



DOWNING PLACE  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH  
CAMBRIDGE  
**PLACE MATTERS**



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## MINISTER'S LETTER

I am writing to you on the day that the builders are able to re-commence work on the **Downing Place building**. Some weeks ago, **Coulson's Building Group** paused its well-advanced progress on redeveloping the premises. It did so with our full support, mindful that we all need to take part in the lockdown required by the coronavirus pandemic. Now they are returning as Government guidelines suggest it is appropriate to do so.

You are more likely to read this, however, nearer to Pentecost, when the church celebrates the **gift of God's self in the Holy Spirit, that profound way of speaking of God's presence and God's power in the world today**.

The building work and the feast of Pentecost may not seem immediately to be linked, but I believe they are. Ninety years ago, the impressive building of **New York's Riverside Church** was opened. It had intimations of **Chartres Cathedral** in France. Deliberately located in a poorer part of New York, it symbolised the church's enduring commitment to social justice. **Most Sunday afternoons during the current lockdown it is where I go for a service that doesn't require me having to look at myself on the screen**. Still today, Riverside Church walks reliably and durably alongside people otherwise marginalised, making real that grace and truth which are revealed in Christ.

In 1930, for that opening ceremony, the minister of Riverside, H. E. Fosdick, wrote a hymn. You can find it at *Rejoice and Sing* 344, but its first verse is

God of grace and God of glory,  
on thy people pour thy power;  
**crown thine ancient Church's story;**  
bring her bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom,  
grant us courage,  
for the facing of this hour.

I hold on to those words as something of a theme song for the ever-evolving Downing Place Church, and I do so for various reasons.

**First, Harry Fosdick links the new church to the Church's ancient story, and sees Riverside as a coming to flower of all its potential. That is part of my vision for Downing Place, too – to be a contemporary flowering of the ancient Church's story, learning from the past, but alive and life-giving for the present.**

Secondly, he recognises the new church's need for wisdom and courage, as in 1930's New York, overlooking the Hudson River and 122<sup>nd</sup> Street, it faced an hour characterised by the worst and longest economic Depression the world had seen. As we live into the aftermath of Covid-19, we, too, will need wisdom and courage for the facing of an unprecedented hour, discerning what to return to and what to leave behind.

Then, later in the hymn, Fosdick asks God to 'save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore'. No less is that needed ninety years later in so unequal a society, both sides of the Atlantic.

But the hymn's primary plea is for the Pentecost Spirit – God's presence and power – to be poured into the church, that it might be an effective and fruitful witness to the God of grace and glory in today's world. Whilst we are locked down this Spring and Summer, wondering what we can do for the church, there is no prayer we need more fervently to offer: 'God of grace and God of glory, on thy people pour thy power'.

*Nigel Uden*



# PROFILE OF HELEN AND TONY SPRING



## *Introduction*

We were married at Emmanuel on a sunny June day in 1969. The Revd David Geddes conducted the service and our reception was held in the Manse garden in Hurst Park Avenue. How we reached that point in our lives involved very different journeys.

## *Helen's Story*

I was born in London in 1943. I was an only child but with three friends living in the same road I never felt lonely.

At eleven I went to Grey Coat Hospital, a girls' grammar school in Westminster where I spent a happy, if undistinguished, seven years.

Career advice was minimal and basically consisted of rummaging through a filing cabinet of brochures. I chose teaching for no very good reason but at the time there were other things on my mind.

In the summer of my final year at school my mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She was rushed into hospital and never returned home. My father, who was an actor, had found work in Norwich so from the age of seventeen I was looking after myself. I have to admit that being able to do what I wanted, eat what I wanted and go to bed when I wanted was a rather novel experience.

I went to the Teacher Training College in Brighton, specialising in Religious Studies. It was a happy time but I was never completely sure it was where I wanted to be.

I spent my probationary year teaching religious studies at a Secondary Modern School in Burgess Hill. Feeling restless I decided to go to America with a friend who had family living there.

We arrived in New York and found jobs as nannies with a wealthy family in Long Island. With the extra money we bought a travel card on the famous Greyhound Coaches. We travelled across the southern states of America and Mexico arriving in San Francisco in time for Christmas. The journey home took in the northern states of America and Canada.

The time travelling had made me realise how much I regretted never going to University and so I applied to New College (part of the University of London) to study theology. I was accepted and in 1967 I became a student again.

The next three years were very happy, not only did I meet Tony but I found the course immensely interesting. At the end of my second year we were married and moved into a tiny flat in Kensal Rise.

Tony was called to a church in West Bromwich and I began teaching in a special needs school nearby. At the end of the year our daughter Rachel was born and seventeen months later our son David arrived.

I returned to teaching when Tony was called to Camberley URC and also trained as a Marriage Guidance Counsellor. We moved to Southampton six years later and I began teaching Religious Studies to GCSE and A level students at St Swithun's, an independent girls' school in Winchester.

I have always been interested in politics and four years after moving to Southampton I became one of the first Liberal councillors on Southampton City Council, which had a combative reputation. While councillors from other parties were always friendly at a personal level, when it came to votes on even minor matters in the Council Chamber voting was strictly on party lines.

In 1993, Diana Maddock, one of my fellow councillors, won the Christchurch by-election and when we moved to London the next year, she asked me to run her office in Westminster. From that point my life changed dramatically and the next nine years of my life were always interesting, often frustrating and frequently exhausting.

When Diana lost her seat in the 1997 election I worked for Archy Kirkwood the MP for Roxburgh and Berwickshire in the Scottish Borders. Both Tony and I developed a great love of the Borders with its beautiful scenery and friendly people and so when Tony retired we moved there for a short time.

The birth of our first grandchild, Betty, brought us south again so we could be close to family. Our son is now a professor in the University Chemistry

Department and unlikely ever to move and our daughter living nearby works in the Zoology Department. We feel Cambridge is now our home for the remainder of our lives.

### *Tony's Story*

I was born in Poole, Dorset, in 1944, my father working as a research chemist for the Navy nearby, but after the war the family returned to Surrey, where my parents had been teachers. They had both come to London, my father from **Liverpool, my mother from Swansea, to find jobs during the 1930's Depression.** Family history research has revealed that my antecedents hail from Stonehaven just south of Aberdeen and Pembrokeshire. I regard myself as a Home Counties Celt.

My primary education was interrupted because my father and mother took part in the earliest teacher exchange with America in 1952. Having disembarked from the Queen Mary in New York, we and a hundred other teachers were whisked down to Washington to meet President Truman in the White House Rose Garden. Since all the other teachers but one had the good sense to leave their families at home, President Truman shook the hands of the four children present and the Ambassador and ignored the teachers.



I am standing next to my sister



We (parents and three children) stayed in Mobile, Alabama, for one year, attending racially segregated schools, but attending a multiracial church. We spent the New Year on a Florida beach, drinking freshly squeezed orange juice, cocking a snook at rationing back in England. My father bought a 1948 Chevrolet to drive us around the circumference of America. We were told the **car wouldn't make it, but they didn't realise we had a 1933 Morris 10 in the UK.** The trip took six weeks with a week in Canada. The sale of the car paid for the **last day's hotel bill before we embarked on the Queen Elizabeth from New York to Southampton.**

My choice of Grammar School amounted to one out of one, because my father was the chemistry teacher at the other. Sadly, my father died the night before my Chemistry A level, but by then I had decided on my future education.

I had secured a place to read chemistry at Exeter University. Without compromising the work necessary for the course, I spent a considerable time enjoying various societies available, not least the Christian societies, PresbyCong Soc, CU and SCM. So much of my teenage years were centred on the church, with its youth club and tennis club, near to where I lived in Sanderstead. It was a natural progression to attend the Congregational Churches in Heavitree and Southernhay during term time. After graduation I was encouraged to spend a **year out before I could enter theological College.** This 'gap' year was spent supporting a community house in Exmouth, begun by members of Southernhay, and working as a bus conductor on Devon General. Thus, I began my ministerial training; at the very least I would be good at collections.

**Having candidated for ministry during the 'gap' year, my course started at New College, London, in September 1966 and lasted four years.** Contrary to Helen's experience the course ceased to be for me the exciting focus of attention after her arrival, but I persevered. We applied for permission to marry during our courses, graciously acceded to by Dr Charles Duthie. Being students, we had tenuous residential qualifications to marry anywhere. The Revd David Geddes had been a University chaplain at Exeter, I had lived in community with his family in Exmouth, I had a student pastorate at Great Chesterford, so being married at Emmanuel, where David Geddes was now minister, was a natural choice.

I was ordained at West Bromwich Congregational Church on 4 July 1970. In 1976 we moved to Camberley URC, followed by a call to The Avenue URC, Southampton in 1982. The bare list does not describe the rich and diverse opportunities that each pastorate offered. Hospital chaplaincy played a large part in each place, two years of which as Free Church chaplain to Broadmoor

Hospital for the Criminally Insane at Crowthorne. (The family rejoiced whenever I came home; or was it surprise?) I served four years as Wessex Synod Clerk, and subsequently eight years as Wessex Trust Chairman. After the Maxwell pension scandal I was one of the first Director appointees to the Ministers' Pension Fund.

An opportunity arose in 1992 to go back to college. I needed some more brain stimulation, so I studied for an MA in Theology and Education at Kings College, London. This experience prepared and refreshed me for my final, full time pastorate at Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church, just within London's North Circular.

Following retirement, we removed to the Borders only to be lured back south to Cambridge to make ourselves indispensable as experts on pre-school childcare.

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## SPECIAL CAUSE FOR JUNE



*The Red Balloon would have been our monthly cause for June. We can't collect in the normal way, but Janet Bottoms reminds us of the work this charity does.*

The Red Balloon is a Learning Centre for young teenagers who have been so bullied and traumatised that they are unable to attend normal secondary schools. Its name was inspired by the French film, *Le ballon rouge*, set in a grey, depressing post-war world where a red balloon becomes, for a child, a companion and a symbol of hope and light.

The first Red Balloon Centre – there are now several of them - was set up in Cambridge in 1956 in response to a cry for help by the parents of a teenage girl suffering from such severe depression that they did not know what to do. It began in the teacher's own home, with just the one student and, though it quickly grew as it became known, was deliberately kept on a homely scale, with never more than 15 students aged between 11 and 17.

Today it still presents the appearance of a private house and education is given in small groups or one-to-one teaching according to the remedial or development needs of the individual students. Each one is encouraged to discover her or his own particular talent or interest and so rebuild confidence in their own value and ability. One girl, for example, who had been almost unable to speak at all when she came to the Red Balloon was discovered to have a fine singing voice. By the time she left, she had the courage to sing in public and speak about the work of the school in teaching the students how to respond to bullying.

Alongside the basic educational subjects the students take part in larger groups in a variety of artistic and therapeutic activities, and sit for at least some GCSE exams. In everything that is done the aim is to equip the students either to return to schools or sixth forms or to enter some form of training. Many have gone on to considerable successes, but whatever they do they have been given a new confidence and self-understanding along with strengths and techniques, hope and light, with which to face the future.

If you want to make a donation to Red Balloon, please see their website to give on-line, or send a cheque payable to “**Red Balloon Learner Centres Group**”.

Their national address is

Red Balloon Learner Centre Group  
Suite 3, Winship House  
Winship Road  
Milton, Cambridge  
CB24 6AP

and the Cambridge Red Balloon is at:

Herbert House,  
57 Warkworth Terrace  
Cambridge  
CB1 1EE

Tel. 01223 357714

e-mail: [admin@cambridge.rblc.org.uk](mailto:admin@cambridge.rblc.org.uk)

**Please don't send cheques to the Downing Place Office – Ann and Elaine cannot deal with them at the moment.**

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

We are active! We are growing!



Nasturtiums



Banana Buns

## LOCKDOWN TREASURE HUNT

Tick the things on the list. Thank God for them.

1. ladybird
  2. robin
  3. butterfly
  4. daisy
  5. Paddington bear [or Winnie the Pooh]
  6. spider
  7. funny-shaped cloud
  8. raindrop
  9. tomato
  10. a book which mentions elephants
- And a bonus ten points for a nasturtium flower!



## POETRY CORNER

Around the block (*inspired by Alison's regular evening stroll*)

I love the licensed snooping of this stroll,  
the casual looking-in and wondering  
at next door's pants blooming in her greenhouse -  
always a lone pair, curiously large;  
and the other neighbour's taste in solar lights.  
The new couple have built a climbing frame.  
There's a special offer at the hardware shop  
so we all have pink geraniums this year,  
but I think they look best in my green pot.  
Midway, I always ponder who on earth  
replaces grass with bright blue rubber chips.  
I pass three chimeneas in a row,  
two fire pits, a rusty barbecue.  
There are rhubarb leaves and pergolas and swings  
and bird feeders and space hoppers and sheds  
and trampolines and trellises and trikes.  
And all the things that do not love a wall:  
frisbees and cats and brambles in the wrong  
gardens; above, the drift of dandelions,  
ice cream vans, butterflies, and bolognese.

*Alison Binney*

# BIBLE READINGS AND PRAYER TOPICS

## JUNE 2020

Below are the Bible readings we may be following together as the Downing Place community during June. You are invited to read them each Sunday.

Overleaf are prayer topics for each day of the month, suggesting church and related matters, and a reminder of wider concerns that need our prayer support.

On the back page a reminder of the 'Collect for Downing Place' originally printed in February 2020 'Place Matters'.

June 7<sup>th</sup>                      Genesis 1-2, 4a; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13. 11-13  
Trinity Sunday            Matthew 28. 16-20

June 14<sup>th</sup>                    Exodus 2. 2-8a; Romans 5. 1-8; Psalm 100;  
Matthew 9.35 - 10.8

June 21<sup>st</sup>                    Jeremiah 20. 7-13; Romans 6. 1b-11;  
Matthew 10. 24-39

June 28<sup>th</sup>                    Jeremiah 28. 5-8; Romans 6. 12-23;  
Matthew 10. 40-42



## ARROW PRAYERS FOR JUNE 2020

1. Pray for your family and friends with whom you keep contact during this time of isolation for so many people in the world today. Make a list!
2. Pray for your family and friends who themselves are suffering from isolation and pre-conditions which makes their days more uncertain.
3. Pray for your local community, and any you know who are suffering from the conditions and restrictions on their normal daily lives.
4. Pray for those you know who have returned to work – pray for their safe return as they widen the circle in which they live and move.
5. Pray for those who continue to work from home – may they find times to relax and times to make contact with others, during every day.
6. Pray for the children – whether their schools are open or not – that they may discover activities and ways in which they develop their skills.
7. It is Sunday!! Worship with others today, either remotely on line, or by reading the act of worship, shared with your own congregation. This week we will pray for groups of people important to our daily lives – name any you know personally . . .
8. Pray for teachers – those with physical contact with children, and those who are teaching remotely – and learning new skills all the time!
9. Pray for those who travel to work – both on the roads and by public transport – that they will stay safe as the numbers increase.
10. Pray for hospitals, and all who work in them – doctors and nurses, administrators and cleaners – and pray that they all keep safe.
11. Pray for the chaplains, that they will have the time to be with those who need their comforting presence. Thank God for their ministry!
12. Pray for those in care homes – name any you know – and thank God for those with the ministry of caring for all who are working in them.
13. Pray for all in Arthur Rank House – particularly pray for the chaplaincy team as they wait with those who are at the end of their lives.
14. It is Sunday!! Thank God for the remote worship that enables all to share – even if, by now, some are able to worship in churches again. This week we will pray for individuals associated with our congregation.
15. Pray for our Minister, Nigel, as he combines the roles of URC Moderator, and Minister of Downing Place and four other local URCs.
16. Pray for John Bradbury as he starts in his new role as General Secretary of the URC, and moves to a new home and a new place of work.



17. Pray for Ann and Elaine who manage the practical work involved with keeping the congregation together in difficult times.
18. Pray for Ian and Mark who, in spite of their busy lives, continue to provide a variety of music, for our time of worship every Sunday.
19. Pray for the Elders and Pastoral Visitors who are ready to help anyone in our large membership, and keep the church regularly in their prayers.
20. Pray for Finance and Management Committee, who have to prepare for the return of worship in the church building which is likely to be very different from normal.
21. It is Sunday!! Pray for our worship together today, in whatever way we are invited to share, and particularly pray for our DPURC families who are sharing their own worship provided by Rosemary Johnston every week. This week we will pray for charities supported this year by our congregation.
22. Thank God for the Cambridge Churches Homeless project which supported homeless people over the Christmas period – and those who continue to support them through lockdown, providing accommodation and regular meals: **Salvation Army, Jimmy's, and the City Council.**
23. Pray for Romsey Mill, and their work with disadvantaged groups in our city – particularly when schools are closed, and families are stressed.
24. Pray for the Olive Tree Project - a charity which supports Palestinian families whose trees have been destroyed by Israeli forces.
25. Pray for Christian Aid, and particularly their programmes which are helping people overcome the devastation caused by coronavirus in countries with a struggling and fragile community health service.
26. Pray for Self Help Africa, a charity that provides the means – animals, tools, support, etc, for communities to become more self-sufficient.
27. Pray for Red Balloon – a local charity supporting children who are finding life difficult – and giving their families encouragement and help.
28. It is Sunday!! Pray for your family and friends – nearby and far away - especially those you have not been able to see recently -
29. Pray for CamCrag – a local charity which takes clothes, tents, and practical support to young asylum seekers stranded in Calais.
30. Thank God for all who have supported you and your family in this time of lockdown – and pray for guidance for those who have to make the decision to open up our society safely once again.

On the next page you will find the Collect written for our church as the work on developing our new building in Downing Place began . . .

A Collect for Downing Place Church (from February Place Matters)

Faithful God - in Jesus Christ,  
You renew creation. . .  
forever re-aligning it to You and to itself,  
and You renew us . . .  
as we grow into being Downing Place Church,  
realigned in this generation  
to one another and to your mission . . .  
We praise You.

In 2020, as we move from buildings  
cherished over many yesterdays . . .  
to one regenerated for many tomorrows . . .  
and as we bid farewell to some companions on the Way  
whilst warmly welcoming new ones . . .  
we pray the work of your Holy Spirit  
to inspire our worship . . .  
and nurture our vision . . .  
to kindle our talents and  
nourish our unity . . .  
that seeing what you are doing  
we might join in . . .

In seasons of fruitfulness . . .  
draw gratitude out of us . . .  
and in moments of challenge . . .  
put heart back into us . . .

With all your people in every age . . .  
whose name we honour,  
we trust that your fervent love  
will do this . . .  
through Jesus Christ . . .  
to whom alone be the glory . . .  
now and for ever . . .  
Amen.



Grateful thanks to those of you who supported Christian Aid during Christian Aid Week in May. Although the covid19 crisis put a stop to the usual Christian Aid activities there was lots happening on-line. Dr. Rowan Williams preached a powerful sermon for the service on Sunday May 10th, which you can read below.

And thanks to the Worship Discipleship and Spirituality group and to Nigel for the Christian Aid based service on May 17th, which explored some of the stories of Christian Aid's work.

Meanwhile campaigns and actions continue. One piece of good news – the Big Shift campaign to dissuade banks from investing in fossil fuels reports a success. After campaigners targeted HSBC last year to ask it not to support the development of new coal burning power stations in Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia, now the bank has quietly withdrawn its support from these projects. There is still a long way to go, but it is good to see that polite demonstrations do have an effect.

Christian Aid continues to work all over the world to combat the coronavirus pandemic in the poorest communities. In Nigeria, Myanmar, Bangladesh, South Africa, Afghanistan, Nepal and many other countries, Christian Aid is working with local partners to distribute soap, sanitisers, water and hygiene training.



*Health education in Nepal*

In his foreword to CA's recently published report on climate change, *Tipping Point*, former Prime Minister Gordon Brown writes:

“As governments around the world struggle to find their way through the crisis, and multilateral organisations find it difficult to forge a coordinated global response, Christian Aid is filling a gap: its concern is for the most marginalised people living in extreme poverty and inequality, exacerbated by Covid-19. In providing health care, creating jobs, defending human rights and delivering humanitarian aid, Christian Aid is making a difference. It needs your help to continue to do so.”

The report itself details three kinds of tipping point – health, economic and humanitarian – facing the world, then summarises the situation in Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It continues with a detailed analysis of the problems of each of these areas, an account of what Christian Aid is doing, and recommendations for further action. The final section deals with the gendered implications of the covid crisis. It concludes:

“Christian Aid firmly believes these actions are vital for ensuring that the Covid-19 response does not entrench injustice, inequality and discrimination, and does not leave the world's poorest behind to suffer the life-threatening consequences of coronavirus. We are in this together, and together we must do all we can to avoid the tipping point.”

If you are reading Place Matters on-line and would like to read this report you can find it [here](#).

Sermon by Dr. Rowan Williams for Christian Aid Sunday May 10th.

A couple of weeks ago, I had a letter from a friend in Sri Lanka reflecting on the current global crisis. Had anyone noticed, he asked, how odd it was that we should be talking so much about ‘social distancing’ in a world where various kinds of ‘social distance’ were built in to the way societies were organised? The life we have regarded as normal is in fact a life in which there are deep chasms of separation between those who have the resources to manage their lives with a degree of freedom and control and those who don't. In many contexts – and not only in the developing world – you can find communities living literally side by side, but with this immense gap between them.

One of the most dramatic aspects of the pandemic we are living through is that these familiar kinds of social distance don't help much: sickness does not

discriminate between rich and poor, and we are all suddenly reminded of the limits of our freedom and our control of the world we live in. And yet even in **this situation, we can't help being uncomfortably aware that the level of risk varies.** We think with gratitude and admiration of all those who are daily exposed to high levels of risk – health and care workers of course, but also shelf stackers and rubbish collectors; and we think too of those for whom lockdown restrictions mean the risk of abuse, or pressure on a fragile mental health condition, or simply the growing demands of caring for others in the home.

**This week we're invited to cast our eyes wider still: to remember those across the world with the least resources to respond effectively to the pandemic.** Our Christian Aid partners in Africa are facing challenges we can scarcely begin to guess at: communities living in impossibly overcrowded conditions, communities **with no safe water for washing or drinking, communities where you can't rely on consistent public health provision of any kind.** As the pandemic takes a tighter hold in such environments, the economy of entire countries begins to unravel, far more dramatically even than the painful economic effects of the disease here in the UK and Ireland. **Part of the 'social distance' we have tolerated in our world is the reality that the securities we take for granted, even in times of crisis – health care, pensions, unemployment benefits – are lacking in so many societies.**

So even as we observe the social distance, we need to keep each other safe in our households and neighbourhoods here, we might think about how we are called to step across another kind of social distance, so as to stand alongside those who are so much more at risk. In the story of the Good Samaritan, we have the picture of a person who crosses more than one gulf of distance to bring life and hope to someone whose life is at risk. He must stop on a lonely road where danger may still be lurking. He must take time and pay attention, putting aside his own preoccupations and worries so as to see carefully and intelligently what needs doing. And, not least, he must distance himself from his own prejudice and hostility towards a stranger – a man who would be likely in other circumstances to see him as a contemptible and dangerous enemy. He steps across the distance by **putting a distance between his perception of someone's suffering on the one hand, and the familiar human mixture of self-preserving instinct and inherited fears and hatreds on the other.** **The Samaritan's act in saving the life of his Jewish neighbour is a sign of what a world might look like in which the distance created by fear, ignorance and bigotry had been abolished; a world where we were free to respond to one another's needs with prompt and deliberate action.**

Another name for such a world is the Kingdom of God. We are not going to bring it about by policies and programmes, certainly; but we need constantly to be

finding ways of letting its reality show through, so as to challenge the ‘social distances’ we so easily take for granted. In a rather strange way, we are learning something about this through the conditions we’re currently living with. We are learning to put on hold a lot of our instincts for the reassuring pleasures of company and entertainment; learning to pay attention to our physical habits in a new way, becoming aware of the literal distance between us when we shop or take exercise, remembering to wash our hands and so on; and we’re also learning the crucial importance of so many unromantic jobs in public service without which we’d be lost – the jobs done with the selfless professional concentration that provides us with a steady backdrop to all our anxieties and uncertainties. Whether it’s a health service professional routinely staffing the intensive care unit, or just someone stepping aside on a footpath to allow another to go past at the right distance, we are recognising that living thoughtfully – mindfully, if you like – rather than just letting our own comfort and convenience dictate everything is something life-giving.

We are still in the Easter season, celebrating the central fact of our faith. The God we worship has abolished the distance between heaven and earth, manifesting the glory of divine life at the very heart of human failure and pain in the cross of Jesus Christ. The God we worship gives us the power and freedom to step away from the prison of our self-preoccupation; to confront with joy and thanksgiving God’s own radiant beauty, and to confront with honesty and love the urgent needs of God’s creation. Jesus in his life and his death distances himself from safety and self-obsession; his life is a journey towards a deeper and deeper solidarity with human beings in their pain and guilt and helplessness. And in that journey to the heart of our darkness, he renews the whole human race and creates a new level of connection and compassion between human beings.

So the painful days we are experiencing at the moment give us a chance to think again about the way in which we fail to notice just how far we have slipped away from each other in our global society, and indeed in our own country too; to see how we have lost sight of the promise of the great events of Good Friday and Easter – not to mention the vision of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit who brings the gift of understanding between diverse languages and cultures. We have come to think that distance is normal, the distance between rich and poor, powerful and powerless; and we’ve not found the energy we need to challenge this.

As our own society faces great challenges in the shrinking of its economy, these things will be of immediate concern to all of us – but most of all to those in

insecure jobs, those without work, the elderly and disabled and homeless. Likewise on the world stage, we shall all be affected by the burdens that will fall on the poorest and least protected nations. One thing we should have worked out in the light of the crisis is that, in our tightly interconnected and mobile world, no problem is only local; disaster and disruption anywhere rapidly become an issue on our doorsteps. As many have said, our best hope as a world community for avoiding another lethal pandemic, perhaps even worse than this one, is to urge the creation of effective health care in every country and of rapid and efficient international vehicles for response to medical emergency. It means no longer tolerating the deadly inequalities that condemn so many to dangerous exposure to sickness and hopelessness.

In our enforced social distancing, we have the opportunity to reflect on how we learn to live more consistently in and by the grace of the God who abolishes distance, who breaks down the walls of separation and loves us one family. God help us to rise to this challenge and learn to love as he loves us, with a love that never fails in its willingness to cross over, like the Good Samaritan, to wherever there is suffering and fear, leaving behind the narrowness that we have let ourselves get used to. **Love never fails; don't let us fail the call and opportunity that love gives us.**



## BUILDING WORK RECOMMENCES



This picture shows the Sanctuary a few days before the lockdown. It shows the steelwork in place for the new room at the back of the sanctuary and the containment for the cabling in the floor and walls.

As a result of the government's Covid-19 lockdown Coulsons closed the DPURC site on 23 March, removing staff and plant and securing the site. We are glad to report that Coulson's returned to the site on the 18<sup>th</sup> May, as the management sorted out safe ways of working on the very constricted site. Coulsons will be coordinating with all the suppliers and sub-contractors to ensure that all materials etc. are available to enable them to produce a revised programme of work; a revised completion date will then be agreed.



Our architects, Arch:angel, have continued to work on detailed designs, with staff working from home. During the shutdown the Building Group have been continuing their work (using Zoom) and have been looking *inter alia* at colour schemes and floor finishes, external signage and the courtyard garden. Designs for the liturgical furniture are now being considered.

In view of the success of recording services and making them available on YouTube, we have established that the infrastructure is already in place to accept the additional video and audio equipment required for the streaming of services.



This picture shows the steelwork in place for the mezzanine floor in the Hub (the former St Columba's Hall)

*David Thomas and Robert Porrer, photographs by Robert Porrer*

# CLIMATE CHANGE—SOME THOUGHTS

*Editor's note:*

*In next month's Place Matters we plan to look at climate change. Anne Grubb's article below gives us all something to start thinking about.*

God said 'take what you want in this world and pay for it'. Is this a crude attempt to catch your attention by pretending to be a biblical passage, or should you think of it as a provocative statement?

What do you want? Food, water, warmth, shelter and love.

What do you eat? Bread, meat and fish, fruit and vegetables, mostly provided by farmers and fishermen.

Where does your water come from? The tap. How convenient.

Shelter? Our homes. Usually a house or a flat.

Warmth? Clothes like woolly jumpers or those amazing garments made out of plastic, that spin off from the petroleum industry.

What about central heating which makes your whole house so comfortable in the winter? Is that fired by oil, gas, electricity or coal?

So, farmers provide our food. They need tractors to plough their fields, lorries to take produce to market where we collect what we need using our cars. all powered by petroleum products.

**Do you ever think where our water comes from, because we don't use water from wells any longer?. Dams collect water or it is extracted from artesian basins. Then it is purified and pumped to our houses. I don't think we will bother about sewage. Let's just flush that away and let the pumps do their jobs.**

Behind everything we need to make life comfortable for us is an engine or a pump powered by an energy source - petrol, gas, coal or wood. When we use these energy sources we release heat and carbon dioxide. There are now so many people in the world that we are warming the atmosphere not only by the heat released from energy sources but by producing carbon dioxide. This gas acts like **a blanket and traps heat near the earth's surface! You don't understand? Neither do I, but chemists assure me that it is happening.**

I am a very old lady now, but fifty years ago, in winter, I remember routinely pushing a pram through the snow and sliding on icy pavements. I wore a sheepskin coat when I went out. When did you last walk up the road in the snow? My sheepskin coat is used occasionally.

Life is so comfortable these days. An amazing selection of food at the supermarket, some of it flown from the other side of the world, water on tap, a warm house and a car to take me where I want to go. I could add holidays in Spain and a visit from my daughter who lives in Australia. But what is the pay off? A warmer atmosphere is causing ice in Antarctica, Greenland and glaciers everywhere to melt. This will cause rising sea levels. (Remember the Thames barrier?) How many major cities are built beside the sea?

So, dear readers, is there an answer? Are we going to pay for what we do? We all expect so much. Cheap food, comfortable homes. A car at our disposal to deliver us door to door. Holidays abroad. But we are warming the atmosphere and we **don't know how that will end. What are you prepared to pay for your comfortable life on this wonderful world which God has created?**

*Anne Grubb*



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# THE CHERRY HINTON ROAD TUESDAY FELLOWSHIP



The Cherry Hinton Road Fellowship has continued to keep in touch during this period of lockdown when we can no longer have meetings. We have kept in touch by phone and through our own monthly newsletter edited by Wendy Roe. This month we have made a donation of £40 to Emmaus as we are conscious that during this time they cannot rely on the money from their shop because of it having to be closed due to Covid-19.

As most of our members were alive during VE Day we have been collecting memories of the day and in one case a wartime memory as well.

Many of us were very young at the time and so our memories are from the perspective of very small children. Others were older and were not only able to capture the excitement of the day, but also to express mixed feelings that must inevitably be present after all the horrors of war. So for some VE Day was a bittersweet day. Barbara Boud in particular remembers being so upset by the nuclear bombs being dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the war that this has coloured her memories of enjoying VE day.

There are memories of street parties which are beautifully illustrated by Anne Disney's photo. She says that she is sitting on her friend Sheila Bright's mother's lap and her brother was in the front row with his hand in front of his mouth. Anne was a toddler at the time. Sheila and Jean were sisters. Sheila introduced Anne to Emmanuel URC when Anne was twelve. Jean later became Jean Harper who was the Secretary of Cherry Hinton Road URC for a while.



Others remembered dressing up in fancy dress for the street parties. Sheila Ostler was dressed in a nurse's uniform while Margaret King remembers being dressed as Little Bo-Peep in Edinburgh where she and her mother were evacuated. I was in Hungarian national costume, but all I can remember is being lifted up high to wave a tiny Union Jack as I was two at the time. Sheila Simpkins remembers being in a highchair for her street party. Cynthia Higginbotham remembers being a baby in a cot and seeing the sky full of planes.

Jan Tucker, former member of the Cherry Hinton Road Sunday congregation, has written of her memory of VE Day together with her wartime memories.

I am so grateful to all those who have contributed to give us such vivid pictures of VE Day from the point of view of children living at the time.

*Penny Milsom*

## **WARTIME MEMORIES AS WRITTEN BY JAN TUCKER**

Having reached the unbelievable age of 80, I am one of the last generation of those who remember World War II. I was six when the war ended, but I have a few vivid memories of that time. The recent celebration of VE Day on May 8th did not stir a memory of that day, but of a later date.

On August 15th, VJ Day (Victory over Japan), I was walking down the main street of my home town (Beccles, near Lowestoft) with my father and exclaimed “Daddy, they’ve put on the flags for my birthday”. He quickly disillusioned me of that.

An earlier memory produced an intriguing aftermath. My grandmother, who lived with us, kept chickens at the bottom of the garden (as many did at the time, as meat was short and expensive). She went out every evening to collect the eggs. My father, too old to be conscripted, but a useful convoy driver, was at home at the time. Suddenly, to the south of us there was a huge explosion. “Where is your mother?” he asked my mum. Soon after, Granny came into the kitchen covered from her old felt hat to her shoes in chicken feathers. She’d thrown herself down in the kitchen run when she heard the explosion.

After the war and decades later, we found the date of the explosion was 12th August, 1944. Joe Kennedy Junior, elder brother of JFK, was pilot on a secret bombing mission from a Suffolk base. The bombs had been badly loaded, and the bomber blew up over Aldeburgh, killing him and the crew. As the dates fitted we guessed we had witnessed that.

My father’s convoy driving was not without its dramas. Coming back from the London area one night, he had dimmed his headlights as a blackout was in force. Hearing a noise behind him, he hightailed for home, and left his truck in the lorry yard, heading for home in the dark. Next day he went back to base to be greeted by his mates. “What have you been up to, George?” The back of the truck was all stove in, but the German gunner had missed his wheels.

I remember the noise of VJ flying bombs, or “doodle bugs”. Living only ten miles from the east coast, we were right in their path. My mother said calmly, “Don’t worry, girls, you only have to worry if the noise stops. So we’re ok if the noise keeps going.”

When we were frightened we had a bolt hole. There were two types of air raid shelters, outside and underground, and Morrison (indoors). Ours was the latter - a steel box with steel mesh sides, and it was in the middle of our living-room. We ate off it and played houses in it. When the war was ended it was taken away, but we were in bed at the time. Coming down to breakfast, we exclaimed, “We’ve got a new shelter!” We’d never seen a dining table before. Father invited two American servicemen, whom he had met during his convoy work, to have meals with us, which they enjoyed so far from home. One kept in touch with us during the war, sending us food packs and beautiful dolls for me and my two sisters. The dolls were exquisite and far better than the cheap ones you could buy here at the time.

## DOWNING PLACE URC ONLINE SERVICES JUNE 2020

7th	Trinity Sunday	Holy Communion Preacher: The Revd Professor David Thompson President: The Revd Nigel Uden
14th	Pentecost 2	Preacher: The Revd Elizabeth Caswell President: The Revd Nigel Uden
21st	Pentecost 3	A service led by the Revd Nigel Uden
28th	Pentecost 4	Preacher: The Revd Dr Janet Tollington President: The Revd Nigel Uden

Watch online at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7GQuqsJi5A2PFacVyp4YOg>



MAGAZINE EDITOR: Sheila Porrer

ITEMS FOR MAGAZINE:

Please send items to both Sheila Porrer and Ann Auger  
([ann@downingplaceurc.org](mailto:ann@downingplaceurc.org))

ITEMS FOR MONTHLY

PRAYER DIARY: Maureen Kendall

WEB EDITOR: Alison Binney

Please send all items to be included in the June edition to both Sheila and Ann by the cut off date of Wednesday 17 June 2020.

Any items received after the deadline will not be included.

The July edition will be available during week ending Friday 26 June