

+ STOMP

WINTER 2020 MAGAZINE



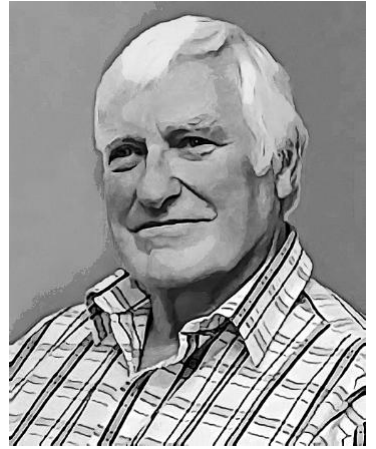
THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD





Last October, Revd Caroline spent a three-week placement at the Anglican chaplaincy of Christ Church, Lille, in Northern France. Read the full story starting on page 5.

From the Editor



‘NATURE WILL ALWAYS WIN’

Simple words spoken by Yemi Wilde recently on a Sunday over coffee. Gales, snowstorms, floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanoes all in their unbridled power to destroy seem to confirm her thought as do famines and pestilence. So do some choice biblical references:

Exodus 10:15 on locusts

‘They covered the face of the whole land, so that the land was darkenednot a green thing remained, neither tree nor plant of the field

Luke 21:11

‘There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terror and great signs from heaven’.

Today locusts from the Yemen are sweeping devastatingly through East Africa, the corona virus threatens us worldwide, huge areas of Australia are scorched and floods devastate Wales and parts of England. However, is it true that nature will always win or is it rather that the forces of nature will always threaten us with disasters and that we need to be ready to deal with these physically and psychologically? Humankind has found many answers over the centuries and now through conservation and green policies and medical research and discovery we are facing up to the challenges of the natural forces that help to shape our lives.

This brings each of us to an attitude on this subject - is one optimistic, pessimistic or realist? In philosophy and geography the dilemmas are reflected in the determinist and possibilist schools of thought. Determinism sees the environment and the forces of nature as controlling human life and actions. Possibilism sees that human behaviour and culture are not merely determined by the environment but by human choices and actions. Possibilism seems to be more in line with the Christian ethos of hope and personal responsibility but what as a Christian do you think? We will try to publish any letter of reply, but it needs to be short!

GG 19 February 2020

Cover picture

'In the Grip of Winter'

When this photograph was taken in Gadebridge Park in the middle of February 2013 the park was in a sorry state. Large areas were flooded, picnic tables awash almost to seat level, the poorly equipped children's play area unusable, the river choked with vegetation and neglect. It was some weeks before the water level dropped but even then large areas of the ground were quagmires covered with slushy snow. The whole vista was grey and misty and only the flocks of screeching seagulls found any benefit in it.

What a different scene it will be in just a few weeks' time and a summer view from the same vantage point will be hardly recognisable from the bleak vista in my photograph.

Today, with the world's woes pressing in on us, there is a danger of despair, or at least an uneasy feeling that the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are saddled up and ready to ride.

The one easily recognised feature in any photograph taken at any time from the same viewpoint is of course the spire of St Mary's Church rising out of the gloom and pointing us to the One whose love for us is unfailing and who, above all, is actually in charge.

Jeff W



THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL

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The Revd Luke Geoghegan

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The French Escape

Last October, I was lucky enough to be given some time out of parish life to go and explore a different perspective on ministry. I decided to spend my three-week placement at the Anglican chaplaincy of Christ Church, Lille in Northern France. When I was studying French at university in the late 1980s, I spent a year working in northern France, just down the road from Lille, in Amiens. I worked as a language assistant in a large lycée technique and taught English to mainly boys who were training to become car mechanics – their only need for English

was to be able to understand the British and American pop songs so I mainly taught English through the medium of the lyrics of Dire Straits and Madonna.

It was a real pleasure for me to be able to return to my old stomping ground, albeit for a very short time. Never in a million years, all those years ago, would I have ever imagined the next time I would come back to this region would be as a

priest! I wasn't even a Christian the last time I was there and I can assure you I did not set foot in to any churches at all – apart from accompanying my Roman Catholic Friend to Amiens Cathedral on all days of obligation, which much to my great annoyance at the time, seemed to come round very regularly.

I was delighted that the Archdeacon of France suggested to me that I might spend some time in Lille, with the Revd Canon Debbie Flach and her congregation at Christ Church. I was excited to find an *Air B and B* right in the heart of Lille within a short walk of everything.



I really did not know what to expect to find at an English church in the heart of a French city. Having arrived by Eurostar with Chris and having quickly found our bearings, we walked over to meet Debbie and to go to a Saturday evening social planning event – to launch their 150 years celebration. ⇒

Everyone was really friendly and welcoming, it was a bring and share supper and a presentation – in their underground parish room – a room which apparently during the second world war was used to hold secret prayer meetings.

On Sunday morning, we turned up for their morning service – and walking into the church, it was like walking into any church in England – everything was just the same, the hymn books, the notice sheets, the liturgy, the rotas etc!



People were curious to find out about us and were instantly welcoming. The services followed the usual common worship format and everything was in English. However, the congregation were certainly not all English.

There were indeed a lot of ex- pats, British people who were married to French nationals, students from the university from all over the world whose common language was English, Americans working in Lille, asylum seekers, British tourists who are visiting Lille and wanted to find somewhere to worship whilst away on holiday. There were also French people who lived locally who just said they found something special at that church, even though some of them had limited English! What was most remarkable amongst the diverse congregation was the wide range of ages - there were many younger people in their 20s and 30s – an age group we find hard to attract at home.

During the three- week stay, I shadowed Debbie and observed what it was like to be a chaplain in France. I saw how the church was run, attended meetings, attended their version of a PCC, a baptism preparation meeting and a baptism. I had the privilege of both preaching and presiding at the Eucharist.

The time away in France gave me some time and space away from parish and family life – not only to reflect on my own vocation and where God may be taking me next, but also to reflect on what it means to be an Anglican church in France.

I think what was distinctive about this place was that hardly any of the congregation considered themselves to be locals. Even some women who had married Frenchmen and been living in France for over thirty years, still talked of themselves as not being “at home.” They seemed less concerned about their building but far more concerned as seeing themselves as a body of people – a community, a family.

The fact that so many of the congregation hailed from many parts of the world, seemed to gel them together. They behaved as if they were all ‘foreigners’ – and therefore unsettled and because of this, the sense of belonging to this community was so much more important. For some, the church was reminder of home – maybe the prayers, hymns and liturgy reminded them of their time before they moved to France, for others it was the commonality of the language which bound them together. For others it was the genuine Christian welcome, the fellowship and the sharing of food and drinks. At Christmas, someone does a run back to England to stock up on mincemeat to make the pies and Christmas crackers!

One guy I got into conversation with on one Sunday morning was a French Roman Catholic who had decided to come to Christ Church because he found the worship there “less detached, more relatable and more down to earth” than the offering at the local Catholic church.

My experiences made me reflect on what it means to be a settled community as opposed to being a community of scattered people gathered together. As I reflected, Psalm 137 kept going through my mind “How shall I sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” The people at Christ Church sang the Lord’s song by creating community, offering a warm welcome and hospitality, being family to those without family close at hand and by putting the body of people at the top of the priority list rather than the geographical location or the building. I had a feeling that if the Christ Church building fell down tomorrow, then this would not matter so much to them, they could be a church anywhere.

The experience left me reflecting how we maybe need to ‘unsettle’ ourselves from time to time and try to take on a different mindset about who we are as a church. Does the fact that we are so ‘at home’ in our Church mean that we are less open to welcoming others? *Revd Caroline*

Cakes, Coats & Community Café

In our MAP, we stated that we wanted to improve links with and support for our local community, and with this in mind we collected from the very generous parents at Penny's school a wonderful collection of pre-loved (and in most cases barely worn) coats, shoes and football boots.

Once in possession of these high quality goods, we had to decide on the best way to get them to the people for whom they were intended. After a false start or two, it became clear that a joint initiative offered the best chance of success. So, together with Liberty Tea Rooms and Christians Against Poverty, the 18th January was booked as the Cakes, Coats and Community Café first event. St Paul's, a church and hall in the heart of its community, made the perfect venue.



It was wonderful to work with people from other organisations, and between us there was a whole range of support on offer. The Liberty Tea Rooms provided refreshments, CAP offered debt advice and counselling (and a health check by a District Matron) while support was also available from Carers in Herts. As well as the coats, shoes, football boots and wellies, there were jumpers, toys and books on offer, and plenty of willing volunteers to sort and set out the goods, direct visitors to what they might need, and serve and clear away the refreshments.

While we did not get as many visitors as we would have liked (despite some excellent leaflets and good publicity work) those who did come were very appreciative, with football boots in particular proving very popular. Our visitors encouraged us to do it again, saying they knew of other families who needed and would appreciate what was on offer.

Word of mouth is indeed the best way to spread awareness of this initiative, and we have decided to repeat it in the next few months. We had fun working and socialising with other Christian and voluntary groups; generous donations found a good outlet, and families were able to go away with much needed, good quality items and support to make their lives a bit easier. A good day of community in action all round!

Norma Podmore



The elderly Anglo-Catholic vicar, Eustace, continues his correspondence to Darren, his nephew, a low-church curate recently ordained . Another of The Rev Dr Gary Bowness' tongue-in-cheek reports.

The Rectory
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

Your idea for our two churches to hold a combined New Year's Day walk was an admirable one, although I could sense a certain clash of cultures when your party arrived at the starting point with boots, waterproofs and GPS equipment. Our own group, rather anticipating tottering between tea shops, with a little light shopping in between, sported tweed suits, shopping bags and furled umbrellas.

Even the two sets of dogs seemed bemused with one another, with your Westies and King Charles spaniels making enough noise to scare all the wildlife in the county, and our Retrievers puzzled why the pheasants were not dropping from the sky. Dear Miss Mill's miniature poodle, with the painted toenails, will probably need life-long counselling; the furthest it had walked previously was from its bed to beside the dining room table.

The electronic navigation equipment brought by members of your group made me think that if only the wise men had had these blessings, they wouldn't have had to follow anything as unreliable as a star.

Although I suppose that instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh, they would then have arrived with an MP3 player, a mobile phone which would have been obsolete before Jesus' first birthday and a CD of Madonna's greatest hits.

I do concede that our two congregations learned much from one another. Our ladies were most interested to hear about the latest in personal trainers, while yours discovered how to bring a pan of jam to a rolling boil. Your men seemed impressed to hear of squirrel shooting while ours gathered useful tips for caravanning abroad. And poor Miss Mill's poodle learned that the great outdoors was a parallel and hostile universe.

By mid-afternoon, however, the balance of power shifted. When the leader of the walk from your group lost his SatNav, our members felt the need to assert themselves. The gentlemen navigated using wind direction, moss on trees and angles of the sun, while our ladies, with tweed skirts furled somewhat higher than one would have wished, showed yours how to wade through peat bog without complaining.

Perhaps town and country really can learn from one another. But if Major Bullock's wife arrives for Matins next Sunday sporting the latest gym gear, you will have much to answer for.

Your loving Uncle

Eustace

The 100 Club Emergency Repair Fund needs you

It's that time again!

The 100 club was originally set up in 2013 to raise funds for the failing boilers at St Mary's. Since then it's raised £900 a year for vital repairs in both churches, and given away £600 a year in prizes in the £50 monthly draw.

It is a fact that each year we've lost subscribers from death or moving away, so we've got to push hard to fill the gaps by the renewal date of 1st May. This is where you come in.

The club is now known by the name "The100 Club Emergency Repair Fund" to emphasise its importance to the Parish. There are a few spare numbers that we know about, but some existing subscribers may not renew this year (please do!) so we need to recruit more members. It's only £15 per number to join for the whole year (equivalent to less than 30p a week!) with £50 every month paid out in prizes. Those with two or three numbers of course double or treble

their chances. The congregations are encouraged to subscribe, and if already a member, to consider an extra number. Why don't you spread the word to current non-subscribers, for example your family, friends and neighbours?

To renew, see the list in church at St Mary's to remind you of your numbers, and new members can select a number from the vacant ones, and put the money or cheque made payable to "St Mary & St Paul PCC" into an envelope addressed to "The Treasurer (100-club)" with your number(s) clearly stated on the outside. At St Paul's Rosina will be speaking to you personally and will be delighted to take your cash or cheque, again made payable to "St Mary & St Paul PCC".

Rosina Gaddes



Maundy Thursday: time to wash feet

Maundy Thursday is famous for two things. The first is one of the final acts that Jesus did before his death: the washing of his own disciples' feet. (see John 13) Jesus washed his disciples' feet for a purpose: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." His disciples were to love through service, not domination, of one another.

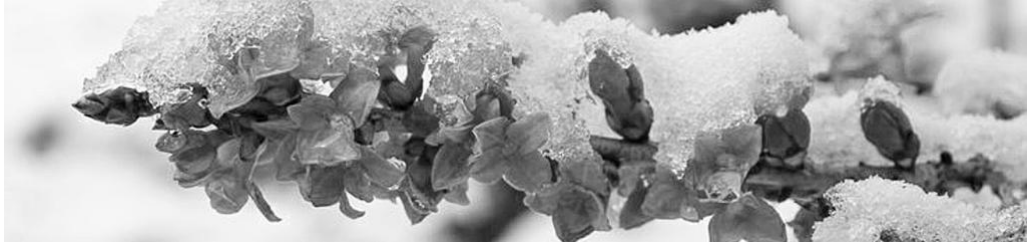
In Latin, the opening phrase of this sentence is 'mandatum novum do vobis'. The word 'maundy' is thus a corruption of the Latin 'mandatum' (or command). The ceremony of the 'washing of the feet' of members of the congregation came to be an important part of the liturgy (regular worship) of the medieval church, symbolising the humility of the clergy, in obedience to the example of Christ.

But Thursday was also important because it was on that night that Jesus first introduced the Lord's Supper, or what we nowadays call Holy Communion.

Jesus and his close friends had met in a secret upper room to share the Passover meal together - for the last time. And there Jesus transformed the Passover into the Lord's Supper, saying, 'this is my body' and 'this is my blood' as he, the Lamb of God, prepared to die for the sins of the whole world. John's gospel makes it clear that the Last Supper took place the evening BEFORE the regular Passover meal, and that later Jesus died at the same time that the Passover lambs were killed.



The Surprises of the Winter Garden



After the celebrations and bright lights of Christmas, January and February can be very dark months.

However in early January, if you look carefully surprises can be found. In my garden the first of the snowdrops are appearing, *Galanthus elwesii*. An early flowering Camellia is out, a single delicate pink with prominent yellow stamens *x williamsii* J.C. Williams. Coloured stems stand out too in these dark days. Examples I have are, *Cornus sagguinea*, Winter Beauty, with its yellow, orange and red stems. There is *Salix Alba* with its bright yellow stems. Walking further on I pick up the sweet scent of *Sarcococca confusa*, it has small cream flowers and shiny black berries. A dominant shrub in full flower with no leaves is *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn', having pink and white flowers and a sweet scent. Lastly on my walk is *Hamamelis intermedia* 'Jelena' with its ragged orange flowers with a delicate scent. Underplanted *Cyclamen coum*, in shades of pink never fail to give a good display, there is also a slender leaved variety to add more interest.

We have now moved into another month and with daylight increasing more plants are coming to life. In the front garden *Bergenia schmidtii* with large clusters of pink flowers are giving a good show. This is the earliest of the Bergenias to flower. The snowdrops are quickly being replaced by the natural daffodils, *Narcissus pseudo narcissus lobularis* and primroses. More camellias are coming into flower each week and for the last week of February there is St. Ewe, a deep, single pink and Cornish snow, a small, single white with a touch of pink at the tip of each petal.

On the patio the Hellebores are now in full bloom. I have had them in bloom since Christmas. Many new hybrids are available at the garden centres. December Dawn being an early pink tinged variety *Hybridalis Citron*, a yellow/green one. Other than division why not try saving seed, mainly of *Hellebore orientalis*. I have been successful in germinating seed and getting a variety of shades and form but flowering takes three - four years from sowing!

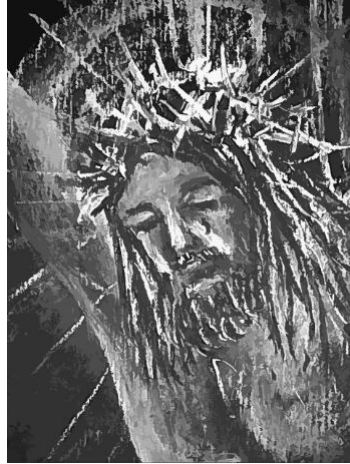
Easter Story



Further down the garden is a large bush of *Lonicera fragrantissima* covered in creamy- white flowers with a sweet perfume. To the front of the border *Primula denticulata* is just showing colour and daffodil Dutch master is in full bloom standing up to the winds we have had with its strong stems. At the base of the Pear tree, Crocus Bowles yellow and Tomasinianus are giving a colourful show. Finally reaching the top of the garden *Mahonia x media Charity* is in full bloom with lily of the valley scented clusters of yellow flowers that even at this time of year are attracting the bumble bees. Beneath this I planted last year's clumps of *Pulmonaria officinalis* which is in full bloom of pink and blue flowers. I do think this is a plant that should be grown more, it always gives a good show in early Spring and there are many varieties to choose from in many colours of blue, red and white.

Well this article has been written over two months and I hope it has given some of you an idea of what can come into flower from early January onwards.

Roger Sygrave



The thud of nails on open palms,
'Father forgive' was all He said,
'Finished' was His final cry,
As death approached God
bowed His head.

Born of a woman He entered our world,
Fully man yet fully divine,
Such is the mystery beyond
comprehension
That One such as this
should step into time.

He came to die and rise again
The first-fruits of the Father's love,
That man should follow in His train
On wings of light to realms above.

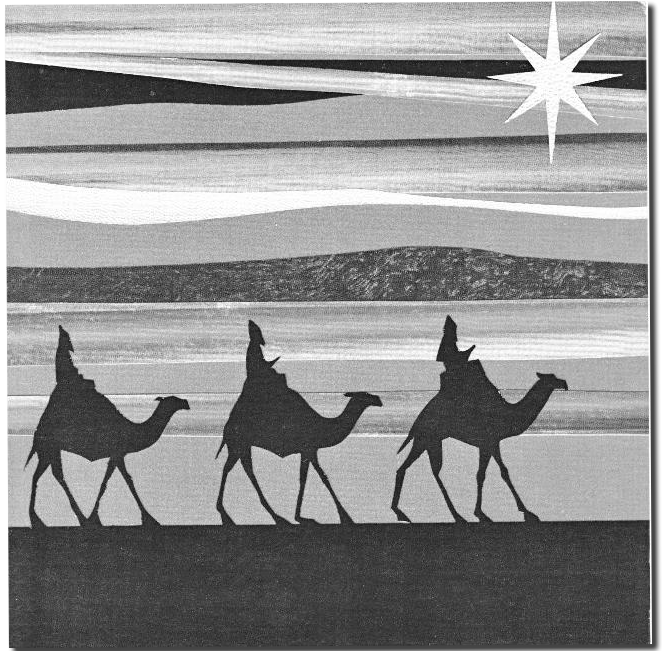
Megan Carter

'Christmas' or

The Winter 2018 issue of SToMP featured an article on 'Christmas Card Reflections'. An analysis of 100 cards received for the 2017 Christmas showed that 54 carried a clear Christian message whilst 46 'showed variously snow scenes, Christmas trees and the like'. Wondering whether there had been changes over the next two years I assessed 100 cards from last Christmas and found that the Christian themed cards had dropped to 49.

Another question raised for 2017 was how many of the 100 cards indicated support for charities? In answer, 64 cards showed such support compared with 66 in 2019. A related question was whether there was a greater propensity for those who bought Christian themed cards to buy cards supporting charities than those who bought secular themed cards. In the 2017 sample there was such a propensity as 69% of 'Christian' and 57% of 'secular' cards indicated support for charities. A

welcome sign of improvement two years later was that the figures respectively were 71% and 62%.



'Xmas' and All That

In answer to the question as to whether we should call this great December festival 'Christmas' or 'Xmas', it is useful to reflect on the idea that pre-Christian practices at this time of the year have survived and have become enmeshed in our Christmas celebrations. Carol singing traces back to wassailing and pre-Christian fertility rites. Mistletoe has been seen for millennia as a magical plant, a fertility symbol and, in Norse mythology, a symbol for peace and reconciliation. Holly to the Romans



represented the god, Saturn. For the Celts the Holy King ruled during the darkest months of the year. Centuries later Scandinavians called holy 'Christ's thorn. Gift giving by mythical beings are illustrated by the Danes' Sinterklaas, the Italians' La Befana and the Germans' Frau Holle. Equally we can trace pre-Christian 'pagan' roots to Christmas trees, hanging decorations and the symbolism of the yule log.

In the Northern Hemisphere 22 December is the shortest daylight year, the sun being at its greatest distance from the celestial equator. Autumn ends and Winter starts. This momentous progression of the seasons has been awe-inspiring, sometimes fearful, over the centuries and has led to spiritual and symbolic responses which have carried through to us today as at Xmastide we celebrate Christ. GG



Catherine Lindsay from St Mary's congregation recounts her experience of joining the local team of 'Street Pastors' the nationwide Christian interdenominational initiative

I was intrigued by the idea of being a Street Pastor a few years ago when my cousin, who lives in the West Midlands, told me she had become one. I didn't know they existed in Hemel Hempstead until I was handed a leaflet prior to the Walk of Witness on Good Friday a couple of years ago.

To be a Street Pastor you have to be 18 or over and a member of a local Christian church. I went out as an observer with four Street Pastors one Friday night and walked and talked with them as they made their way from The Liberty Tea Rooms, where they assemble for prayer, along Marlowes and into the High Street passing a word of greeting to groups of people outside the various pubs and night clubs, enquiring of those on their own if they are alright and noting where the homeless are settling down.

After DBS vetting and references I embarked upon the training course encompassing themes such as Roles and Responsibilities, Knowing your Community, and Listening Skills, designed to 'prepare Christians to care for, listen to and help people in their local neighbourhood, engaging with people whoever they are and whatever their circumstances'.

During this time I was put on the rota and went out once a month on a Friday or Saturday with three others. We all wear uniform (including a hat) so that the public (and police) recognise us. We stay together, leaving The Liberty Tea Rooms about 10pm, when the senior Street Pastor for that evening contacts the CCTV people so they know we are out that night. We return just before 2am. We carry bags containing a Good News Bible, lollipops (very popular), spikeys and flip-flops. In winter a thermos of coffee is sometimes taken.



Last Summer, with three others I was formally commissioned as a Street Pastor at a short ceremony during a service at a South Hill Centre.

Street Pastors is an interdenominational network of Christians charities operating world-wide. In the UK there are more than 300 groups showing a concern for their community. The people we meet are very appreciative of our presence but many of them cannot comprehend that we are volunteers. New volunteers for Street Pastors or Prayer Partners are always welcome.

OPTING OUT

"There are 100 members in our church,
But 30 are frail and elderly,
That leaves 70 to do all the work,
But 18 are young people at college.
That leaves 52 to do all the work.
But 14 are tired businessmen,
So that leaves 38 to do all the work.
But 16 are busy with jobs and children,
So that leaves 22 to do all the work.
But a further 10 have most important
outside interests,
That leaves 12 to do all the work.
But 5 live too far away to come regularly,
So that leaves 7 to do all the work.
And 5 say they've already done their bit
for the church.
That leaves you and me,
And I'm exhausted.
Good luck to you"

This piece appeared in the magazine of Handbell Ringers of Great Britain and was spotted by St Mary's member, Suzanne Warren. Suzanne is also a member of the Handbell Ringers of GB and thought it might chime with some STOMP readers.

Deanery Matters

Following her 7-year period of service as Rural Dean the Deanery Synod warmly thanked The Revd Lizzie Hood for her contribution over the years and she was presented with a bouquet of flowers and a cheque by the incoming Rural Dean, The Revd Mike Macey.

Mike Macey, concerning the recent Rural Deans' Residential meeting, indicated disquiet from this Deanery about the 'Big Conversation 2025' and its tag line 'Growing Younger'. It is understood that our Deanery instead will use the tag line 'a church for all ages'. Bishop Michael indicated that he intended to visit the Deanery and all its churches to help initiate the Conversation.

Mike informed us, relating to Parish electoral roll figures, about the numbers of Synod representatives for each Parish in the coming triennium; the Parish of St Mary and St Paul is to be reduced from 3 to 2 representatives.

He indicated that the Diocese is to host Bishop Leopold of the Windward Islands as part of the national hospitality associated with the July Lambeth Visitation by the world Anglican community. Finally, presenting her with a bouquet, he thanked Jean Garner who is now retiring following 40 years continuous service on the Deanery Synod, during many years of which she served as Secretary.

The Treasurer, Peter Bladon, indicated the Deanery account to be in good order, with a balance of £3,089.

Concerning the overall contribution from our Deanery churches to the Diocese he indicated that for 2019 we will have contributed 94.5% of the share required, slightly higher than the 94.2% arising from the Diocese as a whole. Our Deanery share for 2020 will be £428k, 3.2% higher than 2019.

Arising from the standing 'Swop Shop' item, (in the Swop Shop each Parish has the opportunity to describe a new idea or activity, and to publicise events), it is worth particularly to mention the success of the Deanery 2019 visit to Ely and the intention on 15 August in 2020 to visit Leicester. Also, arising from the success of the Rural Dean licensing service, with a joint churches choir and excellent attendance, the idea of arranging an occasional joint evensong was warmly welcomed by the Synod.

GG 3 March 2020

Being a widow is likebeing an odd shoe

The shoes have become worn together, the creases and scuffs match. The wear on the soles is similar or complementary, where the miles travelled have left their mark.

To replace one shoe is impossible, one cannot buy one shoe, they probably don't make that style any more, and one would be new and the other old.

One shoe having 'worn out' so to speak, the odd shoe is left for the rest of its life. The lost shoe is irreplaceable by any other and the remaining shoe cannot easily be paired with a new one.

And so, I am left odd and on my own for the rest of my life, several decades.

It is the placid acceptance of this fact, which gives so many widows such grace. There is no hoping that 'someone' will come along - no hunting or flirting. Only as I accept that my lost partner can not be replaced do I begin to find this peace.

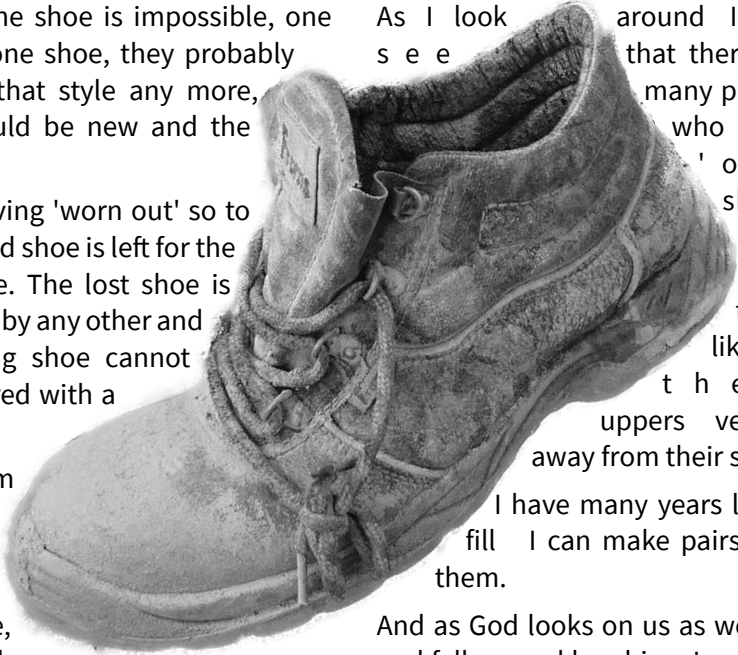
Well, I ask myself, of what use is one odd shoe? Odd shoe does describe me rather well, though some who know me might better call me an 'old boot'.

As I look around I can see that there are many people who are 'odd shoes' worn and tatty like me, their uppers veering away from their soles.

I have many years left to fill I can make pairs with them.

And as God looks on us as we hop and fall around laughing, I am sure that it will make him smile with great love, because although it is his plan that we should be pairs, he created us not only as unique individuals but also each one of us as an integral part of society.

Ruth Clinch



Report to the congregation on the PCC Meeting of Monday 20th Jan 2020

The Parochial Church Council (PCC), which is the governing body of The Parish of St Mary and St Paul, comprising elected lay members together with the clergy, makes regular reports to the congregation about business conducted at meetings.

Reports are circulated to the members of the Electoral Roll (for whom we have an email address as GDPR updates allow), displayed on the notice board in both church buildings and printed in STOMP, our parish magazine.

Below, is a summary of key business from the latest meeting.

1. 60th Anniversary – St Paul’s

The PCC noted that 2020 is the 60th anniversary of the building of the new St Paul’s and has started planning a celebration for later in the year.

2. Change and Growth – St Paul’s

It was reported to the PCC that a strategy to develop and open up the worship space at St Paul’s would be developed by the congregation with the help of an experienced priest from outside of the parish as facilitator.

3. Welcomer Training

The PCC discussed the welcomer and sidesmen training sessions which will be run to help support our Mission Action Plan as well as updating volunteers about their roles and responsibilities.

4. Toilet and Kitchen – St Mary’s

The PCC was pleased to approve the funding and start date for this most anticipated work.

Canon John Williams
Chairman

God in the Sciences

This series is written by Dr Ruth M. Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

A Bucket of Tadpoles: Springtime, Curiosity, and the Theology of Science

When I was nearly three, I knocked a bucket of tadpoles all over the patio. Those unfortunate creatures must have been collected to educate my brother and me on where frogs came from, but a toddler can't just stand by and watch. Can I see up close? Or maybe I was 'helpfully' moving it to another place. I just remember doing something I shouldn't have done, and tadpoles on the ground. I was sad that I wouldn't get to see those creatures grow up.

I might have been great at destroying things when I was a child (my family would probably say I still am), but I absolutely love watching living things up close. The more I learn, the more my sense of wonder grows. For a tadpole to become a frog, large sections of its gut, salivary glands and muscles must die, as well as the gills. The cells in those tissues are programmed to curl up and disintegrate, and are then swallowed up by a specialised kind of white blood cell. Legs grow from small sacs of cells on the tadpole's body, and one of my textbooks says that 'The nervous system is also remodelled' - which I suspect is a bit of an understatement. ⇨



This knowledge removes a little of the mystery of how a tadpole turns into a frog, but there is plenty more to discover. These few details also reveal the cleverness of the process. Metamorphosis is surprisingly common in the animal kingdom. How is that an efficient way to grow up, or is efficiency not the most important thing for an animal?

Scientists are essentially grown-ups who are still very much in touch with their inner two-year-old. They refuse to stop asking questions, even when finding an answer becomes decidedly more awkward than opening a textbook.

Many scientists are people of faith, and this also drives their questioning. They believe that God created a world that was very good, that the purpose of all Creation is to praise Him, that we are made in God's image, and that we are tasked with looking after Creation.

So Christians, of all people, should be enjoying and investigating our surroundings. These are the bones of a theology of science which serves some of us very well, and keeps us looking into things like buckets of frogs – that is, until a two year-old comes and knocks them over.



Editor's Interview

Wendy Lewington, Chief Executive Officer of DENS



Born in Aylesbury in 1970 Wendy, with her parents and 10 year- old brother, left Tring for Perth in Australia in 1976. Her parents were amongst the last of the '£10 Poms'. Her Dad, a bricklayer, and his wife from rural Ireland, left for a new life and made Perth their permanent home. A pale skinned and red -headed girl, with an accent queer to the locals and in a newly settled part of Perth, Wendy took time to settle down. This is well shown by the memory that in those early years her closest friend was a girl immigrant from Sri Lanka.

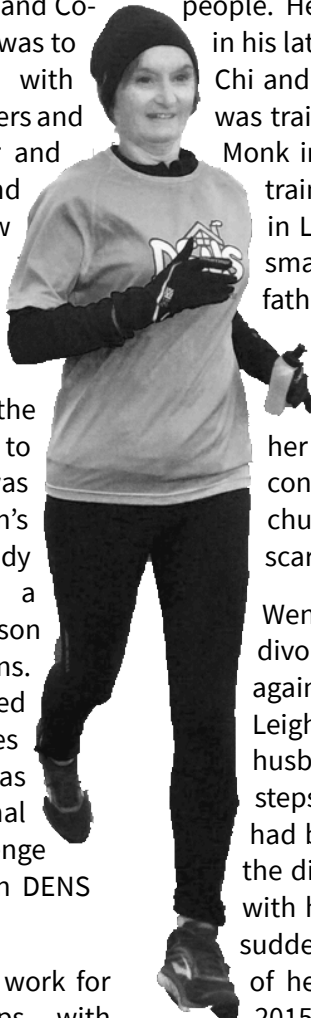
Settle down she did and well. Aged 17 she went to university to take a degree in

Psychology, three years followed by a post-graduate year. Asked why she had chosen this subject she said that since childhood she felt that she wanted to do something to help people and this led her to the humanities and social care. In her post graduate year, now 20 years old, her placement was in the prison service for four months with linked probation work. Thinking about that time I reflected what a revelation it must have been, to which she agreed and said it was more of an issue for the guards than the prisoners! Later she was given contract work to undertake pre-sentence interviews with offenders before judgement, providing psychological reports with recommendations. Then for two years she worked for a Government department in a multidisciplinary team working to give rehabilitation to disabled and injured people.

Aged 24 she applied for six months unpaid leave and on 8 February 1995 she flew away to England for a few weeks and she has lived here ever since. Within a couple of weeks, she felt at home, something about her birthplace, our culture and sense of humour kept her with us she feels. It was a hard time for a while, with no money or time for interviews she worked in a shoe shop and in the evenings as a receptionist to make ends meet. ⇨

A breakthrough came several months later when she joined MENCAP for four years and this was followed by a major step up when she joined SCOPE as an Advocacy Co-ordinator ending up with a nine year stay during which she became the Head of Advocacy and Co-production. The next big move was to VOICE, a charity involved with advocacy for children, care leavers and carers. First as Senior Advisor and finally as Director of Policy and Participation, she had now moved from operational work to policy making and influencing political decisions. A good example was her work on the Children Care Act and the inclusion of the right of children to have advocacy, for which she was thanked by the Children's Commissioner. In 2014 Wendy became CEO of Trailblazers, a charity involved in prison mentoring services in six prisons. In September 2016 she joined DENS as CEO. Here she sees herself in for 'a long haul'. She has moved back into an operational role, which gives enough challenge and there are areas of work in DENS still to be developed.

All this represents 30 years of work for unprivileged people, perhaps with another decade to come. I asked Wendy what influences had brought her to this career. She sees herself as coming from a



working - class family. Her father, bricklayer and union official, and her Roman Catholic mother, had brought her up to ideas of the rights of people, of people being treated fairly and of the empowerment of vulnerable people. Her father's spirituality led in his later life to his interest in Tai Chi and to Buddhism. Indeed, he was trained by a monk, the Head Monk in Perth, who himself had trained at the Buddhist centre in Little Gaddesden - what a small world it is! In retirement father went on to teach brick laying to disaffected youth. Her mother, who lives in Perth, still had her faith but, taught in a convent, she had been put off church by the nuns who scared her.

Wendy married in 2007 and divorced in 2011. She married again in 2013 and now lives in Leighton Buzzard with her husband and 19 ½ year old stepson. Like us all she has had bad times and mentioned the difficult separation process with her first marriage and the sudden pancreatic cancer death of her 78 year - old father in 2015. Each these happenings has spurred her to take up running, including several half marathons and full marathons in Edinburgh 2014,

Dublin 2016 for Pancreatic Cancer, London 2017 for DENS, and Dublin 2019, this last being her fastest in 4 hours 48 minutes and supposedly her last! Marathons are time-consuming and demanding – given the training, the nutrition and the physiotherapy – and there is the loss of time for relationships and friendships. Yes, perhaps 2019 will be the last as promised to her husband.

It will be good if Wendy can be with us for the long stay and it has been a privilege to find out about her varied life in giving to others and I am glad to have the opportunity to share this story with the readers of STOMP.



All in a day's work...



... er ... the good news is the youth-group has made a great start by pressure-washing the west window ...

CORONAVIRUS:

Coughing all day long ♥

Oh lord please help these people

Rinse and soap your hands

♥ Oh lord make everyone wash

Never leaving the house ♥

And lord please heal these ill
people.

Very dangerous for the old

Is there anything I can do lord

♥ Ruining your everyday life

Under close inspection

Save the ill! ♥

You can give hope.

Only you.

Understand yourself.

Can we be safe?

Always try.

Never give up.

Heaven accepts anyone.

Even if you sin.

Love for god overwrites it.

Poor, rich, anyone.

Prayers composed by children from 'Acorns' at St Mary's