

# CORNERSTONE

The Magazine of  
**WITNEY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**



Christ Jesus is the chief cornerstone.

In Him the whole fabric is bound together, as it grows into a temple,  
dedicated to the Lord (Ephesians 2:21)

**SUMMER 2021**

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It is over a year since COVID-19 and the associated restrictions, which are slowly being removed, and hopefully will continue to be eased from 21<sup>st</sup> June; but even if it does, we cannot be complacent about our actions until the people in this country, and the rest of the world, have been fully vaccinated

In the last edition I stated that the Church would remain closed, but from 23<sup>rd</sup> May the Church has re-opened for Sunday morning services only, and the attendance on a Sunday has been very promising with a good number of people attending, and thank you to those of our membership who are leading services, but we are in the process of others, outside of our church, to come to preach



Once again, I hope this edition of the magazine will remind you that you are not forgotten; so, may God bless you and keep you in the months ahead. He alone is our refuge and strength when times get tough.

So, on that note, I now turn to some of this month's contents: Lesley Barter, once again, gives us the Deacon's Letter; there is the continuation of Ken Lee's Bible Study and Pip Cartwright's history of WCC; some articles have been extracted from Parish Pump, to which we subscribe, to name but a few

Many thanks for those who have contributed for this edition, but would encourage anyone to consider submitting article(s) for the next edition by either:

E-mail: [terrypowlesland@uwclub.net](mailto:terrypowlesland@uwclub.net)

[jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net](mailto:jacquipowlesland@uwclub.net)

or, just plainly written on paper, which can be typed up

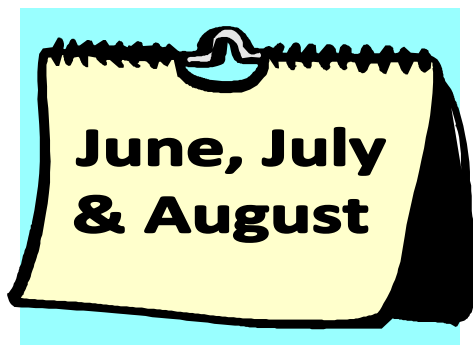
The next 3-monthly Autumn edition, covering September, October & November is due on **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September**

Your Editor

A deacon was in a hurry to inform the congregation that their minister had recovered from an illness, so he put the following notice outside the church: *God is good. The vicar is better.*

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## Reflections during COVID-19 pandemic

The weekly services will start at 10.30 am but you will be able to join at 10.15

### June

6<sup>th</sup> Rev Elaine Kinchin  
 13<sup>th</sup> Rev Judi Holloway  
 20<sup>th</sup> Nanna Blackman Communion  
 27<sup>th</sup> Rev Judi Holloway

### July

4<sup>th</sup> Rev Judi Holloway  
 11<sup>th</sup> Gillian Warson  
 18<sup>th</sup> Rev Elaine Kinchin Communion  
 25<sup>th</sup> Nanna Blackman

### Aug

1<sup>st</sup> tba  
 8<sup>th</sup> tba  
 15<sup>th</sup> Rev Judi Holloway Communion  
 22<sup>nd</sup> Rev Elaine Kinchin  
 29<sup>th</sup> Rev Oliver Kinchin

### Sep

5<sup>th</sup> tba

**June** 14 Norline la Fortune  
 16 Sandi Franklin  
 24 Janet Park-Pratley  
 26 Barbara MacLarty  
 30 Jacqui Powlesland



**July** 05 Bob Blackman  
 25 Harry Hathaway  
 Oscar Stanley  
 26 John Brent  
 Jennie Garrett  
 28 Michael Pratley  
 30 Irene St Clair

**Sep** 01 Theo Howells  
 02 Gail King  
 Claire Woodward

**Aug** 02 Janet Hayes

## Opening and closing churches in the UK

There were an estimated 45,500 congregations or churches in the UK in 2020: 79%, in England, 8% (3,700 churches) in Wales, 8% (3,500 churches) in Scotland and 5% (2,100 churches) in Northern Ireland.

New congregations are being started or having to close all the time; Most of the Anglican new congregations are in the Church of England, many of which are planted by the larger churches. A third of all the churches which have closed in the last 15 years have been Methodist, followed by the Anglicans and Roman Catholics (both 15%) and the Presbyterians (9%). The Baptists (7% of all closures) have also seen over 400 churches close in the last 15 years, which is one in eight of their congregations.

## Deacon's Letter

Dear Friends

At last we are really getting a sense that green shoots are appearing – and not just on the trees. We are passing some real milestones in the Roadmap and fervently praying that there will be no more setbacks. We have a great deal to thank God for: not least that our Church Family is still intact. We have used the lockdown time to make some much needed repairs and improvements to our church fabric and properties and we now need to think about what kind of church we want it to be. Let us use the opportunity to do some radical thinking and face some difficult decisions.

Firstly, we need to consider the possibilities that technology offers to enable people with mobility and travel difficulties. Many of us have got used to Zoom meetings, not just for worship but for reflection and Bible Study. Attendance at Sunday services online has remained at an encouraging level and we have continued to keep in touch regularly with those who aren't able to join us, so no one is forgotten. We recognise the fact that nothing can replace face to face contact, however.

What we need to work on is our community presence. We have allowed ourselves to be restricted by our small numbers and age demographic. Since that will not magically change after Covid, we need to do some really creative thinking about what we are able to offer – making better use of our property portfolio and especially our garden. We don't necessarily need to lead lots of new activities ourselves, but we can offer facilities to organisations that are socially active in the town and volunteer if we feel able to do so. Volunteering doesn't need to involve physical fitness, incidentally.

We have some exceptional talent in our church which needs nurturing. Please think about what you can offer – we will suggest ways in which it could fit into our future plans.

Lastly, we must bring our vision to bear in the selection of a new Minister. I am sure that we all agree we need a motivational leader who will help us to be more than we believe we can be.

This excerpt from Soul Fuel by Bear Grylls sums it up:

*When God gives us big goals it often begins as a small idea. So, protect and respect those dreams: they are often God-given. And remember: a mighty oak tree is just a little nut that held his ground. God likes it when we think BIG.*

*'Make your tents large. Spread out! Think big!*

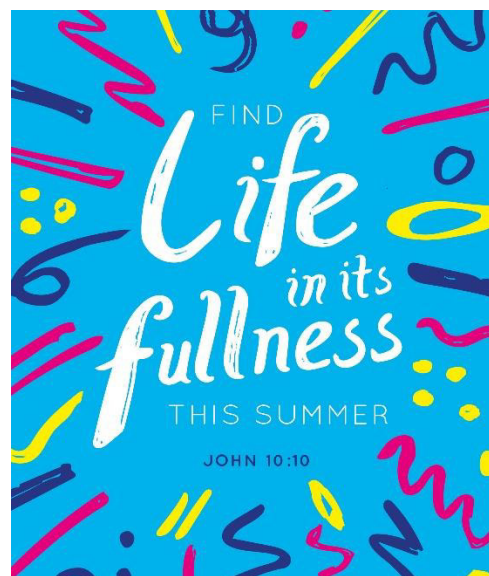
*Use plenty of rope, drive the tent pegs deep.*

*You're going to need lots of elbow room for your growing family... '*

*Isaiah 54 2-3 Message*

We may be a small church, but we could be a real force for good in the town. That is the best form of evangelism that I know.

God bless you all.





## PRAYER LETTER

No 198

### HOPE

#### Hope

#### Opportunities

#### Promises

#### Expectations

The word 'HOPE' is used so frequently in conversation with people in our everyday life. Expressions like 'hope you get better soon', 'hope the weather will stay fine for this particular occasion' 'hope you have a safe journey' hope for peace around the world 'etc.

These last 18 months the word HOPE must have been used millions of times as people have uttered, 'I hope I don't catch Covid 19'; hope Covid doesn't spread any further; hope the Scientists are able to produce a vaccine.

As we know Covid 19 has spread throughout the world making it a frightening Global Pandemic. Fortunately in an amazing short space of time the Scientists in many countries have discovered several vaccines which have been manufactured for distribution and inoculation. This is a very positive outcome from our hopes.

Hope is looking forward to the future with optimism and perseverance. The populations of countries involved in conflicts and war hope for peace. Refugees who flee these countries hope for a better, safer life elsewhere in a friendly country. All over the world Farmers hope for a successful harvest which helps in feeding the nations.

Opportunities arise in different situation or circumstances, some by random events others planned or by negotiation. Many Governments, World Associations and Charities raise money and invest in programmes to help Third World Countries the opportunity to have clean water, health care schemes, education, food programmes etc. As Christians we should support such organisations not forgetting those in desperate need in this country.

We can seize opportunities in our ordinary everyday lives when prompted by the Spirit. In the Old Testament God PROMISED that He would deliver the Israelites to the Promised land from their exile in Egypt. In the New Testament God fulfilled his promises in sending Jesus as the Messiah not just for the Jews but for the Gentiles too. After His Resurrection, Jesus told his disciples that he was going to send them what his father (God) had promised. Jesus is referring to the Holy Spirit.

Expectations, when you expect something, you expect it to actually happen, to be delivered, to be fulfilled. Are we looking forward? Keep positive, keep and hopeful in the days and weeks ahead.

Contemplate on this verse of a well-known hymn:

*Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
Whose trust ever childlike, no cares could destroy,  
Be there at our waking and give us we pray  
Your bliss in our hearts Lord at the start of the day.*

Every Blessing,

Beryl

*Please note that for up-to-date prayer requests contact Beryl (703717)*

At the request of Beryl Cartwright, the following article, used by Elaine Kinchin in a recent Zoom service, has been submitted by Elaine Kinchin, and is entitled:

## Prayers of thanksgiving

Father God, we thank you for:

**A**pples and **a**musement  
**B**ooks and **b**eauty  
**C**ompassion and **c**onfidence  
**D**eacons and **d**ebate  
**E**xcitement and **e**ggs  
**F**aithfulness and **f**ellowship  
**G**ood news and **g**ratitude  
**H**appiness and **h**ope  
**I**magination and **i**ngenuity  
**J**oy and **j**ocularity  
**K**eenness and **k**iwifruits  
**L**ove and **l**iberty  
**M**usic and **m**eerkats  
**N**oodles and **n**uts  
**O**ases and **o**ranges  
**P**eacemakers and **P**ointless  
**Q**ueues and **q**ueries  
**R**outine and **r**elaxation  
**S**anity and **s**ecurity  
**T**ranquillity and **t**reasure in Heaven  
**U**mbrellas and **u**niqueness  
**V**ision and **v**egetables  
**W**ellness and **w**ater  
**X**rays and **x**yllophones  
**Y**uccas and **Y**our Son  
**Z**eal and **z**ebra - Amen

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The following article, written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, writes

on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith, and is entitled:

## Exploring the Big Questions: scientists and theologians share their views

It's important to have debates about science and Christian faith and to dig into the hot topics, but we can't exist solely on a diet of controversy. I find it helpful, at times, to simply enjoy the wonders revealed by science and the big questions they raise about meaning and purpose. What's the universe for? What do you do with your feelings of awe and wonder? Where do we get our sense of the value of the living world from? I had the privilege of meeting a group of Christian scientists and theologians who shared thoughts about these big questions, and will share some of their thoughts here.

The Oxford-based theologian Alister McGrath shared that "science is wonderful at asking questions. Some of those questions can be answered, but very often when you do answer them, they simply open up yet more questions. But of course, there are some more fundamental questions I think science simply cannot answer...questions like, 'Why am I here?'"

Rhoda Hawkins, a physicist at Sheffield University, has had a similar experience. "I never cease to be amazed at quite how impressive the world is, and how impressive the mechanisms are for how things work...It really is beautiful in many ways, and it leads me to think about God. I'm not saying that I have any proof, but I'm saying that by looking at the world around me it tells me more about God and it leads me to worship Him."

Another scientist who appreciates beauty is Jeff Hardin, who explained that "studying the wonders of the living world is an exercise in art appreciation. For me, God is the creator of everything... so the



joy of discovery is also the joy of appreciating the world that God has made...and leads me to thank God for the amazing world that we have to enjoy and to explore.”

I will close with some words from Jeff Schloss, who – like the others quoted above – finds that Christian faith makes science more satisfying for him. “Once I became a Christian...I had the sense that I was studying the marvels of the natural world, which are marvellous in their own right but become more profoundly engaging and enticing when one thinks that you’re studying the works of God.” Perhaps if we can spend more time listening to people like this, our discussions about science and faith will also be richer and deeper.

Quotes from videos on [www.wondersofthelivingworld.org](http://www.wondersofthelivingworld.org)

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The following article, taken from ‘Prayers of Life’ by Michel Quoist, was submitted by Marjorie Lee, back in 2010, and Beryl Cartwright has re-submit it, and is entitled:

## Lord, I have time

People complain that they haven’t enough time. It’s because they look at their lives from too human a point of view. There’s always time to do what God wants us to do, but we must put ourselves completely into each moment that he offers us.

*Be most careful then how you conduct yourselves: like sensible people, not like simpletons. Use the present opportunity to the full, for these are evil days. So do not be fools, but try to understand what the will of the Lord is, (Eph 5, 15-17)*

I went out, Lord People were coming out,

They were coming and going,  
Walking and running.  
Everything was rushing, cars, lorries, the street, the whole town.  
People were rushing not to waste time,  
They were rushing after time,

To catch up with time,  
To gain time.  
Goodbye, sir, excuse me, I haven’t time.  
I’ll come back, I can’t wait, I haven’t time,  
I must end this letter – I haven’t time.  
I’d love to help you, but I haven’t time.  
I can’t accept, having no time.  
I can’t think, I can’t read, I’m swamped, I haven’t time.  
I’d like to pray, but I haven’t time.

You understand, Lord, they simply haven’t the time.

The child is playing, he hasn’t time right now . . . Later on . . .

The schoolboy has his homework to do, he hasn’t time . . .

Later on . . .

The student has his courses, and so much work, he hasn’t time . . .

Later on . . .

The young man is at his sports, he hasn’t time . . .

Later on . . .

The young married man has his new house, he has to fix it up,

he hasn’t time . . . Later on . . .

The grandparents have their grandchildren, they haven’t time . . .

Later on . . .

They are ill, they have their treatments, they haven’t time . . .

Later on . . .

They are dying, they have no . . .

Too late! . . . They have no more time!

And so all people run after time, Lord.

They pass through life running – hurried, jostled, overburdened,

frantic, and they never get there. They haven’t time.

In spite of all their efforts they're still  
short of time,  
of a great deal of time.  
Lord, you must have made a mistake in  
your calculations.

There is a big mistake somewhere.  
The hours are too short,  
The days are too short,  
Our lives are too short.

You who are beyond time, Lord, you smile  
to see us fighting it.  
And you know what you are doing.  
You make no mistakes in your distribution  
of time to people.

You give each one time to do what you  
want them to do.

But we must not lose time  
waste time,  
kill time,

For time is a gift that you give us,  
But a perishable gift,  
A gift that does not keep.

Lord, I have time,  
I have plenty of time,  
All the time that you give me,  
The years of my life,  
The days of my years,  
The hours of my days,  
They are all mine,  
Mine to fill, quietly, calmly,  
But to fill completely, up to the brim,  
To offer them to you, that of their  
insipid water  
You may make a rich wine such as you  
made once in Cana of Galilee.  
I am not asking you tonight, Lord, for time  
to do this and then that,  
But your grace to do conscientiously, in  
the time that you give me,  
what you want me to do



The following article, written by by Tim Lenton, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## 100 years of the Chinese Communists

One hundred years ago, on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1921, the Chinese Communist Party was founded. It had its roots in the Russian Revolution of 1917 and at first worked with the Chinese Nationalists. But the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek, turned violently against them in 1927 and for a while the Communists, under Mao Zedong and others, went underground, turning to rural areas for recruits.

The Nationalists were stronger, however, and in 1934 Mao and his followers undertook the Long March northwards in order to survive.

After that, and despite many internal power struggles, the party grew quickly – assisted by its resistance to the Japanese invasion – and drove the Nationalist Government out and into Taiwan in 1949, following the Chinese Civil War. The People's Republic of China was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> October that year.

Today the CCP has more than 85 million members and is a monolithic and monopolistic entity dominating all aspects of Chinese life. Although Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution insists that citizens "enjoy freedom of religious belief", in May this year a decree was issued requiring all religious leaders to support the Communist Party: links to foreign organisations, such as church organisations and missionary societies, often led to persecution.

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What did one magnet say to the other  
magnet?  
I find you very attractive

Why didn't the skeleton go swimming?  
Because he had no body to go with



The following article, written & submitted by Pip Cartwright, was correct when first published in July 2006, and is a continuation from the last edition, and is entitled:

### **The Growth of WCC: 1960-1962**

During March 1960 before the Rev. David Dews took up the pastorate, the Rev. and Mrs Rudd who were living in the Manse were blessed with a baby daughter. 'The baby in the Manse' was named Jennifer Rudd. The Rudds' vacated the Manse in July 1960.

For the Easter celebrations, Stainer's 'Crucifixion' was performed in the Church. In May 1960 Andrew Turner was born to Daphne and Philip Turner. Philip was a Deacon and Daphne is the eldest daughter of the Sellman family. In July, Kevin Mark Sellman was born to Diane and Peter Sellman.

With the successful completion of his studies at Mansfield College, Oxford the Rev. David Dews was ordained during the summer. At this time the Diaconate consisted of Mr A. E. Sellman as Church Secretary, Mrs E Cadel as Treasurer with Deacons: Mr Sidney Collis, Mr Bob Richardson, Mr Peter Sellman, Mr Philip Turner, Mr Wright (Miss M Lea and Mr Braine hadn't sought re-election).

In October the Church considered a draft of a 'Short Confession of Faith' which had been prepared by the Congregational Union of England and Wales. In November the Youth Group re-opened but it appears that there was a lack of leaders but not a lack of young people. Mr Bob Richardson (Deacon), who was a farmer and very good with his hands, made a new Table Tennis Table for the Youth Group.

Sadly on December 28<sup>th</sup> 1960 Mr Frank Lea died. He had been a Church Member since the 1850's and had served the

Church in various capacities, such as Deacon, Choir member and leader, but also as Sunday School Superintendent from 1912 to 1945.

January 1961 started with a Special Church Meeting. It was called because New College, our Trustees, asked the Church to pass a resolution allowing for some of the land at the rear of the Church to be sold to Witney U.D.C., who wished to acquire it for development. The Church was aware of these developments and really had no option but to agree to it as it was likely that the land would be acquired by compulsory purchase otherwise. This land is now part of the site of the Nuffield Medical Centre down Welch Way which was also built at this time.

A suggestion was made by the Witney U.D.C. that, in return, land would be made available at the western end of Welch Way for a new Church if they wished to vacate the High Street site. This matter of the future of the Church was a subject for discussion for many months following the acceptance of the resolution. The Marlborough Lane Hall (our original Church) was now in the hands of the Scout Association and some Memorial Tablets had to be removed.

Church life continued with the Sunday School visit to the Pantomime, a performance of Hayden's 'Creation' by the Witney Choral Society, Easter Week Services, a Concert by the Marston Minstrels, Commonwealth Youth Sunday Service held in the Congregational Church and the Sunday School outing to Wicksteed Park, Kettering. The Women's Pleasant Hour visited Leamington Spa and the Youth Group organised a 'Tramps Supper'.

Sadly, the deaths of Mrs Elizabeth Townsend, Mrs Florence Townsend, Mr William Hedges, Mr William Phipps and Mrs Giles from Freeland were reported.

At the AGM, Mr Sid Collis resigned as Deacon and Mr David Pearson was elected in his place. With the death of the Church Treasurer, Mrs E Cadel in December 1961, Mr David Pearson volunteered to take on her duties as Treasurer. One of his first requests was to ask Church Members to sign a Covenant Form so that the Church could reclaim Income Tax.

The proceeds of the sale of Marlborough Lane Hall and the land at the rear of the Church attained £2,050. A suggestion that this money be used to purchase land in a more highly populated part of Witney for a new Church and Manse was further discussed. This question was going to run and run!!

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The following articles, written by Revd Dr Jo White, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and the first one reflects what it can really mean to 'be still', and the second the need for listening

## **Reflected Faith: Sit and be Still**

How do you 'sit' in church? I'm a wriggler and change my position on the seat often. I cross one leg over the other, then swap them over, stretch them out, then cross them at the ankles. I do the same with my arms. I lean one way and then the other.

In other words, 'I'm a fidget.' But having been absent from a church building for so long, I wanted to think this month about simply *sitting and being still* before the Lord.

I'm well aware we've done little else this last 18 months – but if you manage to get into a church building, for whatever reason I'd like to encourage us all to just sit still and breathe in the place. To relish being 'back'!

To sit 'heavily' in that spot. To feel the solidity of the surface you are sitting on. Lean into it. Feel how it supports you. Feel each part of your body where it is touching the chair or pew.

Look around you at all the distinctive seating set aside for the different participants of the church: the choir, the worship leader, a deacon or curate, the priest and so on.

In an Anglican church there will be a chair especially dedicated for the use of the Bishop.

However plain or fancy each piece of furniture is within your building, they all have the same purpose. To hold the person and keep them safe.

**NOW:** As you sit in the church building – or at home if you are not able to do so – think of all those people in the Bible stories who sat with Jesus. The number of times He taught in the Temple or in a synagogue, or to crowds gathered on a hill. Recall the Last Supper and His friends gathered sitting with Him to eat and share the Passover meal, and then recall the meal with the men from the Emmaus Road. So many meal times with the bold and the weak, the saints and the sinners. With you and me.

## **Reflected Faith: the spaces between**

Most of us have been in situations where we are not in control, and we don't know how to feel or how to react to our situation. We need help.

The most valuable gift you can have at those times – is time itself. Time to be 'listened to'. Really listened to. But it is not easy to find someone who will 'actively listen' to you.

Think of the last time you were in the reverse position with a friend or a colleague, and they were talking to you. How easily do you recall what they actually said? Most of us are so busy getting our replies ready for when the person has finished speaking, that we don't clearly hear their punch line.

With God it is different. We can take everything to Him; all our worries and cares and failures and faults. And He listens.

He doesn't necessarily jump in with an instant, easy solution, but rather He promises to always guide us, if we ask Him, through life's challenges, and He promises to never leave us. He often speaks to us through his written word, the Bible.

This last year, when many of us have been communicating with others by phone or Zoom, we get nervous if it all goes quiet. We feel the need to 'nudge' the other person, to make sure they are still there. Silence is not a natural state for many of us – and yet it is in the quiet we can hear ourselves and God most clearly.

So, when we talk with God, our conversation should not be rushed and one-sided. We need to give space to our silence before Him, to wait and listen for Him to speak to us.

**NOW:** As you worship in church, listen to the silences: the spaces between the words, the music and the actions. Listen to all the prayers that are spoken.

Look at your surroundings and reflect that they have absorbed thousands of prayers – and holy silence – down the centuries of their existence.

Look out the window and see the vastness of the sky above you – and let your prayers join with those that have gone before you. May the knowledge that you are not alone encourage and strengthen you.

The following article written by Tony Horsfall, and extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## Time for a change

I have had my walking boots for a few years now, and they have been faithful companions. We have walked many miles together during that time, on my daily walks as well as on holiday. They are partly responsible for my physical recovery after Covid-19, so they have a place in my heart. They fit me very well, and we have adjusted to one another. But they are very thin now on the soles and heels, and it is reluctantly time for a change.

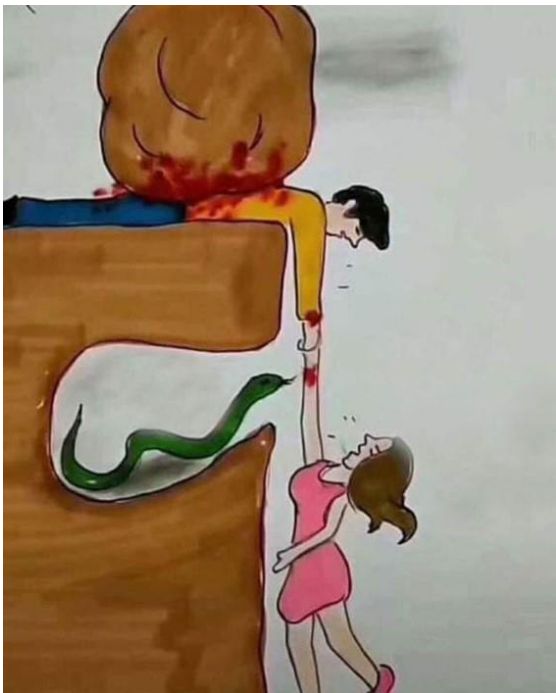
So, one recent Saturday I bought a new pair. They are clean and smart, and fully waterproof. The soles are strong and new. There are no signs of wear and tear. But I know that change is never easy. They will take some time to wear in. They may rub and I may get a blister or two. Occasionally I will long for my old boots, and wonder, 'Did I make a mistake?' Hopefully, they will become as much a part of me as my old ones as we tread the miles together. But there is always a risk with something new, Isn't there?

Change is never easy in whatever form it comes. But change is inevitable because life does not stand still, and we have to keep adjusting and adapting and being open to fresh winds of the Spirit. Never more so than in these present, troublesome days.

Strangely enough as I have been meditating on this, my reading this morning (Isaiah 9) contained a reference to 'Every warrior's boot used in battle ... will be destined for burning (v5).' Oh dear. I'm sure like me, warriors were fond of their boots too and found it hard to part with them.

The following article has been submitted by David Kinchin

The man doesn't know that there is a snake underneath. The woman doesn't know that there is a stone crushing the man. The woman thinks: "I am going to fall! And I can't climb because the snake is going to bite me! Why can't the man use a little more strength and pull me up!" The man thinks: "I am in so much pain! Yet I'm still pulling you as much as I can! Why don't you try and climb a little harder!?"



The moral is— you can't see the pressure the other person is under, and the other person can't see the pain you're in. This is life, whether it's with work, family, feelings or friends, we should try to understand each other. Learn to think differently, perhaps more clearly and communicate better. A little thought and patience goes a long way

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The following article, written by Canon Paul Hardingham, has been extracted from

Parish Pump, considers the need for encouragement and is entitled:

## Olympic Gold

*July should see the start of the Tokyo Olympics, having been postponed from last year due to the Coronavirus pandemic. A number of New Testament letters refer to Olympic sport including Hebrews: 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith' (Hebrews 12:1-2).*

The Christian life is compared to a long-distance race, but despite the struggles and obstacles, there is a great crowd of witnesses cheering us on. We have a heavenly Father who loves us and a Saviour who has run the race before us. If we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, He will enable us to finish the race.

During the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, the British athlete Derek Redmond was running in the semi-finals of the 400 metres. About 250 metres from the finish his hamstring tore. He fell to the ground in pain and stretcher bearers came over to him. However, Redmond was determined to finish the race and so he started hopping toward the finishing line. Suddenly Jim Redmond, Derek's father, ran out of the stands towards him. "You don't have to do this," he told his son. "Yes, I do," said Derek, to which his father said, "We're going to finish this together." They completed the lap with Derek leaning on his father's shoulder. As they crossed the finish line, the spectators rose to give Derek a standing ovation. Although he didn't win an Olympic medal, Derek Redmond finished the race with his father at his side. Let's not forget the encouragement we have to finish the race!

The following article has been written and submitted by Clare Ellis, and is entitled

## **Every Cloud**

Reflecting on the Pandemic, and lockdowns, I am very proud of how our church stepped up, to serve and protect each other.

During the first lockdown, I, like others in our non-secular society, wondered where the churches were during this time?

As the doors shut, to passers-by who may have wished prayer, and our regular coffee shop callers, who often rely on a warm reception and affordable hot drinks and treats, it seemed somehow wrong.

I knew the Church buildings had to shut, but surely, churches needed to be visible, as beacons of hope and support in our society?

I started to feel a bit disappointed.

I mentioned it.

I didn't reckon on what happened next; behind the scenes the Church was on the move!

David Kinchin was signing our church up to a Zoom account, which, as an organisation, we have to pay for.

David was also learning how to host our 'new church.'

Elaine set up and began to run our Wednesday morning Reflection sessions, which latterly have included a Wednesday evening session to accommodate working people who couldn't attend the morning session.

As a regular attendee I would describe the group as an informal, informative and sociable gathering where we all could air our questions and opinions on the bible verses we were reading. A real treat.

Church services resumed online and it was wonderful to see our congregation login to join the Church services provided.

I for one had never used Zoom, and like a lot of us is a bit of a technophobe, so it was

heart-warming to see how so many of us managed to login and worship with the best of them!

I feel that through sharing this time online I have begun to know other church members better, there is something very personal about being zoomed into each other's front rooms and sometimes seeing or hearing family members in the background!

I know that behind the scenes all the usual church pastoral, prayer and church Deacons meeting etc, have all been going on and decisions about the evolving COVID situation have been made.

I'm very grateful, I'm sure that we all are, if we stop and think about it.

One thing though - Who outside the church knows what has been happening in our church ?

We have got to find a way to get the word out in Witney; who, and what our church is and does.

We are hiding our light under a bushel. Not what God intends for us.

Are we asking ourselves what can I offer church? What can we offer Witney or the wider world?

What is our mission?

Our passion?

Are we telling everyone we know how much our church offers & inviting others?

Our Book club; quizzes; Church café; children's church stories; sewing classes & Lite Bite.

I realise more than ever how much hard work goes into being a church, and how lucky we are for the help, support and love given.

We are the only church in Witney that I know that has a lovely walled garden attached to the church and is in the town centre, and one passion I have for the church is for us to use our garden to benefit us and the community in some way.

I would like to see the future of the garden to be carefully considered and debated by the deacons, ministers and equally the church members.

Another thing I would love to see happen, hopefully during Autumn, is the church banners being completed by myself and others in the banner group - All welcome.

Jacqui Powlesland told me about this idea she would love for the church, and I hope you don't mind me mentioning this Jacqui.

During the Christmas season a fairly large and striking, nativity scene be placed at the entrance of the church, so that passers-by might ponder the true meaning of Christmas, and I'm sure many children would love to see this.

I think it would draw attention to the fact that our church, just off the pavement, is actually alive and forward thinking. Maybe this could be another church discussion?

I digress. Another lesson I learned is that the church is us; each one of us. In some small or large way we all can find a way to play our part. It is not all up to someone else. We are all valuable.

The future is exciting.

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The following article, written by Revd Dr Gary Bowness, has been extracted from Parish Pump, and is entitled:

## **On why the clergy should avoid computers**

The Rectory  
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

Thank you for the kind offer of your old computer, but I do not want it. I know you find it a fundamental basic of daily life, but I do not, and I intend to keep things that way.

This is despite the fact that our diocesan office now takes it for granted that all of us clergy have a computer. Indeed, the diocesan secretary and I have had several awkward phone calls upon this very subject. He can't believe that I really don't have one, and suspects that I am simply hiding my email address from him so that he cannot send me the daily diocesan briefings, weekly questionnaires, and constant notification of all sorts of meetings and training days. But I remain firm: I have survived in ministry for nearly 50 years without a computer, and I don't intend to change now. When he gets tetchy with me, I take the high moral ground and remind him that St Paul did not have a computer.

Besides, it would not end with just a computer. Next, I would be obliged to get a printer and then ink cartridges and then maybe some sort of virus would attack me. As I have no idea about any of this, I might have to allow someone into the vicarage to sort it out, and even worse, I might even have to *pay* them. My money can be far more usefully spent on good claret.

Being without a computer also saves me much aggravation. From what I can gather, most computer owners spend significant parts of their lives either trying to get their machine to do something that it refuses to do, or else getting help from someone in a remote part of the world who speaks a jargon only distantly related to English, who assures you that whatever you did, it would have been better if you hadn't.

So, I have decided that should I ever REALLY need to use a computer for something, I will visit our local primary school and get a six-year-old to do the job for me, which they do with effortless efficiency, speed and accuracy.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace



## Bible Study

In this edition, and with permission from Ken & Marjorie Lee's family, and in memoriam to Rev Ken Lee, a series of Bible Studies, written by Ken and first submitted back in 1999, will be re-produced and is entitled:

### MEANDERING IN MARK

*"Meander" means "To wander deviously or aimlessly". Perchance this is not too accurate a description of these studies; it is hoped that they are not too devious nor totally aimless. However, the term "meander" is used to indicate an approach which takes its time, stops as needful to let a thought, an idea, an insight develop - all with the purpose of seeing what the Lord has to say to his people. May He speak, and to Him be the glory.*

### 18. MARK 6: 45-56

"Immediately". Mark uses one of his favourite words to commence his next story concerning Jesus. The feeding of the five thousand is over, the twelve baskets of pieces have been collected up. Mark gives no information as to where the baskets came from or what was done with them. He is now concerned to press on with the second of the great nature miracles which he records at this stage of his Gospel story. He pictures Jesus as urging the disciples into the boat by which they had arrived at the desert place as he sends them on to cross to Bethsaida. The implication is that Jesus intends to walk to Bethsaida to rejoin the disciples. Bethsaida, which is on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee to the east of the River Jordan, is described as being on "the other side"; hence it seems a fair assumption that the desert place was on the western shore of the lake, somewhere south of Capernaum. Jesus sent the disciples off while he dismissed the crowd. Again, no detail is given. If it was

indeed "very late" (v.35) when the disciples became concerned about the crowd's hunger, it would seem highly likely that by now it was dark. Perhaps Mark's "immediately" is a trifle incorrect; maybe after being fed the crowd settled down for a night's sleep in the open air so that the events which Mark now records took place on the following day.

Alternatively, the two stories may be of events which were quite separate in time but which Mark brings together to further serve his purpose of challenging his readers to decide who Jesus is.

Whatever may have been the actual events and timing regarding these stories concerning Jesus, Mark has now set the scene for his next major story. The disciples have left, the crowd has departed, Jesus is left alone and, says Mark, he went up on the mountain to pray. Geographically the word "mountain" presents some problems as the Sea of Galilee is some 200 metres below sea level and in the likely area of the desert place the ground does not rise above sea level until a distance of several kilometres from the shore; while there may have been a few low hills nearby, the availability of an adjacent mountain seems unlikely. Mark is however making two important points here: first Jesus sets aside time for prayer, and second Jesus follows the practice of the prophets and seers of the past in seeking for communion with God in the high places. Prayer is needful and prayer requires a personal effort, a testing of a person's willingness to put themselves to some trouble, to climb the mountain, whether a physical mountain or a spiritual one. Prayer is a present reality and a heritage from the past: in seeking the present reality of prayer for himself, Jesus embraced the heritage from the past and built upon it. "Mountain top experiences" are needful but they only come for those

who make the effort to climb the mountain, whatever that mountain may be. "Jesus went up on the mountain to pray."

In his account Mark seems to imply that Jesus was left alone as evening was coming on although this is far from certain. If the disciples did leave him in the evening, then it would appear that Jesus spent most of the night in prayer. Certainly, when Jesus had finished his time of prayer it was early in the morning; Mark literally describes it as being in the "fourth watch of the night" using the Roman form of reckoning the night watches. This puts the time as between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. when Jesus looks out again across the lake to see if there is any sign of his disciples. The disciples should long since have arrived at Bethsaida but Jesus sees them still in the boat, struggling hard at the oars as they row into a strong head wind. So strong was the wind that it would appear that the disciples may even have been driven south of their starting point since they are eventually to land at Gennesaret (v. 53), an area on the west bank of the lake well south of Capernaum and stretching down towards Magdala. All that is certain is that Mark has set the scene for the story of Jesus walking on the water.

There were the disciples, storm bound in the boat, while Jesus comes towards them, walking on the sea and heading, so it seems, as though to pass them by. They thought they were seeing a ghost and they cried out in terror. The point which Mark seems to be making here is that the disciples did not recognise Jesus because they were not looking for him to come to their aid. Despite the way he had solved for them the problem of the hungry multitude, and despite their previous experience of his care and power during a storm as sea (4:35-41), they did not even

consider the possibility of his presence coming to them: so far as they were concerned, there in the boat they were on their own. Yet Jesus came in their hour of need, came in a way that they deemed impossible for they still had not understood who he is. Mark expresses it, "They did not understand about the loaves." Those disciples may have digested the bread but they had not taken to themselves the fullness of understanding as to who Jesus is. So, they were not prepared to find in Jesus the one of whom prophet and seer had spoken as making his path through the sea, his way through the waters (Ps. 77:19; Is. 43:16.)

Whatever may have been the actual events that led Mark to record this story, its meaning is quite clear - the Lord never abandons his own, however adverse the winds or stormy the seas of life, his presence and power are close at hand. This is because of whom he is, something which Mark emphasises again by picturing Jesus saying to the terrified disciples: "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid." The Greek translated as "It is I" is literally "I Am." Mark records this word of Jesus as being given "immediately" when they cried out in fear. There is no delay in the response of Jesus to their need for even in "the fourth watch of the night", the time when hopes are at their lowest, when it is the darkest hour before the dawn he comes to them. There need be no fear. "I Am" says Jesus to the frightened disciples, yet even then, as he enters the boat and the wind ceases their hearts remain hardened, they do not understand. They recognize Jesus, but do not recognize who he really is. That recognition of the present reality of "I Am" is yet to come for them; Mark tells his story as he does so that each of his readers may come to his own recognition of whom Jesus is.

The two nature miracle stories concerning the power of Jesus, showing him to be more than just a teacher and healer are finished. Mark prepares to move his narrative on to include other stories from his collection concerning Jesus. He brings Jesus and his disciples to land. "When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat." In geographical terms they had not "crossed over". They had set out to go across to Bethsaida but they now land on the west shore of Galilee, the same shore from which they had set out and well south of Bethsaida on the north-east shore. Yet perhaps the disciples had "crossed over" in a deeper sense, crossed over from the confidence in themselves with which they had returned from their first healing and teaching mission (6:30) to a deeper reliance upon the presence of Jesus; perchance they had come closer to recognizing whom Jesus was and is. Certainly, Mark goes on to speak of recognition, not by the disciples, but by "people". "When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him." Once again Mark uses the term "immediately". As soon as he is seen, Jesus is recognised, but he is only recognized as a healer.

In a couple of short sentences Mark now paints a picture of a somewhat frenzied period of healing activity by Jesus - or rather, of a healing response by Jesus to the activity of others who seek him out, bringing their sick to him wherever he went. Whether he was in the town or a village, on a farm or in a marketplace, people brought their sick to Jesus for healing. They saw a power in Jesus and they sought to tap into it, begging even to just touch the fringe of his cloak. This fringe of the garment was a feature of the attire of every devout male Jew, set there as a constant reminder of the commandments of God (Num. 15:39-40)

and of their call to be a people holy unto the Lord. Such seeking of healing by touching the fringe of the garment was effectively an acknowledgement that the healing desired could only come through the holiness that came from God. To seek healing in this way was to see Jesus as a holy one of God. Mark records that all who touched the fringe of Jesus's cloak were healed, healed by way of the reminder of the law delivered to Moses. Could this be Mark's way of proclaiming Jesus as the One who came to fulfil the Law? Is Mark once again posing to his readers the question as to whom Jesus really is? It is to Jesus's interpretation of the Law that Mark is to now turn in his continuing story of the Good News.

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On the 10<sup>th</sup> June, the Duke of Edinburgh would have turned 100. The following articles have been extracted from Parish Pump; the first is from the Archbishop of Canterbury's recent tribute to him in the House of Lords, and the second one is written by the Ven John Barton:

### **Remembering Prince Philip**

"We have thanked God for Prince Philip's life of extraordinary service. There are some rare people who bring energy into a room - the Duke of Edinburgh was very much one of those people. His presence lifted a gathering. He might have challenged and interrogated, but whatever he said, he never bored anyone.

"The Duke of Edinburgh had a profound moral imagination, extraordinary foresight and even vision. He saw the world not just as it is but as it could and should be, as worked out in his commitment to young people, especially through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, to the Commonwealth, to our Armed

Forces, and to engineering, technology and design... In Edmund Burke's words, he had an instinctive sense that the social contract was found in the traditions we inherit from the past, in our obligations to the present and in our responsibility to those yet to be born.

"His genuine and deep sense of humility and his service came from the same place, which was his faith... He had a sincere Christian faith absolutely untainted by false piety... He understood deeply how important faith is for the vast majority of the world's population. He engaged the rich diversity of faiths within the UK and the Commonwealth. He was a pioneer in recognising the crucial role that faith leaders play in advocating for creation care. He was literally half a century ahead of his time in this area."

## **A prince's legacy on matters of faith**

Just when we thought the last word had been written about the late Duke of Edinburgh, it emerged that he had a genuine interest in theology. That dashing young naval officer, who became the Queen's dutiful consort and accompanied her to thousands of church services, was someone who listened intently to sermons, thought through what was being said, and then asked questions.

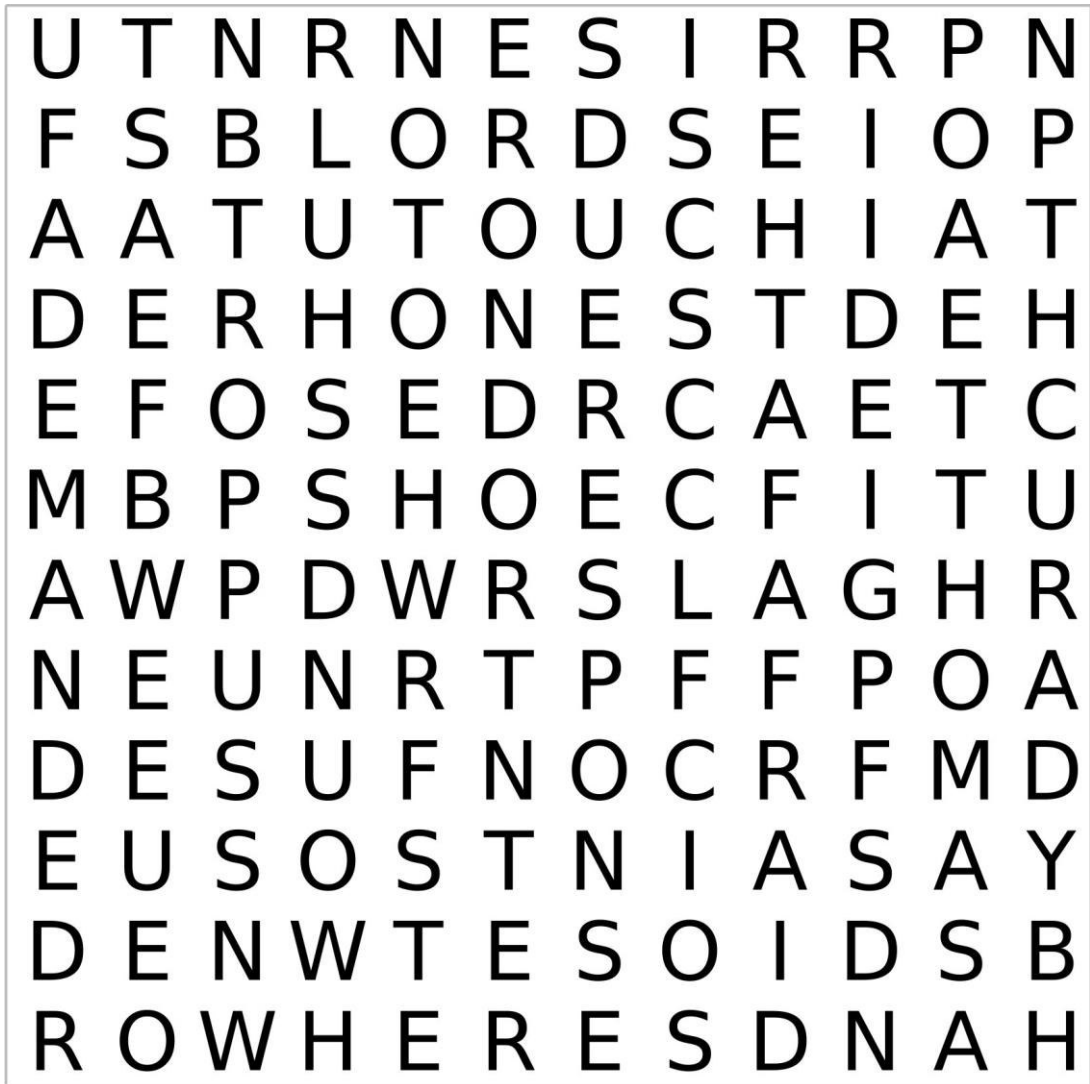
Every Sunday when the royal couple were at Sandringham, a diocesan bishop was invited to preach in the parish church. Afterwards, they were grilled by the Duke who, we are told by one of them, showed that he "wanted to be intellectually and spiritually engaged". That's a polite way of saying he wasn't prepared to swallow what came out of the pulpit if he wasn't convinced by it.

Some Christians are suspicious of people who probe the faith. Should it not be taken on trust? Who are we to question the Almighty? For others, doubt hovers uninvited. Honest doubt won't settle for unbelief but will continue to persevere with its enquiries. The Russian writer and philosopher Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote: "It is not as a child that I believe and confess Jesus Christ. My hosanna is born of a furnace of doubt." Dostoyevsky had lived a turbulent life, both personally and publicly, and wrestled mentally with himself and God. Some people are like that.

Prince Philip had been baptised into the Greek Orthodox Church and was received into the Church of England just before his marriage. He organised much of his own funeral, and if you followed it, you will remember how traditional it was. Many of the prayers were from the 17th Century Book of Common Prayer, the hymns were more ancient than modern, and the Bible readings confidently proclaimed the magnificence of God's Creation and Jesus' teaching about the resurrection. These are basic to Christianity and it was from such a foundation that he was able to explore.

So, if you wake up one morning questioning everything you have believed, take it as a spur to dig deeper and ask questions. Be encouraged by Philip, who shunned a second-hand faith because he wanted to know the truth for himself.

The next time you hear a sermon which you can't understand or disagree with, don't let the preacher get away with it. And if, in your private conversations with God, you find yourself praying, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief,' you won't be the first. See Mark 9, verse 24.



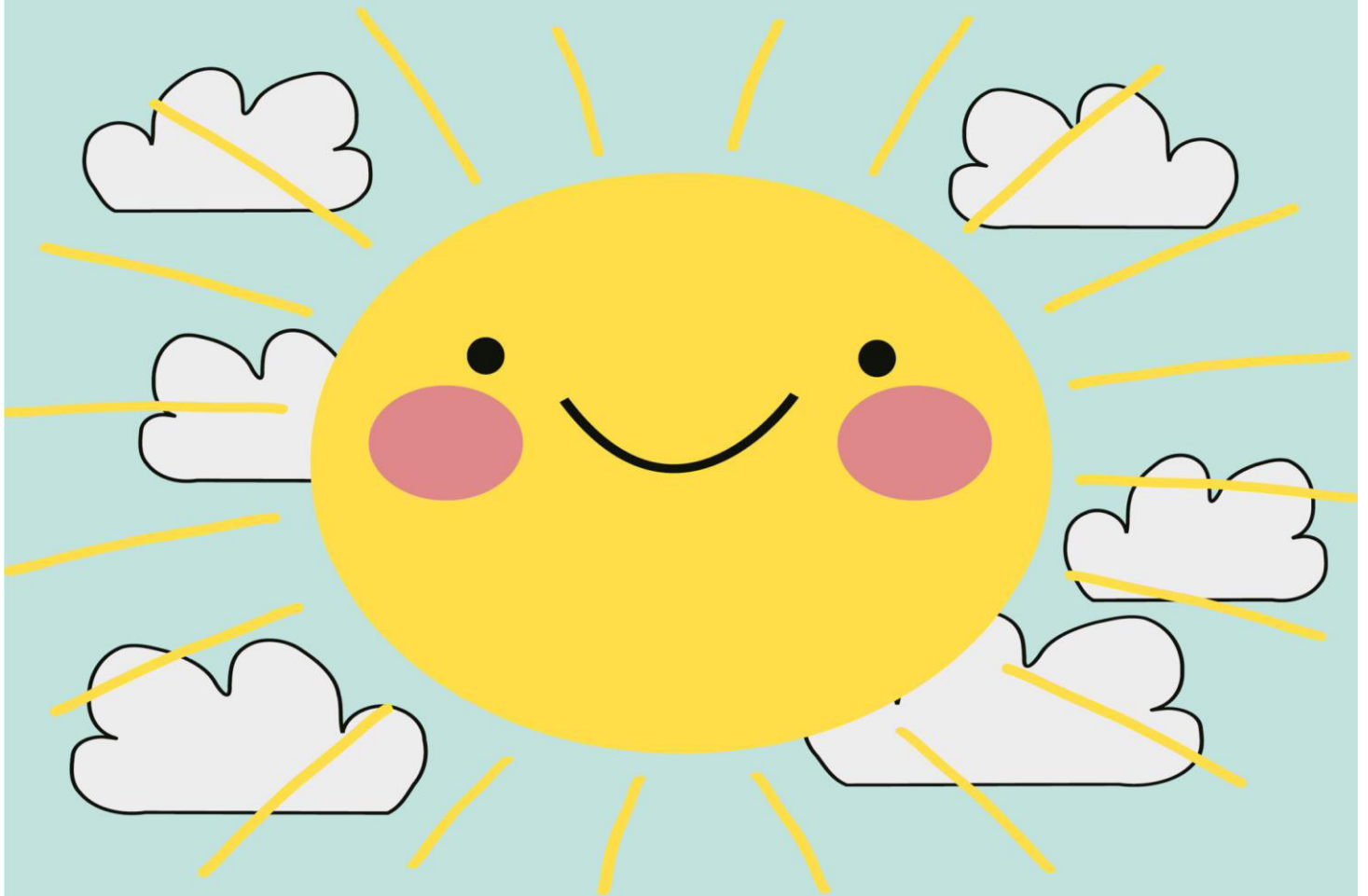
### Doubting Thomas

Thomas, one of Jesus’ 12 disciples, was deeply devoted, but also very honest whenever he got confused. When Jesus spoke of going to his Father (John 14), Thomas was not afraid to ask Him where His Father was. As for the Resurrection, that really baffled Thomas. He demanded to see the risen Jesus for himself - and touch the wounds in His hands and feet. When Jesus appeared, Thomas’ immediate response was one of worship: “My Lord and my God” (John 20).

Thus, Doubting Thomas’ honest doubts, turned to honest faith, have become a reassurance for thousands of us down the centuries who also sometimes doubt Jesus. In Doubting Thomas’ complete affirmation of faith, after meeting the risen, crucified Christ, we can find support for our own faith in Him.

Thomas	Honest	Confused	Saint	Doubt
Faith	Feast	Father	Afraid	Where
Resurrection	Baffled	Risen	See	Demanded
Support	Touch	Wounds	Hands	Feet
Response	Lord	My	God	Worship

OH HAPPY DAY!



THIS IS THE DAY  
THAT THE LORD HAS MADE  
PSALM 118:24