



Connections

Issue 38

October / November 2023

Communication

Communicating Climate Crisis across the decades

Very recently, I came across a sermon that my father gave at evensong in Canterbury Cathedral on Creation Sunday, in 1970 - over 50 years ago!! He was arguing that Christians need to get involved in issues of the environment (in response to some news coverage that the church should stick to church/spiritual matters and not get involved in anything else)

I have found reading it so very moving and poignant both because I don't really remember ever talking to him about this, and also his words from so very long ago (years before the first COP) resonate so strongly now.

Below are a few extracts.

"This brings me to perhaps the greatest and most urgent issue which modern man is being forced to face. It is summed up in the word 'ecology' which by definition is the relationship of plants and animals (including man) to their environment and to one another.

What is man doing to the air he breathes, to the good earth, to the waters fresh and salt?

To the air he breathes? He is polluting it and has been doing so increasingly in recent years of industrialisation.

To the earth? There have been many instances of soil destruction....The temptation is to get out of the soil as much as it will yield as quickly as possible without looking too far ahead. Too intensive cultivation may have disastrous results."

He goes on to talk about deforestation, excess use of pesticides, the increasing lack of fresh water (due to pollution, industry, the dumping of waste material and life killing poison into lakes and rivers) and the destruction of habitats for wildlife.

He quotes Albert Schweitzer: "Man has lost the capacity to foresee and forestall. He will end by destroying the earth" and: "Our approach to nature is to beat it into submission. We should stand a better chance of survival if we accommodated ourselves to this planet and viewed it appreciatively instead of dictatorially."

"All these things are the result of deliberate decisions made by man....and such decisions are, I believe the concern of every member of the Christian Church.

...It is God's world we are in danger of destroying."

He ends by saying it is important for Christians to 'listen to what is being said by those qualified to speak, for we are bound to see these problems as having to do not only with man's relationship with his environment, but also with man's relations with God.

Getting this across to people may well be the greatest contribution that most of us can make in private talks or in public discussion. In many ways we can influence public opinion and it is our duty to do so. We shall doubtless be told not to interfere in what does not concern us. I hope we shall continue to interfere as much as we possibly can."

Morwenna White-Thomson

Welcome to the October/November edition of **Connections**. The theme for this issue that was offered by me is **Communication**.

Talking, listening, reading, writing and typing are all forms of the term, but how do we see it as Christians? How do we believe that Jesus communicated with others? Though done daily, both by us in the present and by the characters of the Bible, the way we communicate to one another is of interest to me.

Thank you to everyone from both Cotham and St. Paul's who have sent in articles, poems, and photographs. I enjoyed editing this and I hope that you all enjoy reading it.

Beth Stephenson

Talking is good

I am no Dr. Dolittle
But I do find myself talking to the creatures
In our garden and on the walks that I take
I warned a stag beetle today not to step in the road
As a lorry was just driving past
I feel it unfriendly not to say hi
To the dragonfly perched on my seat
Or good morrow to the frog sat by the pond
Foxes I meet on neighbouring streets
I greet with a "hail fellow well met"
And of each single magpie I make sure I enquire
Of the ongoing health of their spouse
The holly blue butterfly that ventured in May
To flutter by our holly received a glad welcome from me
It may seem to some that my chat is one way
That the creatures carry on unimpressed
But I am not certain that that is the case
I am sure verbal connection helps to relax them
Those denizens that inhabit our patch
and also those creatures who are just passing through
And may have stopped for a few moments rest
Like the swarm of bees that dropped in last month
Or the sparrow hawk dining on pigeon
Talking is good no matter with whom
A smile and a word does not go amiss

By David Collins



Our Websites and Social Media

www.cothamparishchurch.org

www.stpaulsclifton.org.uk



**Our churches aspire to cherish all, regardless of marital and social status,
sexual orientation or level of church commitment.**

**And we aim to be 'Open' in faith and practice
open to questions of faith and doubt, lifestyle, justice and peace
open to people from all backgrounds and
open, above all, to the ultimate mystery of God and to the life and teachings of Jesus.**

Spark-letter - Greenbelt Festival Edition

Whew! What a weekend! I woke up this morning in my warm bed but I'm still buzzing from a transformational weekend. That may sound hyperbolic but that is the word I keep floating around. I wanted to keep it to 3 things to be in keeping with my spark letters but I may end up chipping in a couple of cheeky bonus ones.

1. The Volunteering Experience

In order to save money, I decided to be a volunteer this year. You get to attend the festival for free in exchange for 2x 3.5 hour shifts a day and you get food vouchers which equates to a free meal a day. There's also a volunteer's lounge where you have tea and coffee on tap and they serve soup and snacks too.

Volunteering however went far beyond a transactional agreement of putting in a bit of work and getting free food and entry. As a steward I got to be part of a team and enjoy the buzz of Behind the Scenes life for all areas of the festival. I was able to use my gifts, like being confident enough to dance about saying "let me see those wristbands! woo have a fab evening!" (yes I am really one of those annoying cheery types). I was able to help people find their way and simply be a friendly face and I even got to use a 2 way radio.

One of the really special things about volunteering was having chats with random people at any given time. You'd sit down in the lounge with a tea and the next thing you know you're talking with an engineer, a chaplain, an architect and a plumber covering a whole gamut of topics from the sacred to the profane. I can't speak for other festivals but it's a great way to experience an event if you're going on your own. We were also really well looked after by the team and had our own pastoral support.

I was asked if I'd want to come back and do it next year and I can say 100% yes. I want to stress, it wasn't all sunshine and roses. It was relentless at times, and I certainly felt run down and overwhelmed, but overall it was incredible. Just next year I'll pack my own cooker so I can eat better.

2. The overall Greenbelt vibe

It's so difficult to explain what Greenbelt really is. I hear people say "Christian festival" and it makes me wince. I've been to a Christian festival. One where everyone is a Christian and it's predominantly one type of belief system and worship style, and the only things on offer are worship or talks about God.

That isn't Greenbelt. Yes there are worship services should you choose to attend them - these range from quaker meetings, to Taizé, to Celtic, to queer, there was even a goth eucharist (one of my highlights!) - but beyond that I'd say the overriding theme is activism and social justice.

As a volunteer I didn't see everything I wanted to but I did attend a talk about a man's bisexuality journey using Epping forest as its backdrop, a presentation on the history of drag, a book talk about how Christianity is responsible for and still props up oppressive systems (don't worry, we all do), and a panel discussion about death and dying and how we can and should talk about it more with the people we love. I also cry danced to Reelin' In The Years by Steely Dan in tribute to my dad who I am still grieving after nearly 35 years.

Throughout the festival there were discussions about climate change, poverty and the economy, humanism, politics, embodied spirituality. Topics I certainly didn't see at the other Christian festival. And between the talks and the worship, there were incredible music, theatre and comedy acts. And all sorts of pop-up events like ukelele jams and chess games, and shadow puppetry!

Many people I met were atheist, lapsed Christians, something fairly labelless. In the nicest possible way, it was a festival for misfits. For those of us who feel we don't quite fit into a box of what society or some styles of church expect us to fit into. It creates an amazing tapestry of people, who may not believe in the exact same thing in the exact same way, but who do believe that us mere mortals can make the world better. That there is still hope even if it sometimes feels the world is crashing down around us.

All weekend I was reminded countless times there is space for all of it. While I've felt comfortable there was space for queerness at Greenbelt for ages, this time I genuinely felt there was space for a bisexual woman who's married to a man. I realised there was space for someone who struggles to say the Creed and believe bits (sometimes any) of it. And just when I thought there wasn't space for the "witchy" side of me (more on that another time perhaps) the Goth Eucharist had me crying as I realised there was a way I can integrate that side of myself and I don't have to be 7 different people in any given day.

As I say, this weekend has been transformational.

3. I'm going to make the art!

And to bring it back to inspiration from a creativity standpoint (which this newsletter tries to be about) I've come home with a new energy of completion. One year, maybe not next year, but we'll see, I'm going to be a performer/speaker at Greenbelt. One project I've had in mind is to establish a classical open mic night in Bristol. I'll write about that in more detail another day but I can see a space for that at Greenbelt. I'm also going to publish my piano compositions this year and I'm going to start my memoir on childhood bereavement from the perspective of an adult who was too young to remember the person they're grieving.

I write this down so it's out in the world. Part accountability, part sharing it with the divine in a prayer to help me do it!

Oh go on... one more

4. Free the Wee!

Woman urinals have been an absolute revelation. I first met Peequal when they were researching opinions with their prototype back in 2020. At the time I remember thinking it was a fab idea, if a little scary the thought of peeing in a hole in the floor instead of a toilet.

They are essentially a toilet area for women and non-binary people (but only number ones not numbers twos!) and as a rural child who loved peeing in the woods I think it woke something in my inner child who only wanted to use these loos for the rest of the weekend, even though many portaloos were closer.

When I saw the neon structures behind a wicker gate I was amazed there was no queue at all and, for possibly the first time at a festival, I was able to pee whenever I wanted and not have to hold it in for hours while I wait for a portaloos! As the weekend went on there did end up being queuey moments, but it was heart-warming to hear the solidarity in the queue. So many people saying "these are brilliant, such a good idea" and chatting like we were all in the toilets of a nightclub - making friends, helping each other out. Who knew a toilet could bring so much joy!

5. And one more... Deep Fried Ravioli!

Absolutely sublime. My personal favourite was potato and mint in a charcoal dough. Inspired!

I hope you found your own inspiration from this week's spark letter! As I'm sure you can tell I'm very enthusiastic this week so looking forward to taking that with me as I head to school to sort my classroom for the rest of the week. Summer is over, boo!

By Beth Nasce

To read more of Beth's writing, go to her blog "Spark and Fable":

<https://sparkandfable.substack.com>



Communicating the Bible Differently

Over recent months, I've been taking a master's course at Sarum College in Salisbury, and I'm hoping to write an occasional piece for Connections inspired by the course.

The first module I took was on interpretation, how we approach the text of the Bible, hermeneutics is the formal description. One of the fascinating insights was to see how different online sources have approached the Biblical text in unexpected ways, and thus to see how we might communicate faith and belief through a multitude of ways.

Firstly, the Visual Commentary on Scripture works together with art historians and theologians to explore Biblical material through the visual arts. They say that it “provides theological commentary on the Bible in dialogue with works of art. It helps its users to (re)discover the Bible in new ways through the illuminating interaction of artworks, scriptural texts, and commissioned commentaries.”

One of the pieces I first looked at was with Wim Wenders, the filmmaker, playwright, author, and photographer who discusses photograph *The Road to Emmaus*, and his search for the 'road' itself. I found it fascinating to see how the spaces he explored connected for him in different ways.

For us as inclusive church, there's a series of explorations of John 7:51 – 8: 11, the woman caught in adultery. Put together by Sheona Beaumont, an artist and writer. One of the pieces she discusses is a series of photographs from Duane Michals, who staged a series entitled *Christ in New York*. In them Jesus is visualised in contemporary scenes standing between people who are being attacked. In one Christ is beaten defending a homosexual, which almost conflates some of the threatening events that happen either side of the woman's judgement in John's Gospel. It communicates powerfully, and raises questions about our place as a church in defending those who are persecuted in different ways.

<https://thevcs.org/woman-caught-adultery/teachers-caught-hypocrisy> is the link.

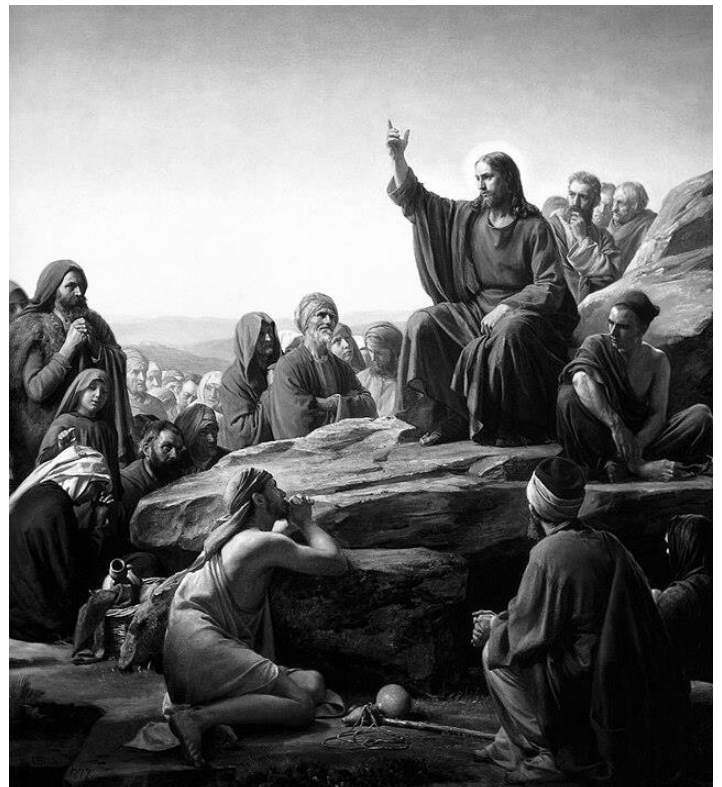
You can search from their home page: <https://thevcs.org/> for a huge range of material, photographs, video, artworks, and interviews.

The National Gallery has developed 'Fruits of the Spirit' as a “pioneering virtual exhibition from the Art and Religion research strand” at the gallery, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/virtual-tours/fruits-of-the-spirit> They use Galatians 5: 22-23 concept of the fruit of the Spirit as their inspiration to explore love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There are eighteen paintings brought together to offer a way to see these qualities in a rich and diverse way, there is also an online catalogue, freely available which looks at this in much greater detail.

In the online exhibition, one example is 'Love.' A Madonna and child painting by Titian is paired with a 1931 painting by Jewish artist Ernst Neuschul, called *Black Mother*. It is an image of a mother and child in a park in Berlin. It is “a bold statement about dignity and identity during a traumatic and violent political era.”

As a way of communicating, reflecting, and meditating on the fruit of the Spirit, it offers other ways of seeing and understanding. Both are worth exploring.

By Nigel Gibbons



Communication

My Papa was born in the age of horse drawn transport and died in the age of Concorde. Is speed really so very important? Sometimes I am so glad that I can visit a friend in Canada and be back ten days later. Other times I wonder whether a voyage across the Atlantic and a train across North America would not have been more enriching but the words Time and Cost spring at once to mind.

When I was in my teens, a very different and less fraught stage than it is today, we had a shared line telephone installed. For younger readers this is exactly what it says it is; this meant, of course, that if the other user was on the line you could not use your telephone. It was a short term measure to enable more households to have their own line and not be dependant on the kiosk. This state of affairs did not last long.

Now here is a parallel which I have to remember when being judgemental about people “glued to their mobiles”. Nearly every evening I would have long conversations with my best friend about who knows what with my mother remonstrating that as we would be seeing each other tomorrow could it not all wait.

Of course, when away from home, be it in this country or abroad, letters and postcards were the means of communication. I still have two letters sent by my mother when I was staying with my German exchange family. Now I would not still have emails or texts or telephone calls, and that is something to ponder on so please think of the importance of the written word. However it is now so expensive to send a letter it is small wonder that we rarely do so. When will Christmas cards, that wonderful means of communication become a distant memory?

Nevertheless, I find myself giving thanks for the convenience and speed of electronic mail and the availability of a phone when waiting to be met somewhere or needing a quick decision on something. I have to confess to being something of a Luddite and was dragged into using email but a recent exchange with a niece who is in a very difficult situation was yet another huge reminder of the value of speedy communication.

Mobile phones have transformed the lives of many people living in a country like Uganda. Landlines were a luxury but many more people can have access to a mobile.

So, to what does this rambling lead us? Well, like all scientific progress it all depends on what we do with it. However, of this I am sure: we have never needed a horse drawn mail coach or the latest electronic device to communicate with any of the Holy Trinity. A quick Jesus Prayer, a Thank you God an awareness of the Holy Spirit somewhere or a more profound communication with one or all of the above has always been and always will be available to us.

By Mary Ingram

Something here

Thank God it's Friday!

Are students interested in faith? Are they confident sharing their faith? Are they willing to engage with those of other faiths? At the University of Bristol, the Chaplaincy team's experience is that many students are.

Earlier this month, Revd Ed Davis (Anglican & Coordinating Chaplain) and Elizabeth Wilde (Chaplaincy Assistant) worked with four student faith societies to create a day of interfaith events, where each society opened up their regular activities to non-members. It ran under the title Thank God It's Friday and comprised:

Christian Bible Discussion

The programme began with a Bible study and discussion at the Multifaith Chaplaincy Centre led by Just Love, a Christian student society focused on integrating faith and social action.

Co-president of Just Love, Richard Hussey, writes: 'We welcomed visitors to come along to our weekly Just Lunch meeting. Working in groups, we read and discussed some passages from the Gospels, Acts, and Ecclesiastes, all on the topic of money. Themes like acquiring wealth, charitable giving, and avoiding greed came up, and it was great to hear from a range of perspectives and interpretations. Lunch was kindly provided by the Multifaith Chaplaincy, and everyone enjoyed some delicious jacket potatoes!'

Muslim Friday Prayers

Next up was the invitation to join the Jumah (Friday) prayers run by the Islamic Society. Around 250 male and female Muslim students were led in prayer by a visiting imam, who also gave a sermon about how to prepare for the holy month of Ramadan and led a Q&A. Guests were warmly welcomed by regulars, who explained the different elements of the service as it went along.

Reflecting on the day as a whole, Dilara Eren, interfaith officer for the Islamic Society, writes: 'It was very insightful and eye-opening. We tend to be so secluded in our own communities that we often don't get to see what other faiths do. It definitely helped me to not only appreciate and understand other faiths, but also feel comfortable expressing my own knowing that people are receptive and interested to learn more!'

This article was compiled by Ed Davis, chaplain of the University of Bristol's Multifaith Chaplaincy.

Buddhist Meditation

There was a break during the afternoon to allow for studies, but participants returned to the Multifaith Chaplaincy Centre in the early evening to join regular Buddhist Society event. It was led by Sr Jinho, the Buddhist chaplain within the team, assisted by a visiting Burmese monk. There was some teaching of Buddhist philosophy (dharma), a focus on breathing mindfully and a period of meditation.

Dingli Xi, the Buddhist Society president, writes: 'The day's event was a wonderful opportunity for us to share our Buddhist practices with others and to learn more about different faiths and their unique perspectives. We believe that interfaith events like this are crucial in promoting respect, understanding, and unity among people from different backgrounds. We look forward to future opportunities to work together.'

Jewish Friday Night Dinner

The final stop was a traditional Friday night dinner hosted by the Jewish Society. Over a three-course meal Jewish and non-Jewish students got to know each other, and guests learnt about Shabbat and its significance in Jewish spiritual and communal life.

The meal finished with some psalms sung enthusiastically in Hebrew, accompanied by table-thumping! Then the Jewish interfaith officer, Zack Colton, spoke briefly of why he had been so keen to participate in and help facilitate the day: 'A wise person is someone who learns from everybody'.

Reflecting on the day, Ed Davis writes: 'This has been one of the highlights of the term! It was immersive and relational and we learnt together how to be both host and guest. There were so many reminders both of our common humanity and of the distinctiveness of our traditions. As a chaplaincy we look forward to continuing this work, providing opportunities for deeper understanding, connection and friendship to form, and for students to be equipped for life and faith in a diverse world.'



‘Saving us’ by Katharine Hayhoe – a book recommendation

If, like me, you wonder what is the best way to talk about the climate crisis without people instantly going on the defensive, then this book might be really helpful.

Katharine Hayhoe, Canadian, but living in Texas, is a much-honoured Climate Scientist (named UN Champion of the Earth, chief scientist to The Nature Conservancy etc etc). She is also a Christian. And wow! what a communicator!

I found myself 2 weeks ago, reading it in a day and a half. I am not a scientist, but I was unable to put this book down. Her main point is that the most important thing all of us can do to help our the threat to our planet, is to talk about it. And in this book she elaborates on ways of doing this with people of all shades of climate-awareness, by starting with a point of shared concern.

is INCREDIBLY readable, really fascinating. Its complex issues are explained in such an approachable way, and the book is full of fascinating information about the huge number of encouraging changes that have already been

made to cut fossil fuel use, especially in the US. It is an optimistic read – full of hope.

Published in 2021 by One Signal Publishers/Simon and Schuster, it is more available here in paperback than hardback, (which unfortunately means cheaper American paper, and it’s not much cheaper than the hardback would be!) However, if anyone wants to borrow my copy, it’s available.

An important, but (I found) a really enjoyable read.

By Catherine Richards



WiFi to God

Talking with God, connecting to the Divine, immersing ourselves in the sacredness of life itself (or whatever other set of words you might like to use to describe it) is a way of communicating, a form of relationship very different to the conventional, rational, means upon which much of society is based. Whilst the latter sees the human brain as a computer, taking in what it knows from books and lectures in the form of words and theories, for our direct communion, it's more useful to see the brain as a receiver: with our internal WiFi picking up God's messages.

The point about inner communication, our sacred reception, is that it is very 'of the moment': it automatically aligns us with our true purpose at that particular time and place. Whilst our logical mind is going to kick in with all sorts of ifs and buts and distract us with theories or attachments, internal Wi-Fi to God will always advise us in the best possible way!

Such a means of communication is about depth of connection, meaningful energetic resonance. Compare that to the superficial communication that seems to prevail via conventional means. Our innate Wi-Fi to God is beyond all commercial bias, it is not subject to technical glitches, it does not go on strike. It is far more meaningful and aligned to the good of our whole species and of the planet than any social media. Shall I go on?!

Logically, our Wi-Fi to God is far more dependable and better for us than any other form of communication. And, when we are able to get into a good reception state, we know how wonderful that feels. So, really, why would we not use it more often?

By Keith Beasley

No speech, no word, no voice is heard

A strange title, perhaps, for an article on Communication! Exploring it a little further:

Day unto day takes up the story,
and night unto night makes known the message.

No speech, no word, no voice is heard,
yet their span extends through all the earth,
their words to the utmost bounds of the world.

These poetic and beautiful words are taken from Psalm 19, in the Grail translation. They describe a form of communication that takes place without words, yet is very real, powerful and seems even to become a presence, constantly in motion.

A book called *The Oak Papers* was published in 2020 and was also serialised as Radio 4 Book of the Week. In this book, the author, James Canton, describes his developing relationship with an ancient oak tree, thought to be at least eight hundred years old. It was when he was going through a troubled period in his life that he first sought out its green shade and rested back against the ribbed ridges of its massive trunk.

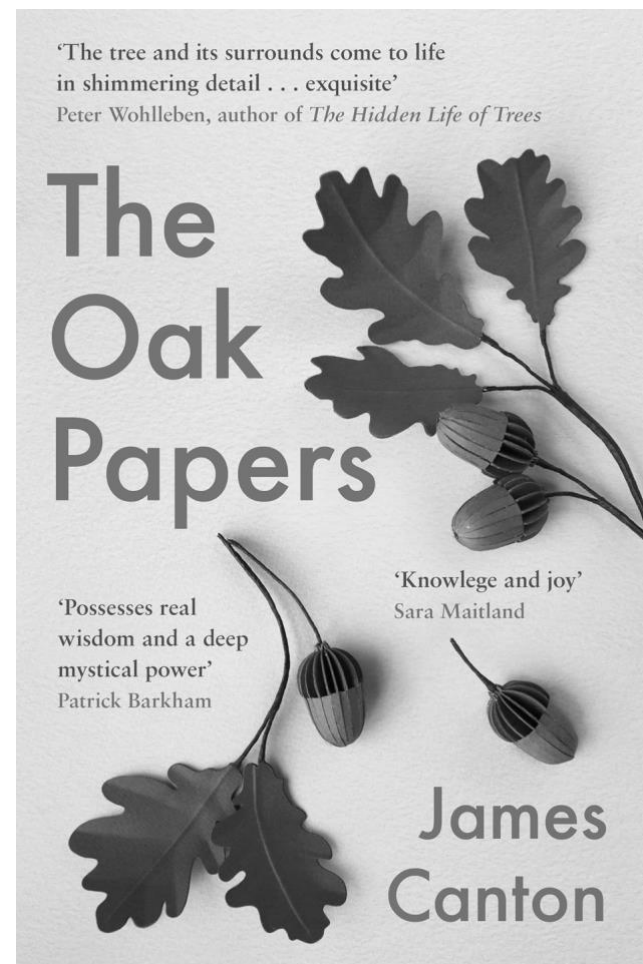
The book, written in the form of a diary, tells of his continued time spent in the presence of this oak and how he moves from observing it as if from the outside, to learning about its ecosystem, through to a deepening perception of its inner life, then finally to a true personal relationship with it. He begins to sense how, centuries before, other people would have been involved with it: people who trod those ways in ancient times; how it was part of their landscape and lives.

Through his interest in it he meets several people whose lives are more closely connected with the natural world than is common today; and how some of them find a spiritual quality there, a sense of profound connection. Perhaps in conversation with some of them he started to try to define too many notions: Is this a form of pagan worship? Is it meditation? He is advised to “Drop the intellectualisation; just seek to become.” He finds this wise advice and increasingly he experiences great peace in the presence of this sheltering tree.

This shows that communication and relationship genuinely can exist between us and trees; ourselves and the natural world. The book also explores communication between trees themselves. In recent years scientific research has established that plants have intelligence. One ecologist back in the 1990s established the concept of a mycelial web, a “wood-wide web” whereby trees “communicate with each other above and below ground.” This researcher was probably a lone voice at the time, but since then research has established “ways that trees communicate with each other on the mycorrhizal level.”

There remain many mysteries of the natural world which we may never fully understand and indeed we have lost much of the ancient wisdom held by people long ago. Their link with nature was a close bond, a communion – and one rarely expressed in words.

By Lorna Hughes



September Charity of the Month – Cecily's Fund

“70% of Zambian children don't get a chance to complete school.

We tackle poverty and inequality for poor communities in Zambia, working with them to champion the value of school, and with life-changing financial and emotional support that helps children complete their education so that they can create a new future for themselves.”

We were incredibly pleased to host the 25th anniversary celebrations of Cecily's Fund at St Paul's on September 16th. For more information, see <https://www.cecilysfund.org>.



October Charity of the Month – Epilepsy Action



For more information on Epilepsy Action, visit their website: <https://www.epilepsy.org.uk>

Epilepsy Action is the largest member-led epilepsy organisation in Britain, acting as the voice for the UK's estimated 600,000 people with epilepsy, as well as their friends, families, carers, health professionals and the many other people on whose lives the condition has an impact. As well as campaigning to improve epilepsy services and raise awareness of the condition, we offer assistance to people in a number of ways including a national network of branches, accredited volunteers, regular regional conferences and freephone and email helplines.

November Charity of the Month – Nasijona / Violette Khourdry (Palestine)

In the spring of 2009, a woman came to a pharmacy in Nazareth for an advice on how to use a drug.

Nasijona-Nazareth is a registered non-profit organization established at the end of 2014 by a group of men and women concerned about the safety of the Palestinian Arab community, the integrity of their social structure and their identity.

For more information, go to: <https://nasijona.com/en>



Cotham PCC Meeting I – 12th July 2023

As the first item on our agenda made clear, this was a PCC full of firsts – the first meeting of the year, and the first for our new curate Adrian and new PCC members Matt and Nat – but also sadly the last for our wonderful Foundation minister Simon, who is settling in Oxford to train for ministry. We thank Simon for all he has brought to the life of our benefice and wish him the best in his training.

In addition to these changes, Helen Heath has agreed to take over from Alice as Treasurer after the next APCM, while Jeni will continue in her role as PCC Secretary. Both were elected unanimously for their roles.

In view of Simon's departure, the PCC agreed that although we wished to continue with a dedicated Foundation Community Minister, the job description would need to be reframed due to the changes Foundation has experienced in recent years. Under Simon's leadership, the Foundation community has begun to feel much more part of the wider Cotham life and has seen an increase both in its members' commitment to each other and in its reaching out to new people. This vision of Foundation as a 'vital, sustainable and accessible community of love' will be central when we come to advertise for and recruit the new Foundation Community Minister over the coming weeks.

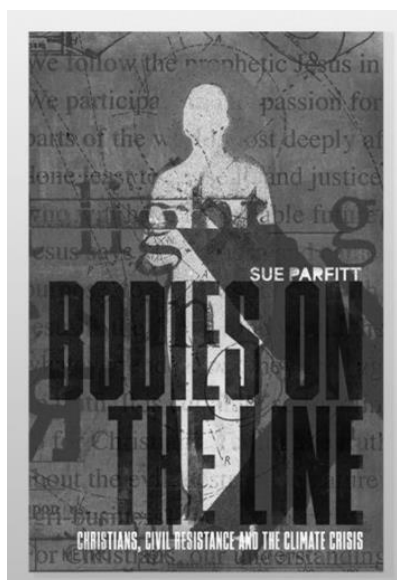
The meeting's other focus was the church reordering project, which is still on track to be finished later this year. There were fears that the project would be delayed when asbestos was discovered in the crypt; however, the PCC has approved a quote from Shield to have the asbestos dealt with. We have also received planning consent for opening the West Gate after consulting all the relevant bodies. In addition, it was discovered that the church will need rewiring due to many problems with its electrical installation – the PCC has accepted a quote from BW Electrical to have this done as part of the reordering.

In addition to these items, the PCC discussed the church's Welcome to Belonging and Storytelling project, which will tell some of the stories of Cotham's people and buildings through the years as part of our 50th anniversary celebrations. We also addressed the church's involvement with the Diocese of Bristol's Transforming Church. Together scheme, for which the Diocese will have a total of £12 million available from the central church.

The next Cotham PCC will be held on Monday 11th September; there is also a day retreat due to take place at the Community Farm in Chew Magna in the coming weeks, as the planned one for 2nd September had to be rescheduled.

By Nat Schaefer

Bodies on the Line: Sue's Book on Christians, Civil Resistance and the Climate Crisis



Bodies on the Line: Christians, Civil Resistance and the Climate Crisis is a new book by Sue Parfitt, a much loved and long-time member of Christian Climate Action

Christians are waking up to the existential scale of the climate crisis. They are rediscovering the radical nature of Jesus's teaching. They are asking what God needs them to do, and putting their bodies on the line to do it.

For the incredulous and inspired alike, Sue Parfitt describes the experience, surveying our ecological, emotional, spiritual crisis with the blinkers off.

Bodies on the Line is available in paperback and ebook formats from all online bookstores, from August 24th, 2023, and is available at <http://www.labora.press>

Cotham's PCC Meeting 2 – 11th September 2023

PCC returned to considering our strategy: what does “Vital, Sustainable, Available, Community of Love in Christ” mean? We have a wonderful diversity of activity, and we want to be doing the right balance of things which will resource us, not deplete us. In one part we were challenged to identify items to prioritise, and then in what practical ways we should nurture them. Prioritising was hard but we were great at thinking how to tend what is most valued!

We are recruiting for Simon's successor as Foundation Community Minister, and as a critical pillar of Cotham's future your prayers are requested for this task. Stop, please pray now.

Finished? OK, you can read on...

The Comms group is being rekindled. The green and eco groups remain a key focus - we seek a champion to lead that area.

Lots of useful and encouraging progress is being made across so many areas of maintaining the activities and buildings, it is inspiring. Thanks so much to the various church members who give their time every day in so many ways.

By Dave Patterson

Recent Meetings of St Paul's PCC

St Pauls Church PCC's first meeting was on Tuesday 23 May. David spoke of John and Charles Wesley whose Feast Day was the following day, noting that we enjoy their legacy still and their celebration of music and mission was a continuing inspiration for One Equal Music at St Pauls.

- We welcomed our newly elected members – David Smith and Alison Eastwood – and Tatjana Ljubic who had been doing great work on Safeguarding and had specially joined the meeting for an update on this.
- We confirmed and approved (where needed) the appointment of people to various roles in church.
- We received a report from the Buildings Group who had put in place a provisional 3–4-year plan, noting especially the great success of the new lighting in the chancel (with thanks to Rob Wedden for all his work on this). Based on this success, we can now move forward to new lighting in the nave and aisles. and the plan for every mosaic to have a spotlight on it. Another improvement is the purchase of a light-weight portable ramp to improve access to the dais for those who cannot manage the steps. Basil had been taking the lead on repairs to the windows, getting stained glass experts in to look and quote for the urgent work. The group is also considering the location of the icons on the Julian chapel. Other minor works had taken place over the year.
- Noting recent events, the One Equal Music Marathon had been a great success and had raised a good sum of money shared between One Equal Music and Aid Box. The APCM meeting was well-attended and liquid refreshment had been much appreciated! It had included a great presentation on One Equal Music.
- David spoke of ministry updates noting the big change of Pippa and Ginny leaving/changing role. Ginny would return in the Autumn with Permission to Officiate. We looked forward to welcoming Adrian Howkins as curate. There will be further updates about staffing, but we were very glad to note that Ed Davis was back on the rota and would be officiating on 18th June; and now that David himself had returned, he noted his thanks to Pippa and the wardens for enabling and supporting him to go on secondment.
- David noted OEM was entering a new phase. It was sad to note that this was the last PCC with Isaac as lead. Huge thanks were due to him, and we were grateful that he will be with us until July! We are hoping

to have funds in place soon to recruit a successor. We could advertise as soon as sufficient funds were in place. The email of OEM presentation at APCM would be circulated to wider community and plans would shortly be in place for Three Choirs walk in July for fundraising.

- A plan was to be put in place to plan the start of academic year including choir, 18-25, study hub etc, including a simple lunch, choir welcome etc.
- Regarding Safeguarding, Tatjana led us in completing various items on the Diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard.
- On Eco matters, Jo reported on a meeting called by Pippa two months ago. The original eco group had been disbanded and there had been a loss of momentum. Jo and Morwenna will keep promoting things especially at St Pauls and there was an idea of beginning a monthly pre-church breakfast instead of the post church eco-space. The recent award of A Rocha Silver had been a great achievement. David and Morwenna had attended an event at the Malcolm X centre and there had been a good morning at David and Judith's house creating our wonderful banner for 'The Big One'. Many had attended 'The Big One' in London with 49-seater coach arranged. Pippa had reported on this for APCM. There will be new resources and support from the Diocese for working towards Net Zero and we would be registering for the relevant audit. Isaac, David (Smith) and George would be joining the Net Zero group at Cotham (David will contact the convenor, Sue Hawkins). David Smith and Basil would register us for the Diocesan Audit.
- We approved updates to our Data Protection Policy as proposed by Jo Straw.

St Pauls PCC next met on September 28.

David welcomed Adrian to his first PCC. David noted the following day was the feast of St Michael and All Angels noting that whatever we make of angels, this was an important part of our inheritance. We should bear in mind the 3 Archangels: Michael (great protector), Gabriel (messenger) and Rafael (healing, reconciliation)

As community – what do we need God's strength and grace and protection around? (thinking of a kind of spiritual SWOT analysis). What are the things that threaten? Healer/reconciliation – how can we be a community of healing and also what within our community needs reconciling?
Messenger – one who calls – what is it that God calls us to?

- The recent triennial visitation from the Area Dean (representing the Archdeacon) to meet with the church wardens to make sure we were safe and compliant and the necessary church records were in place had been a good opportunity to tidy things up and bring things up to date.
- Basil had sent an update on the work to the windows which was all in hand and thanks were recorded to him for all his work.
- Regarding work on the garden David and Penny had had a helpful meeting with Simon Pugh-Jones, giving the green light to proceed with a List B application for resurfacing because we are planning like-for-like. David recorded thanks to Penny and David (Smith) for raising stones etc to see what was underneath. We can put whatever type of surface down that we would like. This was work that we could do ourselves (eg Patrick can help) OR go down the social avenue – eg day release for prisoners. This was the first phase. There might be further plans which might need faculties.
- Thanks were recorded to Josh for tidying up in the building (plus doing his hour's caretaking!)
- David Smith had applied for the Diocesan Environmental Audit which would potentially lead to the award of funds. After discussion, Jo Straw agreed to resend to the Buildings Committee the request to consider further draught-proofing in church. There was discussion about the need to balance range of matters – Covid, comfort, environment, heating costs, but all agreed that if someone says they're cold we should do all we can to help and we should look into draught-proofing.
- Financial updates had been circulated including Parish Share consideration. We were hopefully close to breaking even at end of year. Both gas and electricity rates were down which is helpful too.
- One Equal Music including choral scholarships. We were delighted that Josh was now employed by St Pauls part-time (20 hours a week) to run One Equal Music. He had done about 12 working days including launching the choral scholarship plan! Scholars would commit to Friday evening rehearsals plus Sunday services PLUS school assemblies, working with children, Great Sacred Music events. The scholarships would encompass the traditional University side plus a new and unique side – e.g. workshops for children. Applications were already coming in! Josh was also working with Pippa to set up a choir for school age children in East Bristol, to try music that they hear our choir sing.

Hopefully we'll be able to pay a professional musician to work on this, introducing choral music to children at a young age. The OEM concerts at St Pauls will continue hopefully with double the number of concerts by January. To be inclusive, unique, accessible and more community based. Singing for the Brain continues too once a month. We have on board an MA Music Therapy graduate from the Royal Welsh. NOTE – we couldn't have done choral scholarships without the particularly generous response from the congregation plus the sponsored walk. Alison said that in Oxford she had put on a concert with schools to embrace the middle east plus Cecily's Fund. Some of the schools brought 80 children; and noting that we have a huge asset space wise. In a year's time – would each of these schools like to have a time to perform in our church? This idea was very much welcomed. It was noted too that QEH school were coming back with their annual concert at St Pauls.

- Organ Scholarship and choir update: There had been no interest yet in organ scholarship for a junior scholar to work alongside Sunny. We would continue to put it out there. Thanks were recorded to Sunny for her continuing work with the choir. She said that about 100 students had signed up for choir at Freshers Fair – and so many would hopefully come along to 'Give it a go' session next week. Sunday's lunch has been mentioned to those prospective choir members. David and Josh would be meeting with Redcliffe and Cathedral soon and would keep in touch with them about organ scholarship situation and possible candidates.

- Start of term. It was noted that the weather had not been the best so far on open church Wednesdays, but a fair number of people had come in. We will continue to do gazebo sporadically. Study Hub and evening prayer would start on October 4th. Next year we should consider collaborating with other inclusive churches to have a table at the next Freshers Fair. We must book in Maytime so to be borne in mind as we approach Easter! Noted that article in Church Times had said that inclusive churches in Oxford felt very safe and welcoming churches were for students. David is making contacts! David will send article round. Students and community at Xmas were important including Arlington Gardens.

- Offertory and other worship matters. Standing Committee had started a conversation about this. Worship as it was before covid had not quite been fully restored – e.g. bringing up the collection and bringing up bread and wine. And the hope was to reintroduce this with the duty warden finding people to bring up the elements and the collection. The symbolism was important. Lynne noted also that if she finds she is unable to do intercessions when rotaed to do so, she will write and send the prayers for someone else to read out if she is unable to do a swap. She asked for this to be added to the job description for intercessions. Alison spoke of the ministry of healing, her previous experience of this had involved two people who were prayer wardens. David would work with fellow ministers to explore theme of healing – sermon and prayers - and then maybe find a group to take this forward (to include the thought that people could also receive healing on behalf of someone else they knew who would wish to receive it)

- David noted that both Rafael and Michael have been referenced so far in our meeting.

- Safeguarding - Rachel and Judith were now working together on this and Rachel reported noting warmest thanks to Tatjana for the very comprehensive and well documented groundwork in dealing with the new diocesan safeguarding requirements. An external trainer from the Diocese would be coming to St Paul's on Sunday 29th October to carry out the CI Training for those who needed it and had not completed it online. There would be a simple lunch. There may also be new students who can come along to this if they prefer an in-person plus lunch training. We will propose to them that they complete the Basic Awareness online beforehand. Given the opportunity of having an outside trainer, we will also be inviting any congregation members who need this training from Cotham. We are in the process of working with Jeni Leggatt-Green on this. Some people still needed to do the Basic Awareness training. Rachel and Judith would be introducing themselves to the congregation and new students. Lynne Booth was managing the DBS checks. Jo Straw noted that all PCC members need to facilitate and encourage the safeguarding culture and share this responsibility.

- Re Eco Church Adrian said some gathering up of Eco Church was in process including cross benefice consortium which will be very useful and great to do – aiming at Late Oct/early Nov.

By Margaret Peirson