

St Mary's News

October 2020

(as Coronavirus lockdown continues to ease)



Includes

The Wider Appreciation of Harvest - the Revd Tony Rindl

First Year Reflection - the Revd Josh Brocklesby

The Story of Stone Soup - Cath Da Costa

PCC Update - Roger Courtney

Channel Migrants - Current Affairs Connect Group

.... and more!

‘The wider appreciation of harvest ...’

Growing up in Birmingham in the 1970’s the vicar would always place a lump of coal on the Communion Table at the Harvest Festival. It served as a reminder that there were many people who contributed to the welfare of society and not just the production of food. It was not only farmers and fisherman, but many others including factory workers, delivery drivers, engineers, and indeed coal miners whose hard work provided a vital energy source who we needed to thank. At the heart of lockdown many of us would step outside at 8.00pm on Thursday evenings and applaud our wonderful doctors and nurses and others who work for the NHS. We would also applaud those who are rightly referred to as key workers and whose work is necessary in providing for our essential needs. Harvest is about giving thanks for God’s good providence and it is important to recognise the part others play. Harvest is also a celebration of the work God calls us to be part of, not only working the land and producing fruit, but making our contribution to community life. We also hope the fruit we produce through our lives of faith also contribute to the greater harvest of God’s Kingdom.

Like so many other events in 2020 our Harvest Festival will be very different from previous years. Yet the greater recognition of key workers is just one of the many experiences of this year that I hope will be incorporated into future Harvest Festivals. At the height of lockdown it was noticeable that the air was so much cleaner as pollution levels dropped. As the background noises of busy modern living diminished and the pace of life slowed down we became far more aware of birdsong and other aspects of nature. Many of us have spent extra time in our gardens and the more industrious of us have benefitted from homegrown fruit and veg. As the threat of climate change looms ever larger in our consciousness then our resolve to take better care of our environment and seek a more sustainable lifestyle becomes ever more urgent.



Another rather disturbing aspect of lockdown were the empty shelves of our

supermarkets resulting from panic buying. As some people selfishly hoarded others struggled to obtain some of the basic essentials. What made this particularly worrying was that it was inevitably the older and more vulnerable members of society that suffered as a result. In a way this reflects how the world is even in normal times. Experts will say that despite an ever-growing population there is enough food for everyone. What causes the poor to go without is the greed and selfishness of others. An important aspect of every harvest celebration is to remember as we celebrate God's generosity to firmly resolve to be generous to others and repent of those times when our attitude has been self-seeking and has not considered the welfare of others.



The wider appreciation of Harvest is captured brilliantly in Brian Wren's harvest hymn. If you are not familiar with the hymn it is well worth reading the words:

- 1 Praise God for the harvest of farm and of field,
praise God for the people who gather their yield,
the long hours of labour, the skills of a team,
the patience of science, the power of machine.
- 2 Praise God for the harvest that comes from afar,
from market and harbour, the sea and the shore:
foods packed and transported, and gathered and grown
by God-given neighbours, unseen and unknown.
- 3 Praise God for the harvest that's quarried and mined,
selected and smelted, or shaped and refined:
for oil and iron, for copper and coal,
praise God, who in love has provided them all.
- 4 Praise God for the harvest of science and skill,
the urge to discover, create, and fulfil:
for plans and inventions that promise to gain
a future more hopeful, a world more humane.

5 Praise God for the harvest of mercy and love from leaders and peoples who struggle and serve with patience and kindness, that all may be led to freedom and justice, and all may be fed.

Perhaps in future years the Harvest Festival will gain even greater prominence. My hope is it will do so for all the right reasons. Not only as a time of rejoicing over God's generosity and abundance, but a joyful appreciation which comes from having learned to be more in harmony with nature and with one another.

The Revd Tony Rindl



First Year Reflections

I think it is safe to say that if I was asked how my first year as a Curate and as a Deacon at St Mary's would go that I would never have guessed it would have turned out quite like this! For many reasons, this past year has been extraordinary. The national Church is having to face and respond to a unique challenge where its buildings cannot be used in the same way. The world is responding to a global crisis unseen in generations. And people's lives have been drastically altered from anything like what would have been called normal life before. All this, while experiencing and learning all the things that come with the first year of being an ordained minister in the Church of England! But with my ordination as a Priest on 26th September it felt a good time to reflect on this remarkable journey so far.

This first year as Curate at St Mary's has been great! It has been full of new experiences and learning which is all you could ask for as a first year Curate. We have had to respond to some challenges, not least the impact of

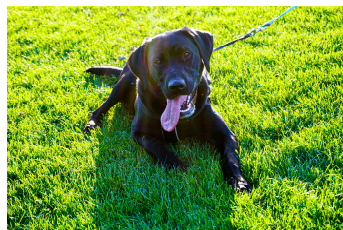
the pandemic and learning how to be Church without a church building, but I have been really encouraged by how as a community we have responded to it all. Who knew that we would be seeing each other so often through Zoom! And who knew that some of my ministry would be devoted to being a part-time IT technician, videographer and editor as part of producing our Sunday services! Hopefully, it won't be too long till I see more of you all in person but whatever the future holds I have really enjoyed getting to know you all and Watford very much feels like home now.

Perhaps the biggest challenge of the year for me personally has been the Hospital Chaplaincy work I was doing throughout my first year and which became even busier during the Pandemic. It was a real privilege to be able to help out on the front line and be with people at the time of their greatest need but I would be lying if I said it also wasn't without challenge and something I had never experienced before. My time there taught me many things and amongst them is the remarkable resilience of human beings to continue even in the midst of a crisis. My thanks and gratitude for all the work of our NHS staff has only gone up having spent a year working alongside them all!



My biggest highlight, has to be the very special day which was Saturday 26th and after having had to wait longer than usual, due to Covid-19 cancelling the original date of my ordination, it was great that the day finally arrived. The service was quite unique! Instead of the large ceremony at the Cathedral where everyone would have been invited it was a small closed service held at St Mary's. It would have been lovely to have been able to share the moment with many of you, my church family, but there was also something very moving about the simplicity and intimacy of the service with just my immediate family there in attendance. It was a day I will not forget and marks a new chapter in my ministry!

It would be amiss of me not to mention and give an update on Mo too, who I get asked about often! This year as many will know saw a new family member in the Brocklesby household as Mo, a gorgeous black Labrador puppy came running and bouncing into my



life! He is now as the picture will show a much bigger dog but he has been a joy to have, especially during lockdown. Restrictions have meant he hasn't been able to play the role in my ministry I had originally intended but I'm sure over the next two years you will see much more of him.

So, to close, I want to say thank you! Thank you to you, the community that is St Mary's. I have been made to feel very quickly at home and have really enjoyed my first year. I also want to say a big thank you to Tony who I could not be more grateful for having as my training incumbent. As a Curate your training incumbent is vital to how you learn and develop, and I feel very blessed to have Tony as mine. I also want to say a thank you to our brilliant Church Wardens, Alison and Peter, who St Mary's are truly fortunate to have with all they do for us. I really look forward to where God leads us as a community over the next two years and am very grateful that I will be spending them here with you!

Best,

Josh



A Story for Harvest - The Story of Stone Soup

Once upon a time, a traveller came into a village. The traveller was very hungry so he went up to a house, knocked on a door and asked for some food. The woman who came to the door opened it a crack and peered suspiciously at the traveller.

“Go away!” she said. “We are only a very poor village and we don't have enough food for ourselves let alone strangers. Go away and try at another village.”

The man asked at a couple of houses but the answer was always the same. It was getting dark and the village was miles away from any others. What was the poor hungry man going to do? But at the last house, the blacksmiths, instead of asking for food the man asked for a huge pot. The

blacksmith was so taken aback that he gave the man his biggest pot – it was huge. What was the man going to do with the pot?!



The villagers peered from behind their curtains waiting for the man to go away, but instead he went to sit in the middle of the village green, right in the middle of the village. To the amazement of all he made a fire, filled the huge pot he had borrowed from the blacksmith with water and started to stir the pot with a wooden spoon he had taken from his pack.

After a bit of time one of the boys, overcome with curiosity went over to the man and asked, “What are you doing sir?”

The man smiled up at the boy, “I’m making stone soup. Do you have a nice large stone?”

The boy thought the man was mad but got him a large smooth stone. The man put it into the pot. After a bit of time the mayor of the village came over to see what the man was doing.

“I’m making stone soup,” the man said, “is there any way you could spare me one onion please?” The mayor thought well I don’t have much but it is only one onion, so he gave the man an onion. The man put the onion into his pot and continued to stir. After a bit a woman passed by the green. The man asked her, “Do you have a carrot or two for my pot?” It’s only a carrot thought the woman and she gave him one.

The villagers were now very curious indeed. “Maybe it is a magic stone in there,” said one of the villagers. More and more villagers wanted an excuse to see what the man was doing and each time he asked for something small – a potato, a swede, a small cabbage. The butcher even managed to find a few beef scraps.

After a bit a delicious smell started wafting across the village. The hungry villagers were drawn to the man and his pot sitting on the green. The man tried the soup, “Mmm delicious”, he said. He turned to the mayor, “would you like some of my soup?”

The mayor was a bit embarrassed but the man kept pressing him to have some soup and eventually he gave in. It was delicious!

“Come on everyone”, the man said to the now crowd of villagers that surrounded him, “there is enough for everyone”. And indeed there was.

Every villager had a bowl of soup from the pot. For the first time in a long time everyone got enough to eat. “That must be very magic stone soup,” said one of the villagers. “No”, smiled the man. “It was because you all shared what you had that the soup was made”.

The next morning the villagers awoke but were sad to discover the man had disappeared. They discovered, however that he had left the pot, spoon and stone. That evening when everyone began to get hungry again, one of the villagers walked over to the pot and made a fire and everyone went into their homes to find what they could add to the pot. From that day to this the villagers have never gone hungry because they always come together and share a delicious pot of 'magic' stone soup.



God Bless

Cath

(07961564382 /

familyworker.stmaryswatford@gmail.com)



PCC Report – Meeting on 21st September

The PCC met for a third time by Zoom. Amongst the subjects considered at the meeting were:

APCM and elections The Vicar reminded the Council that the APCM would be held by Zoom on Sunday 11th October after the 10.30 service. Up to four vacancies on the PCC would need to be filled – he had approached several people but more nominations were required. And identifying the right persons to take over from Alison as Churchwarden and Helen as Treasurer was very important. These were matters for prayer.

Reopening of the Church The church continued to be open twice a week for private prayer and the mid-week service was being shown through the AV system. Two funerals had been held and the Vicar had felt comfortable with the arrangements for these. The ordination service for Josh would be the next event in the church. This would have live music thanks to members of St Mary's, and so would provide more experience relevant to opening the church for worship. At present, though, there was no intention to recommence Sunday morning services; the mid-week Holy Communion and possibly a similar service at 8am on a Sunday would be the first services to be held, but this would depend on the developing situation. The purchase of a 'fogging machine' to facilitate disinfecting the floor and lower parts of the walls was being investigated.

Buildings Roger Courtney informed the meeting that all the scaffolding on the Church Centre had been removed and he was waiting for the architect's final acceptance report for the work. Some minor tasks such as reinstalling the floodlights remained to be done. Development of the design for the sliding door was continuing.

Peter Dean reported a conversation with Total Building Services who maintain the church's boilers. It appeared that further examination of the main boiler had concluded that it could be made operational and it had been on test successfully for a week. It seemed as if replacement could be avoided, at least for the present. This was very welcome information.

Pre-School Alison Saunders said that the Pre-School had reopened, although the number of children registering was less than in previous years. Further registrations were expected. The Pre-School had taken on an apprentice who would be trained appropriately.

Finance Peter Dean reported that both income and expenditure continued to be below budget. While 'planned giving' from the congregation had thankfully held up well overall income had been affected by loss of collections and rental income from the Church Centre. At present the situation appeared manageable but with the church reopening and expenditure therefore increasing it would need careful monitoring. A facility for giving through the church Website would be arranged.

Vicar's report Tony said that he continued to be very grateful to Alison and Peter for their commitment and all that they had done to enable the church to reopen. This was likely to be Alison's last PCC meeting as Churchwarden and so it was appropriate to thank her for her exceptional service in that role. The Council endorsed those thanks.

Roger Courtney

Hilda Thomas RIP

Hilda Thomas was born in Watford on Saturday 6th March 1920, the only girl of six children, to Elizabeth and Levi Knight. She was brought up in a railway worker's cottage in North Watford, not far from the Junction station. She went to Callowland School in North Watford and left at the age of 14 to work at the Co-op in St Albans Road.

Hilda attended Christ Church with her mother for many years, where in 1943 she married Howard Thomas when she was 23. They met at De Havilland's in Borehamwood while helping with the war effort. He was originally a Methodist but for the last 30 years of their life together they were both members at St Mary's.

They had two children, Alan and Ann, and went on to have four grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

When Alan and Ann were old enough, Hilda went to work as a cook at Victoria Secondary School in Tolpits Lane then at the Girls Grammar School; followed by work at Scammel Motors in Tolpits Lane where she was in charge of the stationery department. She was very popular and made many friends there.



She retired at the age of 60 but wasn't ready to stop working. She helped at a number of charity shops before becoming manager of the Help the Aged shop in the High Street. She loved working there, meeting so many different people.

In 2003 after 60 years of marriage, Hilda and Howard celebrated their Diamond Wedding anniversary but then unfortunately in the following January, Howard died. Her many friends at St Mary's were so supportive and she became more involved in groups and lunches, as well as the Sunday morning services. This and her enduring faith in God helped her a great deal.

It was a joy to join in the celebrations for Hilda's 100th birthday back in March.

There was something special about her kindness and generosity of spirit. It really is remarkable that she was able to live independently to such an advanced age, even more so considering her failing eyesight. Yet what made visits to Hilda even more special was her ability to be so well informed about what was going on in the world and in the life of the church. The clarity of her mind was quite remarkable.

Whenever I met up with Hilda she would enquire about people from church and always with a genuine concern for other people's welfare.

The other main subject of conversation was her faith. It was a faith that always had a desire to learn more about God and to always go deeper with Jesus who she entrusted as her Saviour. It is with this faith and hope that we truly commend Hilda to God's eternal care with all our love.

Taken from the Address given by Tony at Hilda's funeral in St Mary's on 21st September.

Channel Migrants: What is the Christian response?

This summer has seen record numbers of migrants, including unaccompanied children, crossing the Channel from France. The issues involve a complex mix of UK border sovereignty, the UK's international obligations, the criminal activities of people smugglers, and the rights, needs and motives of the migrants. The loudest voices are calling for migrants to go back to their own country - but why is that not a legitimate response for the Christian?

Over 5,600 migrants crossed the Channel this year up to 2 September. A significant number came across in inflatable boats they purchased themselves, rather than use people smugglers. The increase in maritime crossings appears to be due at least partly to the reduced availability of lorries during the pandemic.

The Channel is the busiest shipping lane in the world and these journeys are perilous even in good weather. In August, a young Sudanese man, Abdulfatah Hamdallah, drowned in the attempt. Several thousand more boats have been stopped by the French authorities and returned to France.

The BBC reports that while some of these people are economic migrants, most come from troubled areas such as Eritrea, Chad, Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Egypt and Syria.

Under the UN Convention on the Laws of the Sea, countries have an obligation to rescue people at risk of losing their lives at sea. Also under international law, refugees have the right to seek asylum in any country they arrive in. There's nothing to say, as the UK Government has often suggested, that they must seek asylum in the first safe country reached. Refugee organisations such as the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants have criticised the lack of safe routes for asylum seekers. For example, an asylum seeker cannot apply to the UK unless they come here. In early August, Priti Patel, the Home Secretary, condemned the crossings as "illegal" and stated that she intended to make the route unviable by arresting the criminal people smugglers involved. She appointed Dan O'Mahoney, a former marine and Border Force official, to the role of

"clandestine Channel threat commander" and formally asked defence chiefs for naval support for Border Force in the Dover Straits.

There have been several incidents where migrants were attacked by locals as they landed. The Far Right attempted protests in Dover and members of Britain First were arrested following the harassment of asylum seekers in a Birmingham hotel.

Roger Gough, leader of Kent County Council and Natalie Elphicke, the MP for Dover have raised concerns about the record number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children which is putting considerable pressure on the authority and local resources.

Rose Hudson Wilkins, the Bishop of Dover has commented: "We must take action to protect those who are desperate enough to risk their lives to land on our shores. We must challenge and condemn systems and practices and people who are driven by greed to exploit people like this young man, with no regard for the consequences. The long-term challenges have got to be addressed. What are we waiting for? Our children are being washed up on our beaches. How much worse does this have to get before we take definitive action to save lives and protect the dignity of people who have been pushed to take such desperate measures? We need to ask why people are fleeing their homes. We need to ask what we can do. We cannot stand by any longer while their bodies wash up on the shores." She was supported by the Bishops of Liverpool and Durham.

During an Urgent Question in Parliament on 2 September, the Home Office Minister, Chris Philp, said people fleeing war and poverty in their homelands would not be offered safe and lawful routes to the UK mainland. He said the government would be looking at the introduction of new laws to tackle the crisis.

There was a clear political divide on the issue. Conservative MPs said that those seeking refuge in the UK were "asylum shopping" around Europe and "queue jumping". They asked questions about the measures the Government was taking to stop the money laundering and people smuggling operations of criminals and the numbers of migrants returned to Europe - some 185. Another issue was the replacement of the existing EU Dublin Regulations which allow member countries to return migrants to the first country of entry into the EU. These end on 31 December and there are currently no arrangements to replace them.

Opposition MPs criticised the Government's approach, especially the lack of safe routes. The shadow home secretary, Nick Thomas-Symonds, said that the Government approach is lacking in compassion and competence, and concentrates on trying to sound tough rather than finding a solution and saving lives.

Research by the University of Oxford's Migration Observatory found that the views of the British public on migration are divided. In 2019 around 39% thought that the level of immigration should stay about the same, while 44% said they would like immigration to be reduced.

What does the Bible say?

Humanity is made in God's image and individuals are entitled to respect and dignity of treatment (Genesis 1.27). The earth is the Lord's (Psalm 24.1) and we are tenant-stewards of the land (Genesis 2.15, Leviticus 25.23) It follows that Britain is not "ours" but God's: he alone has sovereignty. Jesus tells us that to love our neighbour as ourselves (Leviticus 19.18) is one of the two great commandments (Mark 12.31). And in God's kingdom, the same laws apply to the foreigner as to the native (Exodus 12.49, Deuteronomy 24.17). Accordingly, the foreigner is not to be despised (Deuteronomy 23.7) but loved, not least because Israel was once itself an immigrant nation (Leviticus 19.34).

Indeed, migration is integral to the salvation story. Abraham migrated from Ur to Canaan (Genesis 11.31). Jacob migrated from Canaan to Egypt (Genesis 46). After the Exodus, his descendants migrated back to Canaan (see Exodus, Joshua). Ruth migrated from Moab to Judah (Ruth 1, Matthew 1.5.). In echo of Jacob's experience, the young Jesus migrated to Egypt seeking asylum after Joseph and Mary fled from Herod (Matthew 2.14-15). Christians, too, are a migrant people, foreigners and aliens on earth, who seek a better country (Hebrews 11.13-16). We should therefore be sympathetic to migrants.

Reflections

The Channel migrants are mostly fleeing war torn, chaotic countries and risk their lives to land on our shores because they want to be safe and secure. They choose Britain due to its international language, its many ethnic communities which offer support and, especially in the case of

unaccompanied children, they want to be reunited with close family already here. Their numbers are small in comparison with overall net immigration.

Many more migrants choose to go to other countries such as Germany and France. At the height of the European migrant crisis in 2015, Merkel chose to invite migrants to Germany, a move Germans have largely welcomed, in part because they recognise the need for the younger migrant workers to keep the economy going due the decline in the national birth rate.

Given that the Celts, the Saxons, the Vikings and the Normans were all originally migrants, we observed that Britain ought to have a more welcoming attitude to the Channel migrants than it has in recent years. Traditionally, we have had a liberal attitude to waves of migrants from the French Huguenots of the 15th century to the Kindertransport, Afro-Caribbeans, and Kenyan and Ugandan Asians of the 20th. The attitude to the current wave of migrants is in contrast to the offer made to people from Hong Kong.

We were concerned at the use of intemperate language by the government and its MPs, in particular the absurd title of Clandestine Channel Treat Commander which seems designed to indicate that migrants are a security threat. Some of the media, notably the Mail, Sun and Express were actively encouraging xenophobia; and political opportunists, notably Nigel Farage, were exploiting the situation for their own ends.

We were critical of the government's hostile policy towards asylum seekers, especially the arbitrary cap on unaccompanied children. Migrant accommodation run by outsourced companies was often infested with vermin, insecure, damp and dirty. We were concerned at the meagre level of income support – just £37.75 per week – given to pay for essentials like food, clothes and toiletries while their case is decided.

We noted too, the level of scepticism St Mary's asylum seekers had experienced from the Home Office regarding their accounts. At tribunal hearings Home Office lawyers had even been dismissive of support from long standing, senior members of St Marys.

If the government is genuinely concerned to tackle people smugglers, it could significantly reduce the demand by providing safe routes for migrants, such as allowing them to apply for asylum in Britain in their country of origin.

We considered this whole approach was profoundly unchristian and lacked compassion and understanding. (In contrast, Germany's policy of actively welcoming migrants, albeit in enlightened self-interest, seems closer to Christian values). People are a gift, not a threat and no human being should be declared illegal for crossing a border. Britain was a prime mover in setting up international legal standards for human rights following the Second World War and should set an example by applying them.

However, no country could accept every migrant. European countries need to work together to share the load and they would then share the benefits. We acknowledged some sort of assessment of the individual is required but there should be a presumption in favour of acceptance. In general, there is no security issue since migration is expensive. It tends to be those with money who migrate rather than criminals, and terrorism is largely homegrown.

We acknowledged the strain on local resources in places such as Dover but it is not beyond the wit or ability of government to provide greater funding and help in such circumstances.

We recognised that many British people are fearful that immigration could irrevocably change their communities and cause further pressure on accommodation and the local NHS. Some older members of the Connect Group confessed that they found it challenging to see in their towns large numbers of women dressed in burkhas. This did not cause them to feel hostile to immigrants but it did make them feel uncomfortable. Younger members replied that seeing burkhas etc was a norm for them and did not cause them any discomfort. Perceived pressures on accommodation and the local NHS were often overstated but, in any event, could be addressed by better government planning.

We have written to Dean Russell, the MP for Watford, to ask him to make the Home Secretary aware of our concerns. We will publish her response in the next issue of St Mary's News.

We meet next on Zoom on 9 October at 8pm to discuss God & Governance: Is power being misused in Britain?

The Current Affairs Connect Group

Ordinations to the Priesthood

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Beasley, Bishop of Hertford, ordained
The Revd Josh Brocklesby on Saturday 26th September
in St Mary's Watford and
The Revd Kate Carter on Sunday 27th September
in St John's, Digwell, Welwyn Garden City





Sponsored Bike 'n Hike

BEDS AND HERTS HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

Bike 'n Hike in Beds 'n Herts

On Saturday 12th September, Robert (our 13-year-old) and I set off on our cycle ride around the churches of Watford. We had worked out the best route to include as many churches as possible. We completed one loop in the morning around North Watford, Garston and Leavesden and another around central Watford in the afternoon. In total we cycled over 25km in 2 hours and 45 min, stopping at each church to take a photo and log the time. Who'd have thought there were so many churches around Watford! We visited all sorts of different churches: old and new, large and small, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist and the Salvation Army. It prompted some good discussions about all the different denominations and types of churches. But most importantly Robert is pleased that we visited more than his brothers did in previous years; a grand total of 30! Below and opposite are some of the photos we took. How many do you recognise?

Many thanks to everyone who has sponsored us; we have now raised £150. Half of this will go to the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust and the other half will go to St Mary's.

To see more photos of our ride have a look at our online Just Giving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/margaret-greenstreet1>

It's not too late to sponsor us either!

Margaret Greenstreet





Mission News

from two of the Mission Partners we support

One of the missions St Mary's supports is SIM (**Serving In Mission**). They believe that no one should live and die without hearing God's good news. We believe this too. The work of SIM covers many parts of the world including the UK. The Autumn SIM magazine has articles on: Intercultural Ministry in the UK; Pioneering Mission in South Asia, Nigeria, Mali, North Africa and Thailand; Raising a Family on the Mission Field; Online Ministry in Europe; Resources for Children; Human Trafficking in the Wake of Covid-19; Millennials and Mission; Teaching in Madagascar and Sports Friends. It also features people starting work with SIM and opportunities for people to serve with SIM. It is always encouraging and exciting to read about what God is doing and to get involved through prayer, giving or even deciding to investigate the opportunities for service. For more information contact St Mary's office for a copy of the magazine or go to www.sim.co.uk.

* * * * *

Dear friends,

I am currently in the UK. I had planned this visit last year, to coincide with my nephew Robin's wedding. I had almost given up the idea and then at the last minute decided to come. It was lovely to be able



to attend the wedding, held in Bury St Edmund in a little church adjoining the bride's house. It was strange not to be able to sing, to have to wear masks during the ceremony and to be restricted to 30 people, but it was a beautiful ceremony, and the bride and groom were relaxed and enjoyed the day!

Sri Lanka has had around 3,000 virus cases so far. It appears that the infection arrived in the country through tourists and it is now returnees from other countries who are falling victim. Deaths are still low -13 as of last week. Schools and universities have now re-opened and life is getting back to

normal. Masks have to be worn even outdoors in Colombo, churches are allowed restricted numbers and though singing is allowed, masks are meant to be worn throughout the service. There seems to be no community spread which is a blessing because local hospitals would not be able to cope at all if numbers were high.

Politically, the 2/3rd majority won by the ruling party in the local elections looks like it will have severe repercussions on the constitution. The President is seeking to overturn the 19th Amendment which restricted the Presidential term and bring in a 20th Amendment which would then secure the government stayed in one family's hands for the foreseeable future. This is a huge blow to minorities (religious and ethnic) and to the future of the nation as a whole. The highly nationalistic party will now be untouchable having family members in all important positions and the support of opposition parties who will give in to pressure to conform.

CTS swiftly moved to online teaching last term. This was a great encouragement to many students who can now proceed with their plans to graduate next year. It did however exclude some who did not have the necessary devices and internet for this. This term (Sept -Dec), most classes are on site but we are continuing with some on-line courses.

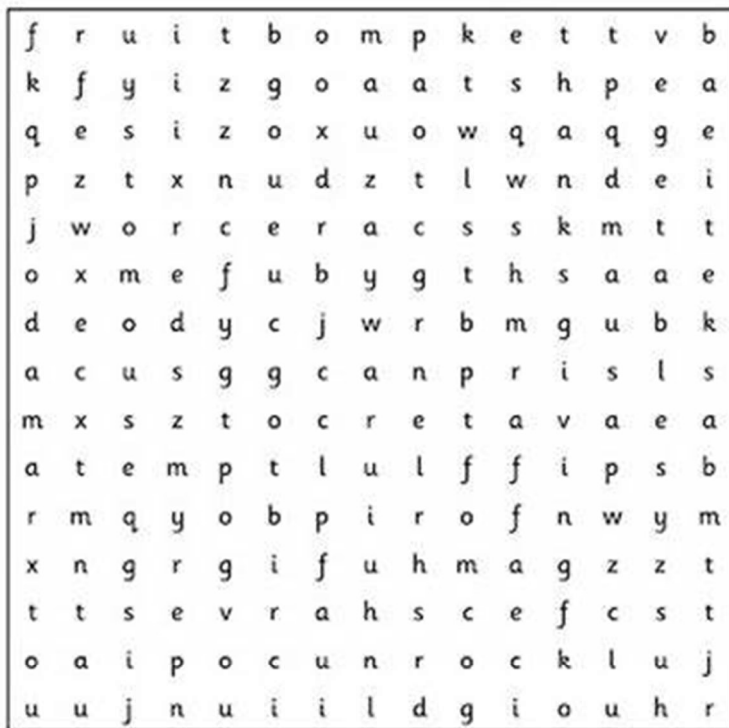
During my time here I am working on a book based on my PhD dissertation, on conflict resolution in an honour-shame culture. Of course, I was not expecting these circumstances when I planned the sabbatical and so have to adapt to the restrictions which does mean I cannot meet many of you. I hope we can chat on-line or on the phone. So do get in touch if you have time.

I am expecting to be here til the 2nd of January. At the time of booking everything was so uncertain, I could only make an educated guess about how events would unfold over the next 5 months. Since things have taken a turn for the worse here, and since the airport in Sri Lanka has not opened for returnees, my re-entry into Sri Lanka could be very complicated, which is worrying.

May God surround you with his love and care at this difficult time. I join you in praying for his mercy towards the nations and that the pandemic will be stopped from causing further devastation.

With love,
Mano

Harvest Word Search



basket

cornucopia

farm

fruit

harvest

loaf

moon

mouse

scarecrow

thanksgiving

tractor

vegetables

Services

We are sorry that due to the Government restrictions the church building will remain closed for most of the week but it will be open for

Private Prayer

Wednesdays and Saturdays
12.00noon to 2.00pm
(but times may change)

We will continue to pray, worship and care for each other from our homes during this difficult time.

Sunday

10.30 am Morning Service via Zoom
4.00 pm KidsChurch via Zoom
5.30 pm Reflection via Facebook Live!

Wednesday

12.30 pm Reflection via Facebook Live!
also now available on the screen in church followed by Holy Communion in church

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
jbrocklesby.stmaryswatford@gmail.com

Churchwardens

Alison Saunders | 01923 244390
Peter Dean | 07876 154387

Children & Families Worker

Cath Da Costa | 07961 564385
familyworker.stmaryswatford@gmail.com

Office

office@stmaryswatford.org.uk

St Mary's Church, Church Street, Watford WD18 0EG

www.stmaryswatford.org