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050. Indeed, irrespective of what we do in the UK to change, as we are only 1% of the emissions problem, it is the combined efforts of China, India and the USA which are required to really impact.

I am not going to look at the arguments about whether the Climate Changes are human-led or not, the fact remains that temperatures are increasing and emissions are still rising worldwide despite commitments to abandon/reduce fossil fuels' use and will continue to drive up emissions. Unfortunately for us, there are other geological changes underway which are affecting the World's electromagnetic and atmospheric capacity to resist the Sun's rays and these are also impacting sea levels and temperature and biodiversity.



The fires we have seen over the past decade or so and increased storminess will likely grow in intensity. In the UK, this will impact us in terms of the infrastructural capacity of sea and river defences. Open grasslands and forest fires are also likely to cause us problems. Loss of life and buildings are already becoming a new 'norm'!

Expenditure on sea and river defences will have to increase significantly in the next two to three decades or many of our major cities will be inundated around their centres. London's tidal defences require significant work now as the Thames Barrier is at the limit of its design capacity. The economic and social consequences of a major inundation in Central London would be comparable to the pandemic of Covid: but overnight!

The past few years have shown us what happens when riverine defences fail or are simply not in place. Just think of Bewdley or Tewkesbury at the confluence of the River Severn and River Avon. We are likely to see a major sea wall breach along the East Coast in the next few years given the tilt of the UK where the North West is rising and the South East falling which leaves the tidal surges along the East Coast rising and recent research is showing Cosmic disturbances impacting tidal surges. Our defences along the East Coast and along the tidal River Thames, are the product of the 1950s flooding and do not take into account new climate information!

The Government has already begun to introduce current and future commitments to change and move away from fossil fuel transport. Our electricity supply system is already dangerously exposed to high demand. Nearly all of our nuclear power stations have closed and the last remaining will close in the next decade. New nuclear power is resisted and very expensive. The move to renewables, and their current mix, is risky as the sun doesn't always shine and the wind is not always suitable for wind farms. Electric car take up is rising very quickly but our capacity to recharge is limited by both recharging points and electricity grid constraints.

Cont...

We must not forget that Climate Change is also going to present new health issues as insects move around the world as do virus and infections. We will see new illnesses in the UK as we experience warmer weather and new bugs and dangerous plants (Giant Hogweed being one such invasive species).



So, how do we each adapt to these changes which are already beginning? Well, I suggest that we think of Corporal Jones in Dad's Army first and 'Don't Panic'. We do not need to all change our cars to new electric models. The environmental impact of building a new electric car is as bad as current models. Current energy packs (batteries) are complex to make and recycle. New energy sources will come forward in the coming years. Travelling less and travelling on public transport works pretty well. Car shares, and car hires even by the hour/day are likely to become

much cheaper.

Home heating changes will develop combining new technologies. Remember the proposed change of home heating to 'hydrogen' is from 2025 for new houses; and this is not likely to happen even then given the lack of proven technologies. Communities have options to provide their own renewable energy solutions at a much more cost effective way of dealing with immediate challenges e.g. biomass electricity and community heating models. Individual action is nearly always the most expensive!

Technology innovation will answer most of our new challenges but the one inevitable will be cost. Estimates of the cost for the UK to change to tackle the current Paris Accord 2050 target of net zero emissions has been estimated at £1 trillion. Given that we have spent about a third of this on dealing with the current pandemic this cost should be affordable over the three decades or so but, the earlier we begin, the more manageable it is. This will result in a raft of new taxes and associated charges. Tax rises are inevitable and we will likely see early impacts by late this year, following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

The evidence shows that governments do not deliver on climate targets nor on proposed solutions. That is why my advice is that most of the changes we as individuals, families and communities need to make, we should make sensibly over time:

Travel less. Use technology thoughtfully. Shop personally (home delivery can be environmentally damaging). Source food based on a combination of desire and impact on environment. Don't over-shop.

Don't build in the flood plain. Understand that flooding from sea or river will impact on drainage systems. Encourage non return valve design on toilets.

Encourage use of sustainable building products which are low carbon.

Share transport systems. Share energy production systems and look for more local resilience.

Protect ourselves from a change in the physical environment. The sun burns - cover up. Be aware of new invasive plants and be cautious.

Accept the need to change and adapt and expect the impacts from a changing environment to get worse because they will; so build in resilience. What we do in the next ten years will be the foundations for our families and their future. So, what we do must allow for future changes.





Come and Celebrate Harvest
at our Bring and Share

HARVEST LUNCH

On Sunday 10th October
from 11:45am at The Parish Centre

Sign up for sweet / savoury items

come and enjoy family fun
with a quiz, musical interludes,
tea, coffee & bar and fellowship




We're Going

TEN PIN BOWLING

THURSDAY 18TH NOVEMBER AT 6PM

This is a great opportunity to have fun together
as a church family, and to invite friends along.

We will meet at 6:00pm at Ten Pin, Tachbrook Park Drive, Leamington Spa, CV34 6RH

To book your place, please use
the sign up sheet in church
or use the link on the website

JUST £10 PER PERSON
Includes 2 games
and a burger




Notes from Tom and Verity Clare - CMS Partners



In our (mostly weed-filled) garden here in Porton, this colour-changing rose has brought unexpected joy...

We wanted to send an update to keep you all informed of what's happening for us at the moment.

We have now been living in Porton, just north of Salisbury, for six weeks or so. Tom has started back working as a GP locum several days a week at a central GP practice in Salisbury and the older two boys (Ezra and Eli) have been attending the local village school. Simeon (our third son) has been attending nursery three mornings a week and has a place to start in the same school as his older brothers in September. Given the circumstances, the boys have settled really well and they are generally enjoying school and nursery.

Verity is managing to spend a good amount of time with her parents, as her mother Angela's brain cancer continues to cause worsening disability. We are so glad that we can be here to support them, but it's been so difficult to watch on as Angela has lost the ability to walk and gradually becomes more dependent on others since we returned.

On top of this, Verity's grandmother (and Angela's mother) passed away at the impressive age of ninety-two. She spent the last two weeks in hospital and Verity and her sisters have been supporting their grandad through this difficult time. We are so glad that we are able to be present here in the UK to stand with Verity's family at this time. The relative flexibility in our roles here has enabled us to be available to make visits and take hospital phone calls when needed throughout the day. Thank you all for your support.

One of the lovely things about being back has been the chance to spend time with both sides of the family (Tom's Dad on the left and Verity's on the right).



COVID-19 on the up in Uganda

Since the end of May (as we were arriving in the UK), the coronavirus pandemic seems to have really taken hold in Uganda. It's unclear to us exactly why it's suddenly got so bad, but the official figures for the number infected (probably a significant underestimate of the true number) has shot up, followed by a rise in COVID-related deaths.

We have had a stream of sad news from friends working with CMS across Uganda as the death toll from COVID-19 increases, such as the recent death of a doctor working at Kisiizi Hospital as well as their local bishop, and the passing of a young American expatriate missionary mother in Kampala. Plus, we understand that supplies of oxygen across the country are getting very short, whilst there is also a shortage of intensive care beds with ventilation capabilities.

The country is currently in the middle of a six-week lockdown, similar to when we first arrived last March. The impact of this on incomes, education and family life is hard to estimate but it will be a huge challenge for the whole country to go through again.

Financial update

We wanted to quickly update on the financial side, as many of you may also count yourselves as our financial supporters.

Cont...

We'll be sending out individual emails to those financially supporting us to explain this in more detail, but the basic summary is that while we are in the UK...

- CMS will continue to send a stipend for Verity (coming from the fund to which our financial supporters contribute), but not for Tom as he has now gone back to doing some paid work.
- All money given to CMS in our name goes to a fund which is strictly kept for funding our mission – this includes costs for some expected time in the UK over the course of the four to five year term (although we initially planned a return after two years).
- Any surplus from the combination of Tom's locum wages and Verity's CMS stipend (after living costs, tax, fees etc) will also go towards God's work in Arua, either in healthcare or education.
- We keep separate accounts for any money received from CMS to ensure it will all go towards the work in Madi and West Nile Diocese.
- Our fund is not currently dropping (praise God!), with donations covering the money going out and whenever we are ready (from a family perspective), the funds are available for us to return to Uganda and resume the work to which God has called us there.



Seeing God's colour in a time of grey

There's no question that for us this is the hardest phase of our lives so far. As anyone who has experienced periods of suffering would probably agree, these times challenge our faith and can make us question aspects of God's character. Some passages in the Bible are very hard to read at the moment but others bring great comfort and we are very aware of the need to root ourselves in God's word, especially in this time.

We've recently been reminded of God's care for his children through the stories of Hagar and Elijah. Specifically his provision of food and water to nourish them when they were in a barren place and in Elijah's case, to give him the energy he needed for the long journey ahead. We know that we need God's word to sustain and nourish us in the coming weeks and months and need to continue to listen for his voice in our lives.

We are also aware that even in (or especially in) the midst of trouble and suffering, God's sovereignty and compassion still remain. One of the things that Verity has particularly enjoyed about living here is the chance to go for runs around the local countryside, without any onlookers, as was always the case in Arua. We arrived in the UK at a particularly beautiful time of year, just as everything was coming into bloom.

These moments of peace and space away from everyone provide much needed rest time to be with and hear from God. Despite generally feeling much better after a run, I noticed that my enjoyment and mood are quite weather-dependent. It's hard not to marvel at God's incredible creation when you're at the top of the hill, the sun shining over glorious wheat fields, lighting up the valleys below. But I can run the same route, with the same views and feel nothing, even though I'm still surrounded by God's incredible works of art. I find I have to look harder to see the beauty through the rain and clouds. In the same way, in this 'grey' period of our lives, we know that God's goodness and love still remain and there are still moments of joy and blessing that we don't want to miss.

Being out in the countryside has also reminded me how quickly things come and go – the fields of rapeseed were here one week and gone the next, followed by dog roses, elderflower, flax and now poppies and cornflowers. Just as I want to appreciate each of these flowers for the time that they are in bloom, we want to make the most of each day God has given us in this period back in the UK and appreciate the opportunities and people that God has brought into our lives for this time.

Prayer points

- Pray for Verity's family as they come to terms with the loss of Verity's grandmother, especially for her grandfather, Roger.

Notes from Tom and Verity Clare - CMS Partners Prayer points cont...

- Pray for Angela (Verity's mother) and Chris (Verity's father) as they deal with the current reality of disability and loss of independence – we continue to pray for miraculous healing but we trust in God and know that He continues to be good in every circumstance.
- Pray for Verity as she tries to support both her parents and her grandparents whilst also looking after the younger children (particularly as Joel is currently very fond of biting and hitting his brothers!)
- Pray for Tom – for wisdom as he returns to the different world of UK General Practice whilst also doing some administrative work for the Diocese in Uganda.
- Pray for the staff in the health centres of Madi and West Nile Diocese – for protection from COVID, for compassion as they care for their patients and for wisdom in knowing how to deal with patients safely.
- Pray for the people of Uganda as they live with the reality of COVID and the shortage of treatment options and for wisdom for those in national leadership.

Tom and Verity Clare



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We were saddened to hear of the death of Gloria Mole. Gloria and her son, Peter, were regular members of the congregation at Holy Trinity.

We were also saddened to hear of the passing of one of our regular readers, Kathleen Symonds (formerly of West Street, Stratford).

Our thoughts and sympathies are with the family and friends of both ladies. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.



Child Sacrifice in Uganda

by Paul Suter

Introduction

I am writing this due to the interest that some at Holy Trinity have in Uganda through the CMS partners Tom and Verity. My knowledge of the matter arises as I am a trustee of *Children on the Edge*. Rachel Bentley is CEO and Co-Founder of this charity and our paths first crossed around twenty years ago when Lynn and I were in the same homegroup as her at our previous church.

You may remember the shocking images on our TV screens of children in Romanian orphanages following the end of the brutal Ceauşescu regime. Rachel, then working for The Bodyshop, visited Romania with Anita Roddick in 1990 and *Children on the Edge* was born. The charity runs a number of projects around the world looking to resource and support children living on the edge enabling them to become agents of change in their own lives. Examples are:

- Education for Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh
- Early years education for Congolese refugee children in Uganda
- Education for 'untouchable' Dalit children in India
- Education for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon

The practice of child sacrifice

Child sacrifice has emerged as a horrifying form of child abuse in Uganda. In the past decade, the sacrifice of children in Uganda has been cited by the media, police and Government of Uganda as a major child protection concern. Police records continue to highlight numerous cases of child sacrifice in the country and the media in Uganda has been awash with stories covering the gruesome ritualised mutilation or murder of young children.

Ugandans believe there is witchcraft power in the shedding of blood. Usually, that blood is shed from animals sacrificed at local shrines. However, as people have become more desperate to manipulate and appease the spirits, they have been turning to the shedding of human blood and using human body parts.

The problem for the prosecuting authorities has been that human sacrifice cases have a very unique nature, but have historically been prosecuted as murder under the Penal Code Act, or under Human Trafficking legislation, neither of which is sufficient to deal with the crime. Sadly, this has resulted in perpetrators committing crimes with relative impunity and the unchecked growth of the practice. Lynn and I were recently on a zoom meeting that included Mike Chibita who now serves on the Supreme Court of Uganda but previously was the Director of Public Prosecution. He explained how frustrating it was when children were found with adults and the strong suspicion was that they were to be harmed. However, nothing could be done because no law had yet been broken.

The practice is rooted in the belief that blood sacrifice can bring fortune, wealth and happiness. The "purer" the blood, the more potent the spell, making innocent children a target. Witch doctors look for children without marks or piercings, so many parents pierce their children's ears at birth and get their boys circumcised in an effort to protect them.

Sacrifice is carried out by witch doctors who charge very high prices. It is therefore the wealthy and powerful who fuel this. The small elite who gained wealth in a relatively short time during Uganda's economic boom in the early 21st century is an example promoted by witch doctors for their successful profession. They claim that they have aided many of the nouveau riche to gain their wealth. There is also an increased risk of child sacrifice and increased work for witch doctors around the elections. This is because high-profile Ugandans have bought into the practice by being convinced they need to sacrifice a child to win a seat as an MP.

Cont...

Campaigning for change

Children on the Edge has been working in Jinja, Uganda for a number of years and in 2012 created a 'Child Protection Team' model at the height of a spate of child sacrifice killings. This was developed specifically for the local situation and it effectively eradicated incidents.

In 2015 Annie Ikpa (media professional and the instigator of the concept of the Bill) made contact with Rachel Bentley. Since then, *Children on the Edge* has been supporting the introduction of stand-alone legislation, specifically addressing child sacrifice. Together with Annie, they worked with a group of Civil Society Organisations to engage the 'Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Children' to draft the original form of the Bill.

They also worked with the police, media and traditional healers, looking at how cases are dealt with and promoted a petition to ensure witchdoctors do not advertise through the media. In 2017, through work with the Ugandan Child Rights NGO Network, they focussed on gaining testimonies from survivors and families and it was after this that MP Atiku Bernard introduced a private members Bill for the Act. At this point World Vision Uganda also joined the team fighting to ensure this Bill became law.

As the years passed, Annie and these two organisations were joined by a strong group of other Ugandan agencies as well as members of parliament in this campaign. The group has worked through the meticulous process of numerous research projects, rewrites, refinements and readings. Of course, there has been opposition including the shocking arrest of a man in September 2020 as he was attempting to deliver a package to the Speaker of Parliament. That package contained the severed head of a child.

In the end the campaign was successful and the crucial landmark decision was made on 4 May 2021 when the Prevention and Prohibition of Human Sacrifice Bill, 2020 was passed by the Ugandan Parliament. This was signed into law by the President on 14 July 2021.

I mentioned above the zoom meeting that Lynn and I joined that included Mike Chibita. This was held recently after the bill passed Parliament. This was a truly inspirational event where we were able to hear first hand from those at the heart of this campaign including Annie, Rachel, Mike and the Honourable Atiku. If you are interested in watching a thirty-one minute edited version of this it is available at <https://youtu.be/Gn3KNitR6mM>

You can donate to this charity
at
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Peppa Pig balloon on church ceiling
at West End

Photograph by Harry Lomax