

St Mary's News

May 2021

(coming out of Coronavirus lockdown)



Includes

Leaving something tangible behind – **The Revd Tony Rindl**

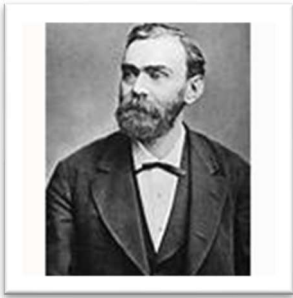
The joy I find in nature ... resonates with faith –

The Revd Josh Brocklesby

Mission Matters – Meninadaña – **Frances Collins**

.... and much more!

Leaving something tangible behind



The famous philanthropist Alfred Nobel was a greatly influenced by reading his own obituary in a French newspaper which had mistakenly written it on the death of his brother. Nobel, a prolific chemist had made his fortune by inventing dynamite. It stated that he was the person responsible for making it possible to kill more people more quickly than anyone else who had ever lived. He was horrified at the thought this was

how he was going to be remembered and so this motivated him to establish the Nobel prize to honour and reward those who most benefited humanity. His legacy has inspired many in the advancement of physics, chemistry, medicine, economics and of course peace.

Very few of us are able to influence the world in the way that Nobel and the recipients of the prizes have over the past 120 years. Yet most of us desire to leave something by which we will be remembered. A good friend of mine has recently been told that a rare disease which affects the liver means he will require a liver transplant within the next twelve months. It is a very strange position to be in, one where he can look back at what he might have hoped to achieve, and yet if the transplant is successful could give him many years to fulfil his ambitions. Understandably he wants to be remembered with affection by his family and friends and to leave behind something that will benefit those close to him. Interestingly one of the things that troubles him most is the impact he has had on his local church and wishes he had more to show for the time and effort he has put into that church.

I think that level of frustration is something many of us can relate to. I think it is an interesting question, if you were potentially facing your last year because of failing health would you be satisfied with what you have achieved, but if you were given a new lease of life through a transplant and could potentially be active for the next fifteen years what would you do? The Psalmist writes "*Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*" (Psalm 90:12) and also "*Show me, Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is.*" (Psalm 39:4) It won't be the first

time someone has been diagnosed with a terminal illness or a life-limiting disease finds inspiration and begins to live life more fully.

The bible makes it very clear that we are called to give account, with a sense that we have something to show for all our efforts. I am mindful of the Parable of the Talents and the expectation that what we have been given will be used to produce more, and the ruler became angry with the servant who simply buried his talent in the ground. Elsewhere we are exhorted to bear fruit. In Matthew 25 and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats the righteous are the ones who feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe those who are naked, and visit the sick and those in prison. Jesus seems to be highly critical of those who store up treasures for themselves here on earth. *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* (Matthew 6:19-20)

We cannot win God’s approval or influence how much he loves us or earn our place in heaven. Your name is written on the Palm of God’s hand. (Isaiah 49:16) In John 15 we read of the Vine and the Branches where God is the gardener, Jesus is the vine, we are the branches. We are invited to abide with Jesus, to abide in his love. In doing so we bear fruit, fruit that will last. There is no denying the satisfaction that comes from that sense of achievement and there is nothing wrong in that desire to be remembered well and to leave a lasting legacy to those who come after. More important

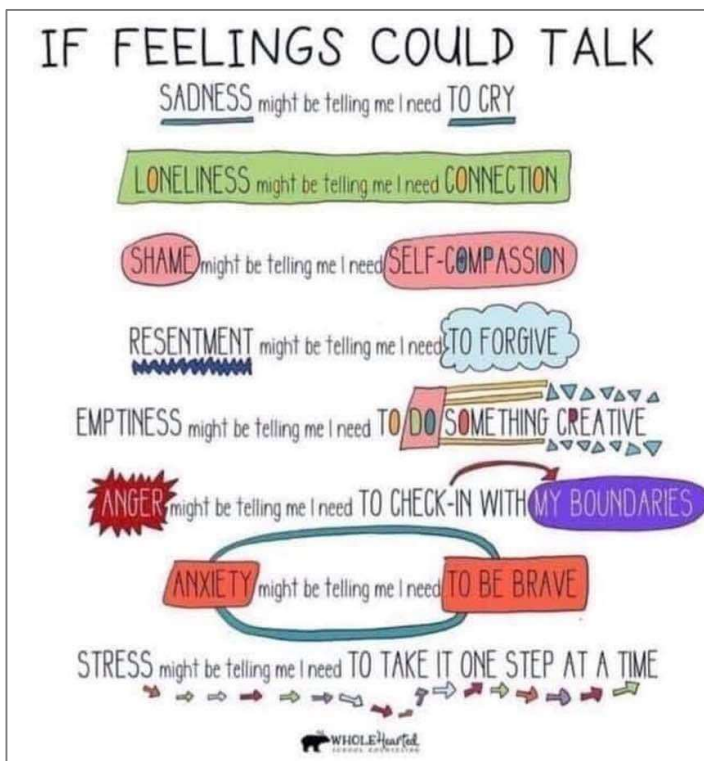
though is our relationship with God, abiding in his love, delighting in his presence and knowing the blessing and affirmation of his love, seeking to respond and to be obedient to his will. Like the boy who offers a small gift of five loaves and two fish so God can take what we offer and use it in the most remarkable ways. In a world where one sows and another



reaps it is not always easy to quantify success or achievement, perhaps it is more important to say yes to God and leave the rest to him.

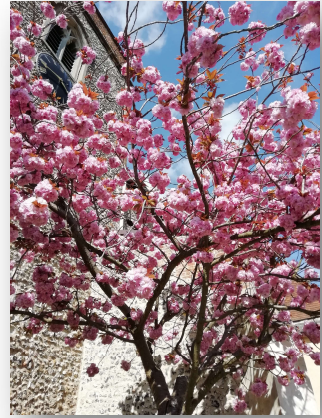
Storing treasure in heaven and seeing things from an eternal perspective is perhaps the only wise and healthy approach, looking forward rather than back as more of God's purpose is revealed to us. However, if being remembered and leaving something tangible behind matters to you, then you may consider leaving money to St. Mary's and other worthy causes in your will. It is a comforting thought that what you care about most will benefit when you have gone. <https://www.churchlegacy.org.uk>

The Revd Tony Rindl



The joy I find of nature ... resonates with faith

Now Spring is a time of so many wonderful things... we have the longer evenings, the beautiful flowers coming into bloom, the warmer weather and of course all of this with the knowledge that Summer is on the horizon! But lingering underneath all that, for me at least, it is also a time when I am reminded of all the home and garden projects which are unfinished, not started or were postponed because of the winter! Chief among these this spring is the garden!



Now, thankfully, nobody from St Mary's has seen my garden and that's good because I use the word garden lightly. I had planned on taking on the project last summer but the pandemic and increased workload from things like the hospital chaplaincy meant there was just no free time or energy to take it on. For background, when I moved in, the garden was already very wild, but it also started to resemble in places a mix between a scene from an archaeological dig site and a visual representation of trench warfare. This added transformation was because Mo, my black Labrador, had been keen to, in my absence, take on the role of head gardener. You cannot fault his enthusiasm and energy for this role but I'm not sure about his vision or big picture planning. Indeed, he seems to be preoccupied mainly with digging holes and uncovering roots and so despite the hours of work he has clearly put into the project I fear he has made the situation worse rather than better! So, this Spring I have taken to the garden to attempt to make it more fitting of that word.

The first main part of the project has been putting gravel down in an area of the garden where grass wasn't growing well due to lack of sunlight and increased footfall. The joy I find of nature is that so much of it tells a story which resonates with faith and our relationship with God. I was struck that this patch of garden was barren, lifeless and, if I'm honest, quite depressing to look at. In many ways it felt like parts of our humanity. Those



areas of our lives we try and keep hidden. The areas we know that do not reflect the beauty of the love of God in our lives.

Something needed to be done about this area. And before me were two options. One, was to simply put the gravel down on top of what was there, hiding what was underneath. This would have been relatively quick and easy to do. We might try and do this in life, cover over the negative parts of us, hide them behind things to ensure nobody sees the full extent of them. But this would only be a

temporary fix. The patches of grass and weeds would eventually break through the stones, what was hidden for a time would eventually re-appear. The disguise would only hold for so long and what we try to keep hidden will always eventually come to the surface.

The other option was to carefully remove the top layer of soil. To take time to remove the weeds and patches of grass that were there. To carefully fill in holes and level out the area and then lay down a membrane to stop anything from growing underneath. Then, finally, after all that to add the gravel which would now lay evenly everywhere, and which would not need to compete with weeds or grass. This option is much more labour intensive and takes a lot more time but it's effect and duration are also long term.

On the surface the two options would when completed look the same for a while but in the future, they would look very different. Now, the easy option, the one which gives instant gratification is option one. Indeed, I only really have about a year left to enjoy this garden, so option one would be the logical one for me if I considered only myself. But transformation and change are not simply gifts for us but gifts for others too. We seek to change not simply to be better people and improve ourselves but to share and show love to others. The work I am doing to the garden will hopefully be enjoyed by others to come too.

In setting out down the path of option two and the hours and hours of labour it entailed, I was struck the whole time how this is God's desire for us. This is God's relationship with us. God's love wants to transform and change the barren and lifeless parts of ourselves, not in speedy easy fixes which quickly come undone but through long-lasting, lifelong change. God is prepared to put in all the back breaking work, to put in all the hours needed, all the effort to ensure that all parts of us reflect and show the beauty of love in our lives. No aspect of us needs to be hidden or covered, all of us is created to be beautiful.

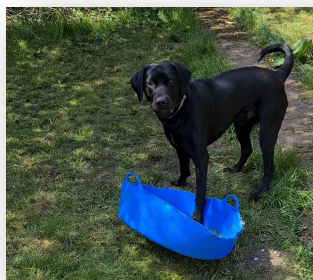
This Spring perhaps there are parts of you which feel unfinished, not started, or postponed because it wasn't the right time. If that's the case invite our loving God, the caring and gentle gardener to start work on that project. Spend time in God's transforming love and allow it to do all the hard work for you. Not some quick fix but long-term change. Taking what felt barren, lifeless and hidden and making it part of the beautiful picture of who you were created to be!

God Bless,

Josh



The Revd Joshua Brocklesby



P.S. if anyone would like a keen, energetic, enthusiastic but somewhat destructive gardener, Mo would like me to advertise his services!

PCC Report – April

Meeting on 19th April – by Zoom

Financial Situation and Appeal The Council reviewed the financial situation as at the end of March. This indicated that the deficit after the first quarter of the year was some £5000, continuing the trend of previous months and indicating the likelihood of a substantial end-year deficit which would seriously deplete General Fund reserves.

The Council then considered an appeal letter which reflected the aims agreed at the previous meeting of both increasing the number of regular Standing Orders and encouraging those who already gave my Standing Order to increase their giving. The letter would be distributed just after the APCM with a follow-up presentation on Sunday 2nd May. Standing Order and Gift Aid forms would also need to be made available. It was confirmed that Gift Aid declarations could be sent to the church by email.

APCM The Council approved the Annual Report and Accounts for 2020 and considered the arrangements for the forthcoming APCM. Peter Dean draw attention to the Independent Examiner's comment that the church had not yet created a register of 'Related Parties' ie members of Trustees' families. This was now a legal requirement on charities.

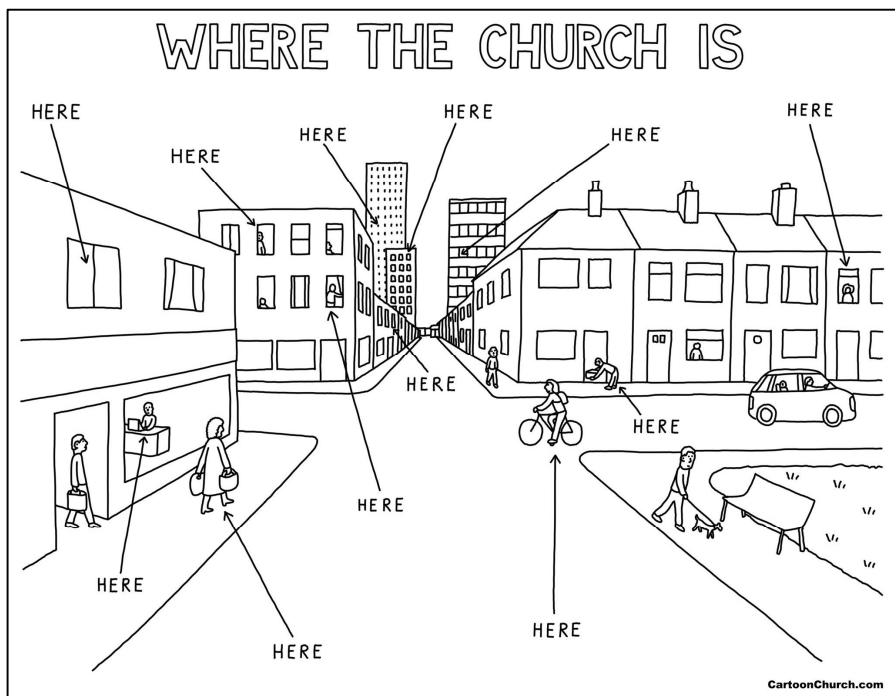
Buildings Roger Courtney reported that. redecoration of the main areas of the Church Centre was now complete. Some additional decorating might be commissioned to complete the work but this would need to be funded from the general maintenance budget. The Council agreed that this should be set in hand and accepted an offer from a PCC member to investigate options for replacement of the curtains in the carpeted area. The sliding door had been serviced. A revised proposal for access to the clock gearboxes had been developed.

Pre-School Alison Saunders reported that the number of children attending the Pre-School had increased. Preparation of the overall business plan had been delayed but the Committee had drawn up proposals for development of facilities and changes to the curriculum to reflect the Christian basis of the Pre-School.

Vicar's Report Tony said that he thought the Lent Course had successfully engaged members of the congregation in thinking about the church's future role and mission as society transitioned from lock-down. The ideas which had been put forward had been captured and would be drawn upon in the development of the next Mission Action Plan which would be a task for the new PCC. He expected that a very small choir would be able to sing at services from May and that we would retain 'hybrid' services but with progressively more emphasis on worship in church. He noted with pleasure Dave Scourfield's appointment as Lead Chaplin to the Town Centre Chaplaincy and looked forward to close working between St Mary's and the Chaplaincy.

Retirements Tony expressed thanks to those PCC Members for whom this was their last PCC meeting.

Roger Courtney



Current Affairs Connect: **The Social Care Crisis**

AN EVENING WITH DEAN RUSSELL MP: PART I

Last month, 18 of us from the Current Affairs Connect Group met with Dean Russell, MP for Watford, to get to know him and to discuss with him our concerns.

We found him to be a warm, caring man with a sense of humour, a genuine desire to serve the community and a vision for society that resonates with Christianity.

This, the first of two articles on the evening, focuses on who Dean is and why he entered politics as a Conservative.

In welcoming Dean to St Mary's, we explained to him that we view politics through the Judeo-Christian perspective of loving one's neighbour as oneself, as we are commanded by God, rather than through conventional right/left ideology. We explained our long tradition - from the Old Testament prophets up to Jesus himself - of challenging political structures and speaking truth to power; not as an ordinary pressure group, but as part of our mission to live out God's kingdom on earth. This includes loving concern for our political leaders as individuals and supporting them through prayer.

Why Dean came into politics

Dean told us he is from Birmingham. His background is working class. His father was a hardworking HGV driver who went to bed at 8pm and rose at 3am, so he was brought up with a work ethic; to look after family, friends and neighbours; supporting each other in the wider community; and, as he succeeded in life, to help others succeed. A seminal moment came for him at school during his A level year when his teacher told him he should give up and work at the local factory because he'd never get to university. His outrage at those remarks spurred him to work harder. He went to University and studied Physics and Business Studies, obtaining not only a Physics degree but also a MPhil. This experience instilled in him the power of words, the power of mentors and the power of belief in oneself and others.

Much of society today was about judging others and hoping they will fail so that we can succeed. But what makes for a good society is hoping for others' success. If others succeed, we all succeed with them.

Dean began work in the digital industry around 20 years ago when the internet was taking off. One of his first projects was on-line accessibility. He identified that people with physical disabilities, such as sight impairment, struggled to access the web. He worked with the Royal National Institute for the Blind and others to ensure equal access. Today mobile phones and similar equipment have many built in features to ensure those with disabilities can use them. This became a theme in his career.

Dean later set up his own consultancy. One of his clients was a charity that was building a village in the Phillippines jungle for 100 families after the area was devastated by Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. Dean visited and saw at first hand the role of community. People had lost everything, including family and yet they had not lost faith in God, themselves or their ability to help others. This lead him to adopt an acronym: HOPE – Help One Person Everyday - which he had used in Parliament. He added that he was privileged in his role as MP to be able to help many people everyday.

Another significant moment for him was when he spent the day in a slum in Manilla fitting hearing aids to children. The process involved Dean speaking vowel sounds into each ear and adjusting the aid until the child could hear. He was able to watch their reactions as they heard their parents' voices for the first time. Having never heard any sounds, the children were unable to speak; yet as Dean continued to speak vowel sounds into their ears, the children were able to transform their unintelligible sounds into basic vowels in rapid time. There was one girl, about six years old, who was trying hard but was could not manage to do this. Dean was upset because he thought he was failing her and the mother looked disappointed because all the other children had picked up the sounds. The head of the charity told him to “Just give it a moment”. The girl suddenly stood up, left Dean and went to her mother who put her hand on the girl's shoulder to gently reassure her. The girl looked up to her mother and suddenly said, “Mama!”. This reminded him of that significant moment in school when he was told to give up and didn't.

Dean said that why, when and how we do things are not always in our control; and yet our lives are lived in significant moments. Throughout

his life he's been privileged to have had many such moments. So when he is trying to help a constituent he recognises that that moment is absolutely significant for them. While he can't necessarily walk in their shoes, he does try to look at things from their perspective. Since being elected in December 2019, he and his constituency team have dealt with over 10,000 cases on a very broad range of personal issues, including the need for housing.

Dean said he has wide interests. He has published four children's books, a book on business and written an, as yet, unpublished science fiction story. He loves storytelling and the way it connects people. The Bible, for example, connects people in a way that goes beyond mere reading: spiritually and emotionally. Sometimes the parables don't make sense until you've lived a certain experience and then your eyes light up and you say to yourself, "Ah! That's what it meant!" Dean is also an artist. Last year he painted a picture of Captain Tom which hangs in the foyer of Watford General Hospital.

He likes to believe that everything he's achieved in life has been done with integrity and the for the right reasons. He's conscious that he's a role model for others, especially now he's a MP. We don't have to be a MP, a celebrity or a vicar. We can all be role models and have an impact on the lives of those around us. The words we use, the way we act, the kindness we show may have an impact far beyond what we realise. Telling a child they should give up is not something he would ever do. Seeing a child say, "Mama" for the first time is not something he ever thought he would see. So, as a Conservative, what is important to him is how we build a society in which everyone can thrive and be the best version of themselves. That when we Help One Person Everyday we create an environment in which we can support, not through fear or favour, but because it is the right thing to do.

As an MP, mental health has been a bit of a theme for him, not only merely the impact of depression and anxiety but also the beneficial impact of self-worth. If we have self-worth, we can contribute more actively to help others. He referred to the well-known *Footprints* story where Jesus carries the person in need and there is but one set of footprints on the sand. He said this was an illustration not only of what faith is about but of what society is about: how we should carry each other through our most difficult times. Mental health is a part of that. So when elected, he set out an ambition to train 1,000 mental first aiders across the community to reduce stigma. And

he introduced a Ten Minute Bill recently to make mental health first aid a part of the workplace. He pointed to the connection between mental health and homelessness, which is why he has secured £4 million so far to tackle homelessness in Watford.

Dean said he would never thought he'd be able to do this but he'd succeeded because he never gives up. If anything makes him Conservative, it's believing we all have an important role to play in this world and only we can play it. If we can help each other deliver that, we will have a great society, where we can carry each other through the bad times, where no child is told they have no hope and where every child can say, "Mama".

In the next issue we will set out our discussion with Dean about asylum seekers, the cuts in international aid and climate change as it impacts the UK.

Next meeting: This will be held on May 14th at 8pm on Zoom. *The right to protest: How far should it go?* We will consider in particular the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. Look out for the link in the Vicar's MailChimp or contact Marcus at ttekcos@aol.com. Everyone is welcome. Everyone's opinion is heard. Everyone is respected even when we disagree.

The Current Affairs Group



Mission Matters - Meninadança

Meninadança is one of the mission organisations supported by St Mary's. Working along the BR-116, a motorway running north-south in Brazil, they reach out to young girls at risk of being trapped in sexual exploitation. Sadly, much of this begins in the home, with many parents sanctioning, or even encouraging, the girls to earn money in this way.

Meninadança counters this from their Pink Houses, currently in four towns along the BR-116. Here the girls can take part in activities which encourage them to view themselves as more than just an object to be (ab)used, find a listening ear and the hope and strength to rebuild their lives. During the worst of the pandemic, when the Pink Houses had to be shut, the staff visited girls in their homes to provide practical and emotional support.

What started about 10 years ago, when two men, former reporter Matt Roper and Canadian country singer Dean Brody, felt moved by the plight of these girls, has become an organisation that has turned round hundreds of lives and is having an impact on whole families and the wider communities.

Meninadança is holding an online conference on Saturday 15th May, from 1-4 pm, where you can find out more, see live link ups with the Pink Houses and hear some of the girls tell their story. It is free to join, but you will need to book your place at: MENINADANCA.ORG/CONFERENCE

Frances Collins



Services

The Church is open
on Wednesdays each week
between 12.00noon and 2.00pm
for Private Prayer

Sunday

10.30 am Morning Service in church and via Zoom;
(*in church for those not able to access online*)
5.30 pm Reflection via Facebook

Wednesday

12.30 pm Reflection in church
followed by Holy Communion
Reflection also available via Facebook

Monday to Saturday

Morning Prayer via the Church website

Please keep up to date with what is on offer
via our Facebook page
or the website www.stmaryswatford.org

Who's Who at St Mary's

(They all continue to be available via the phone or online)

Vicar

The Revd Tony Rindl | 01923 225189 / 07792 505480
tonyrindl.stmaryswatford@gmail.com

Curate

The Revd Joshua Brocklesby | 07764 738596
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Churchwardens

Alison Saunders | 01923 244390
Peter Dean | 07876 154387

Children & Families Worker

Cath Da Costa | 07961 564385
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