

A newsletter brought to you during Covid-19



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Church Together Apart



Is it ever too late?

Last week I had one of those extraordinary emails drop into my inbox. The sender's name was the "subject" and it rang a very faint bell in my memory, although I couldn't have placed it without the accompanying message. Of course! – it was a pupil I taught between 1985 and 1989, when I worked at a school in Salford (so only around 32 years ago!). We have now exchanged quite a few messages and I have sent him photographs of his 15-year-old self on a Hadrian's Wall residential he took part in, causing us to reminisce greatly about the old days and particularly the denim dungarees which were all the trend then (for the girls).

This sort of out-of-the-blue contact has happened to me from time to time over the last few years, obviously facilitated by social media. I'm sure many of you have similar stories to tell. I've had contact with ex-pupils from various schools, from ex-colleagues, and one from a fellow student when I studied Classics way back in 1972-75 and with whom I have had no contact since graduating. I am apparently extremely easy to find – even for this student friend who didn't know my married name (but - of course – I use my maiden name for my email address!).

So far, the reason for the initial contact has been because the person has good memories of me and has taken the time to find me – but I am constantly alert for the first message which could be called "hate mail" – the pupil I excluded from school, or the parent who called me the rudest woman she had ever met, perhaps. And let's not even think about the *teachers* I have upset over the years!

Occasionally I meet up with one of these renewed contacts and the strange thing is that no-one seems to have changed much at all. Obviously there are some physical changes, although even those aren't as great as one might think after a 45 year gap – but more significantly, the "essential" person seems pretty much the same. For me this is something of a blow as I feel I have spent my life trying to be a better person and model myself on those I know who exhibit really admirable qualities. So much for all that! It seems I'm just the same Lynne as I was when 18, 25, 40 years old – for good, for bad.

When these contacts occur I am set to reflecting on my life – on what I have achieved, if anything, to date, and whether it actually matters – and what I can do with the time left to me. Recently I confess I have begun thinking about "scaling back" my commitments on the grounds that I'm getting old. I would have said "older" a little while ago but now I think I must start seeing myself as I really am!



And then this Tuesday we heard of the death of Captain Sir Tom Moore. I won't go into the details of his achievements – there can't be anyone in the country who hasn't rejoiced in them - but was there anything this (very old) man could not do? In his 100th year he not only

raised £32,794,701 for NHS charities, he also had a number 1 hit, was knighted by our relatively young queen (a mere 94), and was made an honorary Colonel. On top of that, he broke the Guinness record for

the most money raised by a charity walk. And – perhaps equally importantly, he inspired many others to see that despite age, or infirmity, or disability, they too still had something to offer and by setting themselves their own challenge they could be a beacon of goodness in their community.

So what do I learn from all this? Well, I am having to accept myself for who I am and try to love myself better. I'm really not going to change much now. I have to internalise a message I give regularly – that God loves me for who I am and not for who I'd like to be. And I need to accept that God still has plans for me, and that I need to be open to them.

And finally – there are quite a few pupils I've taught who have made a really big impression on *me*, and I'm now going to try to contact one in particular and see just what I learn from her life story! I'm not a FaceBooker but I shall deploy my insignificant internet skills and see what I come up with.

Watch this space!

Lynne



Starting on Ash Wednesday, for the duration of Lent: daily Night Prayer ('Compline'), on Zoom, from 8.30pm for 15 minutes or so.

More details next week.

Prayer for the Nation

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York are inviting the nation to join them in prayer every evening at 6pm from 1st February.

Here is the prayer for the week beginning 8th February

**Loving God,
at this time of crisis
when so many are suffering,
we pray for our nation and our world.
Give our leaders wisdom,
our Health Service strength,
our people hope.
Lead us through these parched and difficult days
to the fresh springs of joy and comfort
that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

More prayers can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/prayer-nation#na>



Foodbank Donations – can you help?

Don't forget, if you'd like to donate to the Foodbank while the church building is closed, give me a ring on 01625 614819 (email: lynne.norbron@gmail.com) and we can arrange the collection of any items

Thanks, Lynne (Spedding)

Items needed

Milk (UHT or powdered), tinned meat/fish, sugar, fruit juice (carton), pasta sauces, sponge pudding (tinned), tomatoes (tinned), cereals, rice pudding (tinned), tea bags / instant coffee, instant mashed potato, rice / pasta, tinned fruit, jam / honey, biscuits/ snack bars, general toiletries. Smallish boxes of tea-bags are also currently in short supply (40 bags per box).



Where do we go from here?

Reflections from
Andy Atkins
CEO of A Rocha

These are bleak times. We live not just with a global pandemic, but accelerating climate change, and loss of biodiversity and species. Is there hope?

The answer is a resounding 'yes' - if we have confidence in what we know, humility about what we don't, openness to work with others, and the faith to go where we believe God is pointing us.

A Rocha UK was founded twenty years ago as a local Christian conservation project – now it is facilitating an Eco Church movement of more than 3,100 local churches in England and Wales, learning how to care for creation in all they do. We are amazed at where God has led, and often carried, us.

But we also grieve, as we believe God also grieves, for the loss of species, and we long for a stable climate and clean oceans unpolluted with plastic. It is his creation, after all. And we are not blind to the immense challenges ahead if humanity is to halt and even reverse this damage.

So, where is our hope? In a faithful loving God, yes. And in seeds we believe he has planted and will grow. Christians and churches have truly colossal potential to make and demonstrate change in every corner of the land.

St Michael's is an Eco Church, and is committed to caring for God's creation in the whole mission of the church.

Read the whole of Andy Atkins' article at <https://arocha.org.uk/arocha-uk-is-20-where-do-we-go-next/>

A few months ago we asked you all to try to **measure your carbon footprint**. Thanks to all of you who have already done so; but we need more of you to get involved so that we can draw some meaningful conclusions.

The eco-church group would like everyone to have an idea of how much carbon dioxide they are responsible for releasing into the atmosphere. Once we know, we hope that we might be inspired to try to reduce it.

There are several websites available, but we are recommending you use the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) version <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/>.

When you have done it make a note of the result, and please share it and your response to the group by emailing David Mayers (davidjmayers@btintenet.com).



Christian Aid

Bookings are now open for our 'Changemakers' Supporter Conference!

Feb 22nd - 26th

It's fair to say that 2021 hasn't had the start many of us had hoped for. Being locked-down again and with COVID-19 still very much affecting our day to day lives it's easy to feel like there's not much to be hopeful about.

So, here is something to pierce the gloom a little with **stories of hope from our partners** around the world, along with workshops to inspire and encourage you and your churches. Our virtual supporter conference timetable is now finalised, and bookings for sessions are open!

Feel free to join us for just one or all of the sessions. I would personally love to have you join me for our local '[Cheshire, Staffordshire & The Wirral Supporter Session](#)' on Tuesday evening.

Please click on the link below for full details of the programme and the booking system for your chosen sessions.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/events/changemakers-conference>

Forthcoming Funerals

Doreen Dawson's funeral will be in St Michael's,
Thursday 18th February 2.00pm.
Committal at Macclesfield Crematorium at 3.00pm

Sue Henderson's Funeral will be in St Michael's,
Tuesday 16th February 10.15am
The burial will take place afterwards at Macclesfield Cemetery

If people wish to attend either Doreen's or Sue's funeral we need to know names and numbers in advance.

There is limit of 30 mourners allowed at funerals at the moment.

Please email Martin Stephens
(teamrector.macc@gmail.com)
or phone/leave a message for him
or 01625 426110)



Church Council Report

A Church Council Meeting was held by Zoom on 21st January. The meeting began with the Chair sharing the exciting news that meetings will take place rather more frequently than before, and

will (we hope) be shorter. The idea is to alternate discussion relating to day-to-day, "housekeeping" items with more in-depth consideration of strategic issues.

Thursday 21st was the former of these two agendas.

Safeguarding

Gemma Etchells-Shepherd was welcomed as our new Safeguarding Lead. Gemma explained that, although usual church groups are not meeting live at the moment, there are groups which are meeting via Zoom (e.g. Choir and Youth Group) and that we need to update membership forms to cover use of such technology. Safeguarding posters will be updated once we are back in the building, and Martin and Gemma will be inviting group leaders to undertake relevant online training. Longer term, risk assessments need reviewing.

The Church Council is very grateful to Gemma for taking on this crucial role and bringing her own professional expertise to it.

Use of the Church Building

The Council formally approved the decision made by the Standing Committee at the start of January to close the building until the end of February. Although many believe that we have systems which make our public worship as safe as it can be, the general view was that we should not be seen to be encouraging people to leave their homes at present. There are two groups which continue to use the building on a regular basis, permitted under the regulations. This decision will be reviewed towards the end of February.

Replacement for Sue's Roles

For the present, Sue's tasks have been itemised and some will be covered by volunteers until such time as the posts can be advertised. Rachel Mayers, Martin Stephens and Mike Strutt will lead on this, liaising with the Team Council about Sue's Clergy PA rôle, as this is a Team appointment, while also reviewing the St Michael's Coordinator post. A temporary appointment is recommended while we remain in the current "Covid" situation.

Church Employees

The two cleaning staff are currently on furlough.

Arbour Mews

Following the sale of the church property on Brocklehurst Way last year, and the purchase of a replacement property on Arbour Mews, it was confirmed that a tenant has now been found and should be moving in imminently.



"And now for the treasurer's report."

Financial Report

The Treasurer presented his report. The financial position is one of potential break-even. A Finance Group has been set up to support Mike, and Katie Wilcock reported on its progress, explaining its remit – to look at contracts, investigate cost cutting, explore bids for funding, etc.

Katie invited suggestions from anyone who might have ideas to offer.

Audio Visual Initiative

Rachel Mayers has worked hard researching and drawing up a specification for a new AV system for church which would provide us with reliable live-streaming / recording equipment, with an installed screen / monitors & projection system for live services. Although the CC approved the go-ahead for this at the November meeting, there were reservations about the high cost, especially in the context of our challenging financial context. Rachel has subsequently explored other options which are more cost-effective. It was agreed that a small group comprising Rachel, Martin, Mike and Lynne should finalise the details and place the order.



There was grateful acknowledgement of the generous contributions received from members of the church family to support this initiative which, along with the grant of £4,400 from the All Churches Trust will cover quite a proportion of the costs.

AOB

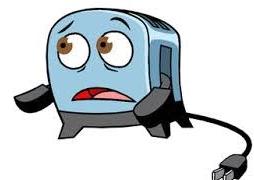
A few matters were raised under AOB: possible storage of KEMS staging in the Flower Vestry, the reinstating of the Building Committee (a new Chair for this group is needed – any offers?); and the intention to make a bid for funding to the Cultural Recovery Fund – Rachel to lead on this.

If you have any queries on any of the above items, please do contact Lynne Spedding (Chair) or any other member of the Council.

Lockdown Advice

Everyone please be careful: people are going crazy from being locked down at home.

I was talking about this with the microwave and the toaster while having a cup of tea, and we all agreed that things are getting bad.



I didn't mention it to the washing machine because she puts a different spin on everything. And I certainly couldn't share it with the fridge because he's been acting cold and distant. In the end, the iron straightened me out – she said the situation isn't all that pressing and the wrinkles will soon get ironed out.

The vacuum however was unsympathetic – just told me to suck it up, but the fan was very optimistic and assured me it would soon blow over. The toilet looked a bit flushed and didn't say anything when I asked its opinion, but the front door said I was acting unhinged, and the door handle told me to get a grip. I bet you can guess what the curtains told me (yes - pull myself together).

We will survive!

**My friend writes songs
about sewing machines.
He's a Singer songwriter.
Or sew it seams.**

The History of St Michael's Church Building part 2

In last week's newsletter we gave you some history of the early days of St Michael's (then known as All Saints') from around 1220 to 1520.
The story continues...



Henry VIII

Anybody who knows anything about Tudor history (or has read or seen *Bring up the Bodies* on TV!) will be familiar with Henry VIII's "Great Matter" – his problem producing a son and heir. His desire to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn led to the rejection of papal authority in England and the Act of Supremacy, making Henry the Head of the Church of England in 1534. Although Henry dissolved many church establishments, he was quite moderate when it came to matters of doctrine and it was his successor, Edward VI, who made many sweeping changes to the church nationally.

He was followed by Mary in 1553 then Elizabeth in 1558 resulting in a see-saw between Catholicism and Protestantism and a time of great turmoil. Attendance at church was compulsory and the huge changes must have been immensely disturbing for ordinary people.



Edward VI



Mary I

As a result of all the upheaval, a new diocese of Chester was formed in 1541, although change was quite slow in Cheshire. St Michael's continued to be under the control of St Peter's Parish Church, Prestbury and was by no means a rich church. It did, however, own a number of items (for instance silk vestments, altar cloths and candlesticks) which were no longer considered appropriate for worship, and many of these possessions were sold off to pay for the new fixtures and fittings required for Anglican ritual. Edward ordered that all stone altars were to be destroyed although interestingly our stone altar in the Savage Chapel was one of the few to survive.

Under Elizabeth, St Michael's bought a movable wooden communion table and fixed seating was provided in the church for the first time. As a result of the wish for simplicity in worship and with the increased emphasis given to preaching, the wall-paintings were covered with whitewash and a new pulpit was installed, although not the one now in St Michael's, which was carved much later.



Elizabeth I

Incidentally, the first extant St Michael's Parish Register begins in 1572 and the old registers are deposited at Cheshire County Record Office.

More information is available at: <http://archives.cheshire.gov.uk/what-we-hold/what-we-hold.aspx>

Much of the information in these excerpts comes from Jane Laughton's Book "The Church in the Marketplace". Before she died, Jane very kindly gave us permission to use this information

How to contact the Office after 22nd Jan

We no longer have Sue in the office, so several volunteers will be trying to keep most office functions going. Please would you be careful to use the correct email address for the purpose of your message.

- For the **newsletter**:
stmikesnotices@gmail.com
- For **bookings, building maintenance**:
office@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk
- For **service details, rotas, anything else**:
clergypa@maccteam.org.uk

These email addresses will be accessed at least once per week, but not every day, so don't expect an instant response.

The office phone will also be accessed at least once each week.



David and Eve's "Achievement of the Week"! (yum yum)



"Possible side effects include smugness and gloating"



Rachel and Lynne "enjoy" a socially distanced walk, in gale force winds and icy temperatures.