What have you seen?

I think it is a fair comment to say that many of us have been spending more time than usual on the Internet in these last few months. I can recall times when I was told “you are spending too much time on the Internet” as an insinuation that I was not doing enough ‘real work’. Much ‘real work’ and an increasing amount of recreation time have been spent online since March, in the wake of COVID-19.

The web has become a place to read about and see the impacts of the virus. Images of PPE-wearing nurses will surely define 2020, yet it is also an image that could be from any part of the globe. The whole world has been affected by this virus – we are all in this.

So, at times what I have read and seen on the Internet has been confronting. Whether it be reports about doctors in the UK being overwhelmed by the numbers of patients, or images of empty cityscapes from almost any city in the world. Or, of course, the ubiquitous coronavirus chart with its difficult-to-tame curve.

Yet in addition to the confronting, we are also witnessing a blossoming of creative talents. This is true in the life of the Church, as anywhere else. I have seen wonderful initiatives that might have even been called ‘stunts’ in the past, including a puppet-wielding priest in Manchester teaching his congregation from his home couch and collaborative services held from rooftops, parks and pulpits that bring people together across continents. Here, too, in our Diocese there are extraordinary things going up online every week, such as well-produced Sunday worship and ministry content that makes use of platforms like Zoom, allowing for congregation input. Many of these services have elements that took all week prior to produce.
We need to care for each other ever more as restrictions ease, but expectations for online worship remain.

There is one image of this time that I hope to treasure. As cities have locked down, many businesses have struggled. One has been billboard advertising, as advertising has rushed online. So, when I drive into the city, I am now seeing new advertisements that say things like ‘Thank you nurses, frontline workers, essential workers, doctors, teachers’, etc.

It turns out these ‘thank you’ billboards are not just found in Australia. Looking online at the news, it appears that other places in the world have been putting up ‘thank you’ billboards.

Might this culture of publicly saying ‘thank you’ be something that remains once COVID-19 passes. What would our world look like if such grateful messages endure beyond this time?

We are a community of gratitude, a Eucharistic community. Might our world emerge from this time more grateful, thankful, Eucharistic.

For live-streamed or recorded Sunday worship services in our Diocese, visit the ACSQ website.

Reflections • Tuesday 9 June 2020 • By The Rev’d Canon Dr Ivan Head

Romans 8: God’s ‘for-us-ness’

Romans chapter 8 affirms that God is unequivocally for us – from our beginning to our end. It shows God’s ‘for-us-ness’. Tyndale, the primary translator of the Bible into 16th century English, coined the phrase ‘at-one-ment’ (‘atonement’) to get a better sense of what Paul said in Greek. ‘For-us-ness’ helps, too.

Romans 8 tells us that God’s for-us-ness is in God’s core. Paul exclaims that ‘It is God who justifies’ (8:33b). God puts right, and God is for us (8:3b), acting fully on our behalf. Christ emerges from deep
within God's time, from where God has anticipated and foreseen all that is needed and now met in Christ (8.29-30).

Foresight and for-us-ness lies not only in the death of Jesus as “God's Son in the likeness of sinful man” (8.3b) but more-so in the goal of unbreakable relationship, thus established between the believer and the Spirit of Christ, which Spirit indwells at the centre of the human person (8.11).

The Spirit of Christ dwelling within us may be intra-personal rather than inter-personal. Twice in verse 11 Paul refers to ‘indwelling’, doubly stressing the claim. Indwelling of the Spirit follows the raising of Jesus from the dead by the same Spirit of God. That resurrection is a pre-condition for the new relationship and new mind-set in the believer. Thus, the divine agent of that resurrection dwells within each human person awakened to faith.

Firstly (8.1-2), Paul tells us that God has provided for us in Christ. We read that God has removed us from negativity and penalty: 'There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus set us free from the law of sin and death.' At the end of the chapter (8.38-39), Paul exclaims: 'I am convinced that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' This inseparability is remarkable. It is the for-us-ness of God.

Noting this indwelling, Paul writes this profundity (8.16): 'The Spirit himself co-witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God'. In the 18th century, John Wesley said that this testimony of the Spirit was immediate and direct. That is, it is not an abstraction. The 20th century philosopher Alvin Plantinga said that ‘we are right to take belief in God as basic.’ Belief in God can be the unshakeable prior given of the human mind – not a prejudice nor a refusal to think, not an after-thought.

Romans 8 is saturated with the word ‘Spirit’. The Spirit is the agent of Christ's resurrection and the matrix of Christ's unbreakable relationship with the human person. Paul uses the word ‘Spirit’ more than twenty times here. A specific renewal of the human person is outlined, where one mindset is exchanged for another (8.5-9). One mindset is intransigently human-only and closed-in on its own resources. It can be hostile to the idea that there is a God. The new mindset is in-formed by the Spirit of Christ and co-formed by him (8.29). The person in Christ is said to be conformed or co-formed to the image of God's Son. Paul uses the word ‘symmormphy’ which, like ‘synergy’, could pass untranslated into English.

Paul says that in this Christ, we share a new destination, achieved by God's seamless intervention. The destination is not an achievement in the modern sense of human endeavour. It involves an end to death itself. He makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 15.26 where death is ‘the last enemy to be destroyed.’ This challenges our imagination. For Paul, God's raising Jesus from the dead was not confined to raising Jesus from the dead. It is inherently an act of ‘for-us-ness' with a definite future.

Death sits on our life-horizon. It is not something we have mastered or can master with our best thoughts. We ponder it from this side of that portal, and daily move closer to it. The better destination Paul hopes for and trusts in is not yet seen (8.25): a renewed human existence in a glorified creation where death is no more. Paul makes this claim in Romans 8.17 which I translate: ‘And if children of God, we are also heirs, heirs of God, and co-heirs of Christ if indeed we co-suffer that we may be co-glorified.’

I use ‘co’ to stress the closeness of the Spirit who indwells within the human person (8.11). We cannot self-isolate here and are not alone. God as the Spirit minutely effects our salvation from within us.
However transcendent and mysterious, the closeness of the Spirit is real and in some way is as much internal to the human person as above and beyond.

Paul wrote elsewhere (Galatians 2.20): ‘I have been crucified with Christ, so it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.’ The Greek verb has the same ‘co’ prefix which could be translated ‘co-crucified’ as much as ‘crucified with’. Using ‘co’ focuses on the closeness that Paul says holds between Jesus Christ, the Spirit, and the believer. The inclusion is real. Paul stresses that closeness in the challenging passage at Colossians 1.24: ‘Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, which is the church.’

Romans 8 points to the moment when ‘the children of God will enter a resurrection glory already seen in Jesus’. The resurrection of all the dead is as important to Paul as the one-off resurrection of Jesus. This can be difficult for the modern Christian to realise. Paul says at 1 Corinthians 15.16: ‘For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.’ As if criticising those who think that crucifixion-alone means salvation, Paul says at 1 Corinthians 15.17: ‘And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain [empty, futile], and you are still in your sins.’

One translation (NIV) uses a phrase from the Septuagint Greek Bible to say that God’s own Son dies in the flesh as ‘a sin offering’ (8.3). Does God offer God a sin offering? Does God grant humanity a sin offering when Jesus stands amongst us as one of us ‘in the likeness of sinful humanity? And, who then offered it? Is Jesus in his humanity the effective sin offering humanity is enabled to offer, the prior gift God has provided? I think Paul says this and it has profound implications for all the ministry of God’s priestly people.

The Spirit makes us children of God and siblings of Jesus. Each person in Christ becomes ‘more than victorious’ (8.37) or ‘Hyper-Nike’. At 8.32 he asks: ‘will he not give us all things with him?’ This statement is focussed entirely on that Christ-focused, unbreakable relationship with God that holds throughout all the circumstances of our lives across all extremes. From the moment of resurrection and our receipt of the resurrecting Spirit, God establishes this unbreakable relationship.

Thus the last two verses of chapter 8: ‘For I am sure that not death, not life, not angels, not principalities, not things present, not things to come, not powers, not height, not depth, not anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

This may be the main point of Romans 8. In all these ‘nots’, those things that cannot break the relational bond of God’s love in Christ present in the Spirit, we hear God’s unequivocal ‘yes’. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1.20: ‘All the promises of God are Yes in Him.’
Q&A with former commando The Rev’d Charlie Lacey and former art consultant Tisa Lacey

The Rev’d Charlie, who grew up in the UK, and Tisa, who grew up in Jamaica, moved to Australia in 2016. They have two children, Isabelle and Caleb.

Where do you currently live and where do you worship?

Charlie and Tisa: We live in the Brisbane suburb of Springfield Lakes and we worship at St Andrews, Springfield.

How long have you been involved in the Anglican Church and in what roles?

Charlie: We have been involved since 2005 when we started attending Holy Trinity, Brompton (HTB) in London. In 2007 I started working for the church on the Alpha program and specifically Alpha For Forces, which is Alpha for people in the defence forces, as I used to be a Royal Marines Commando. Alpha started at Holy Trinity, Brompton. I stayed in that role for a while and then started training for ordination in 2010. I was ordained in 2013 at St Paul’s Cathedral. I am currently the Priest-in-Charge of St Andrew’s, Springfield, arriving in 2016.

Tisa: Similar to Charlie, I started worshipping at HTB in 2005. I worked as an art consultant in London but in preparation for our move, I began working for St Ann’s, Tottenham part-time in 2014, assisting with events, graphic design and marketing. I carried out this role a couple of days a week for two years before we moved to Australia with our two young children Isabelle and Caleb. Once we got here, I spent the first year assisting with marketing activities for the church to get us up and running and after that I worked part-time at Trinity College Queensland for a year. Since then I have been working as the St Andrew’s parish administrator.
What is your current role and what does your role involve?

Charlie: I see preaching, presiding, pastoring and prayer as my core business as a parish priest. Jesus sent people out in pairs and I couldn't do my role without Tisa's support – it is definitely a team effort.

Tisa: I work as parish administrator part-time, but as my background is in the arts I also assist with marketing and support Charlie.

What projects and activities are you currently working on?

Charlie: There has obviously been a huge change with COVID-19's necessary restrictions. Our focus has been on keeping people growing in their faith and keeping people connected so that there is that feeling that we are a family and that's how we see the church – as a family. We are also building connections with Springfield Anglican College and working on the new website. At Pentecost, people said parts of the 'Lord's Prayer' in different languages, as well as contributed testimonies and photos for a multi-national montage.

Tisa: In terms of projects, I support whatever is in the pipeline for the church. Both from an administration and marketing perspective. For example, if there are special services or events, I am involved in supporting the events and ensuring that people have the opportunity to participate as the church aims to operate as a family.

What have been the highlights of your roles so far?

Charlie: Among the highlights for me are when I have baptised families. I baptised two adults and their baby. Another time I baptised a father and his two sons. We also had a wedding, which was really special as the whole church got involved to make it a special day.

Tisa: The highlights for me are Easter and Christmas. They are just so special. On Palm Sunday we have a service by the lake, Maundy Thursday shared meal and foot washing, and Easter Sunday is a great time of celebration. For Christmas, the musicians and kids come together after working hard on a combined nativity, told in a rhyme, and carols performances. 60 people were involved in putting the last Christmas event on and people from the wider community came.

What have been the key challenges of your roles so far and how have you worked through these?

Charlie and Tisa: The biggest challenge is that it can sometimes be all-consuming. We work from home where the parish office is based. As things have progressed, parishioners have increasingly stepped up to contribute their gifts and time. On Saturdays, which is Charlie's day off, we spend time as a family by going to the beach or hiking in the national parks and we find this routine life-giving.

St Andrew's, Springfield is one of eight ACSQ churches participating in the Resource Churches Pilot Project – what does your church hope to learn throughout this project?

Charlie: I think that there is a lot I can learn personally about management, planning and strategy. I think there are other Resource Church leaders who are especially skilled and experienced in these areas whom I can learn from.

Tisa: I am keen to employ some of the tools that other Resource Churches use, including systems and software, as well as share ideas.
What are some of the ways St Andrew's, Springfield is planning on resourcing and supporting other parishes in the short and long terms?

**Charlie:** At the moment, we are being responsive to churches when they request assistance. One area which we can assist churches in is church planting, including how to move from one phase to another, especially in the early stages of a church plant, as well as supporting other parishes whose congregations, like ours, are multi-ethnic or would like to be.

**Tisa:** As we are a church plant, we are willing to share resources that come out of some of our initiatives, including regular initiatives such as the Christmas carols event (for example, sharing slides and scripts when requested) and ad hoc events, such as quiz nights.

What has been your parish community's response to St Andrew's being a part of the Pilot Project?

**Charlie and Tisa:** The response has been largely positive. Our community understands that this is an opportunity for both our church and other parishes. Our congregation gets that and is quite excited by it and feels as though they are part of something special.

St Andrew's, Springfield has responded in unique ways to keep church flourishing in the COVID-19 environment – what are some of these ways?

**Charlie:** We have put everything online in the form of a YouTube playlist, together with a guide to our online resources. For Kids' Church we have a weekly activity sheet and have encouraged our children's ministry coordinator, Emma Williams, to use the medium of video to demonstrate and communicate key elements, as well as source interactive resources for children. We wanted to be mindful that parents have been home schooling and so we wanted to ‘do church’ in a way that wouldn't put our volunteers under additional pressure.

**Tisa:** The service is recorded in a flexible format that allows each congregation member to use the resources in a way that suits them. Since the COVID-19 restrictions have been put in place, we have changed the look of our weekly communications. We used to have a notice sheet, but this has been changed to video recordings containing bite-sized content to connect people and prepare them for Sunday worship. Also, during this period, the Parish Council has created a pastoral care network to ensure that each congregation member receives some form of communication each week. We have also encouraged people to send us photos of their faith activities at home, which we post on Facebook, to help keep that sense of connection.

What are your plans and goals for the next 12 months?

**Charlie and Tisa:** Over the course of this year we are formulating what we are calling ‘Vision 2025’ so everyone is clear what the vision and direction of the church are.

Can you tell us a little about your personal faith journeys?

**Charlie:** My mum became a Christian when I was about 10 and I noticed an obvious change in her character for the better – she used to talk about Jesus in a way that made sense and I made a commitment to follow Christ at that young age. In my later teens, I found myself torn between my faith and a lifestyle that was incompatible with the faith I professed. I joined the marines when I was 20 and my life developed along two parallel tracks – there was my professional life, which was largely positive as I had a good group of mates and we were travelling around the world doing all kinds of
exciting things. I served operationally in Afghanistan, Iraq and Northern Ireland. The other track was my personal life. I was a heavy drinker and was in and out of relationships and was unsettled. I found myself periodically in trouble with the police and even did a short stint in a military prison. I eventually left the Royal Marines with the intention of travelling around the world and about that time split up with a person whom I was in a serious relationship with and then tried to take my own life and was discovered unconscious. After that I travelled around the world and it was during that time that I accepted that something had gone badly wrong with my life. Whilst I was travelling, I felt like I was in a kind of spiritual tug of war. I would try to connect with God, for example, up in the Andes Mountains, but when I returned to the cities and the bright lights and all that went with them, I returned to familiar and destructive patterns of behaviour. Eventually when I was in Hong Kong, after a heavy night out, I realised that something needed to change and so I got down on my knees and gave my life to Jesus anew. At that point, I even imagined that my life would be boring from then on, which of course it isn't, but I surrendered myself to Jesus all the same. I felt a wave of love and forgiveness wash over me. Because I was travelling from Hong Kong to the UK overland, I started exchanging emails with a Christian woman that I met online, which was helpful at that time of my life. I eventually met that woman for lunch when I returned to London. Her name is Tisa and she is now my wife. After we got married, we started attending church together in London. A few years later, I felt the call towards ordination.

Tisa: My father became a Christian when I was 10 and that began the transformation of our family who were not yet Christians. My father's passion and desire to reveal the scriptures to us led to our attending church, him reading the Bible to us and regular family devotions. I committed my life to Christ within the same year, whilst attending a youth camp. I remember being in a large group of children when there was an altar call for those who wanted to commit their lives to Christ. Suddenly it felt as if it were just me (alone) praying to God and knowing that he was now Lord of my life. This was the beginning of my Christian journey, with a strong group of Christian friends.

Whilst at college in Jamaica I participated in a travel and work programme which took me to the US, Canada and finally the UK. I continued my studies and worked in the UK for six years until I met Charlie online. As his life at the time was far beyond my comprehension I never once thought that I would meet him as he travelled across Asia, but we did meet and here we are 15 years later.

How does your faith inspire you and shape your outlook, life choices and character?

Charlie: When you come to faith, some things can change instantly, some things change over a period of time, and there are some things we will battle with our whole lives. I am a very different person to the one I was 15 years ago. Having a relationship with Christ will always change you. Knowing Christ has made me realise that my life has a purpose and that God has a plan for me – and his plan is so much more exciting than anything I would have devised myself.

Tisa: When I became a Christian, I understood that I belonged to Christ's kingdom, something more substantial than anything the world has to offer. This has always shaped my perspective and life choices and been an inspiration in challenging times.

What is your favourite scripture and why?

Charlie: There are lots, but I love Hebrews 6.19: “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure…” For so much of my life I felt like I was being blown around and not knowing who I was and what I was about. This scripture speaks to me, as it's a good verse for someone with a turbulent past.
Tisa: Proverbs 3.5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” I know that God is in control when I submit all to him, even if things do not go in the direction that I would like. He sees the bigger picture!

What person of faith inspires you the most and why?

Charlie: I’d say my mother. I think God used my mum more than anyone to bring me to faith in the first place. I saw the change faith made to my mum and I see the passion and zeal that she has for the Lord. She belongs to a tiny church in a tiny village in Devon, but the church is growing with young families. She really wants people to know Jesus.

Tisa: Charlie – witnessing his journey and growth. Knowing how God has changed his life dramatically and our journey together to this point. Charlie’s perseverance and commitment even against the odds have been a true witness to how powerfully God works in all our lives today.

What are the primary strengths of the Church and what is the best way to make the most of these for the benefit of our communities?

Charlie and Tisa: The primary strength has to be that the message of the Gospel is true. There is a God who wants us to know Him and has made Himself known through the person of Jesus Christ. There is nothing more appealing or exciting than that. We are called to be radically different and we are moving into a time where that difference is becoming increasingly marked. We need to resist blending in with the prevailing culture.

What are the primary challenges currently encountered by the Church and what is the best way to overcome these for the benefit of our communities?

Charlie: I think the biggest challenge is that the Church is increasingly being seen as irrelevant. The question of relevance has to do with two key things, one of which is external and one of which is internal. The external is the idea that Christianity and science are incompatible. The internal factor is that, particularly in the western world, there are large swathes of the church that are capitulating to the culture. If people are going to church and all they hear is what the wider culture tells them, they don't need to go to church.

Tisa: I would agree with Charlie and add that having lived in Australia and the UK, both affluent countries by the world's standard, people tend to be self-reliant and have no need for God. This is, of course, a misconception, as we all need God. However, people tend to look to their own resources before seeking God.

What is the kindest gesture you have ever received or witnessed?

Charlie: In Tottenham, where I did my curacy, there was an elderly man named John. He came to Christ later in life and was a rough diamond. Every time I saw him, he had a question for me. He had had such a tough life and it was great to see him always moving forward in his faith. Before we came to Australia, he presented us with one of his paintings – the cross with light emanating from it, which seemed to be pushing away the darkness. Below it, he wrote ‘Jesus, the light in the darkness’. The painting hangs in our hallway. It was moving because it described exactly what had happened (and was happening) in his life and mine.
Tisa: I worked for an Art Consultancy in London and my boss, who wasn't a Christian, felt I was an employee she wanted to keep. As I was an international student at the time, she proceeded to apply for my work permit following a long list of rules and guidelines. Six months later and under the paid advice of an Immigration Officer, the application was rejected and the officer had gone on holiday without letting us know in advance. I received the notice via email two days before Christmas that I had one month left in the country. With that in mind I prepared myself mentally for the move whilst those close to me prayed for a change of circumstances. The country opened up again after the holiday season on 2 January and without me knowing, my boss called Immigration and argued the case for hours based on us fulfilling the criteria and employing someone recommended by them who was not available to appeal the decision. After a few hours she won the argument, called me and told me that I should be back at work the next day! This was such a heartfelt gesture which led to 11 years working together and a life-long friendship.

What is the best piece of advice you have ever received and who gave you this advice?

Charlie: There is a number. The best piece of advice I was ever given was when I was questioning my mum about faith and she said that I could always pray to God and say, “Lord, if you are there, then I want to know you.” You don't need to be sure that God is there to pray. Another great piece of advice I have received was from a man named Sandy Miller, who was formerly the rector of HTB, who said “when you are preaching never underestimate their intelligence and never overestimate their knowledge.”

Tisa: My mother – “Education provides untold opportunities.” Jamaica has economic challenges and my mother always encouraged my sisters and me to get a good education. Subsequently, this took me to three different countries on a college work experience programme. It was this that helped me to make the decision to continue my studies in the UK.

What do you do in your free time to recharge and relax?

Charlie: I get out in nature, especially bushwalking.

Tisa: Spending time with the family outdoors.

What book have you given away most as a gift and why?

Charlie: Probably Mere Christianity by CS Lewis because he is a great apologist and he makes belief in Christianity seem so rational.

Tisa: The Bible.

Where do you do your best thinking?

Charlie: When I am walking.

Tisa: In bed at night, when it’s quiet.

What’s your best childhood memory?

Charlie: I have a lot of good childhood memories, but I think a Guy Fawkes night when we made a huge bonfire in the garden and had fireworks. I was five years old at the time.
Tisa: At the age of 11, my family and I went on a two-month road trip. We flew to Miami from Jamaica, took the Greyhound (coach) to New York, drove to Canada and repeated the journey again in reverse. It was a great adventure with lots of stories, including a police officer pulling us over on the highway because my father was driving far too slowly!

If you are having a bad day, what do you do to cheer yourself up?

Charlie: The best thing for me is to hit the gym or go for a run. I can go for a run and come back in a completely different frame of mind.

Tisa: Solitude – mental space to think things through and recharge.

What is the funniest thing that has happened to you recently?

Charlie: Because of the current restrictions, I couldn't go to the barber so Tisa cut my hair for me. Unfortunately, she had a minor lapse of concentration and shaved my head without a grader on the clippers, giving me a huge bald patch on the side of my head, near the front. I was due to do filming for church the next day. We ended up gluing some of the cut hair onto the bald patch with a glue stick. The amazing thing was, it worked perfectly and you couldn't tell that I'd been scalped.

Tisa: I can't think of one at the moment, as I would never allow Charlie to cut my hair!

What makes you nostalgic and why?

Charlie: Thinking about Christmas at my parents' house in Devon. When the kids were small, we would go there and my mum would go massively overboard with the cooking and my dad would go massively overboard with the lights and decorations. My kids loved being there. Adjoining my parents' house was a post office that sold lots of sweets, so as far as my kids were concerned their grandparents had a sweet shop in their house.

Tisa: Family life as a child in Jamaica. Remembering the things we did together, the challenges and fun times which helped to build the foundation of the person I am today.

What day would you like to re-live and why?

Charlie: I would say the day after our wedding day. The wedding day itself, as lovely as it was, was not a relaxing day. The day after, we were in Jamaica knowing we had our whole honeymoon and our whole lives ahead of us.

Tisa: Day(s) – most definitely our wedding day (best day ever!) and meeting our children for the first time when they were born (minus the labour).
The Oratory of the Good Shepherd: history, origins and special relevance today

Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, claims that the renewal of the Church depends on a renewal of the life of prayer. He recognises that religious communities, both traditional monastic communities (e.g. the Society of St Francis and the Society of the Sacred Advent) and emerging expressions of the religious life (e.g. Community of the Way), ought to be encouraged so that the Holy Spirit can breathe new life into the wider community of the people of God. I agree with him, and I believe that religious communities remind us that the ministry of Jesus is composed of three fundamental elements – his words, his actions and his prayer. I also acknowledge that we are challenged to follow Jesus' example, and just as Jesus withdrew from the crowds so that he could be with God in 'the silence of eternity interpreted by love', we are enabled to engage with the demands of ministry when we pursue a balanced life. Ministry is like a three-legged stool, and to affirm each element is essential for the proclamation of the Gospel.

The Oratory of the Good Shepherd is a dispersed Anglican religious community that operates in Australia, Europe, North America and Southern Africa. It was founded by a group of priest dons in the University of Cambridge in 1913 and, at present, it consists of 41 professed members ('Oratorians') and 75 companions (similar to Franciscan 'tertaries' and Benedictine 'oblates'). 13 professed members belong to the Australian Province. Unlike Franciscan friars and Society of the Sacred Advent sisters, Oratorians do not live together. Professed members are celibate men (clergy and laity) whose lives are governed by the observance of the Rule and guided by the seven 'Notes' – fellowship, liberty, stewardship, the labour of the mind, the love that makes for peace, discipline and joy. The purpose of the Oratory is the adoration of God in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the 'Notes' and the 'Rule' are designed to achieve the aim.
Oratorians belong to local groups known as ‘colleges’, and the Australian Province is formed by the Brisbane College, the Sydney Mission College and the Melbourne College. Colleges meet regularly for chapter. Chapters include a ‘chapter of faults’ (a report of failure to observe the Rule), personal reports and financial reports. Conversation tends to be supportive and non-critical.

Every day Oratorians are required to attend the Holy Eucharist, read Morning and Evening Prayer, intercede for all professed members by name, pray for departed members by name and spend an hour in silent prayer. The hour of silent prayer is generally recognised as the distinctive feature of the Rule. They are expected to have a private rule of reading and to be regular in making confession of sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Oratorians are encouraged to be interested in the affairs of Church and state, but not to be engaged in the ‘party-politics’ of religion. It is not a strenuous Rule, but it is designed to encourage prayer, intellectual integrity and active ministry in the world.

The charism of the Oratory is the renewal of prayer in the life of the Church, and members are often engaged in spiritual direction and the leading of retreats. Every year members meet for a Provincial Chapter, and once every three years they meet for a General Chapter. Members do not share a common purse, but they are required to make report of expenditure to members of their college.

The Oratory is strongly Anglican in tone, and the patron saint is Nicholas Ferrar, a scholar, businessman and deacon (1592-1637). Ferrar lived at a time of religious turmoil in post-Reformation England, and with his mother, brother and brother-in-law and their families, he formed a community of 30 people at Little Gidding, a remote rural district in Huntingdonshire. The daily pattern of prayer was drawn from the services of the Book of Common Prayer and expanded with daily recitation of the entire psalter, monthly reading of the four Gospels, the practice of greater silence and nocturnal prayer.

The founders of the Oratory chose Ferrar because of his affirmation of both ancient Catholic Christianity and the insights of the Protestant Reformation. Ferrar formed a community that was unique; compassionate in responding to humanity, comprehensive in faith and with the hope of being a fresh expression of monasticism adapted to the aspirations of the age.
Black lives matter!

Nunukul Yuggera Aboriginal Dance Company dancers at the Saturday 6 June ‘Black Lives Matter’ rally in Brisbane, which opened with prayers by Yuggera leader Aunty Kerry Charlton, with Birrigubba Juru man Pastor Lionel Henaway also leading those who gathered in prayer.

‘The Week of Prayer for Reconciliation’ (The National week for Reconciliation) did not go quite as we planned. Not long after it commenced we were all, I am sure, appalled by the death of George Floyd in America. It seemed to me to be so violent, senseless and unjust. This senseless action has triggered off a series of protests and riots around America, and protests here in Australia. It also reminded us that since the findings of the ‘Aboriginal Deaths in Custody’ report (1991) there has been a further 432 deaths in custody. Just in the last few days we have also witnessed the violent arrest of an Aboriginal teenager in New South Wales. We can see quite clearly that reconciliation means far more than saying the right words and uttering the right prayers for one week of the year. Something is very, very wrong with racial equality in both American and Australia, and needs to be changed.

‘The Aboriginal Deaths in Custody’ report makes for harrowing reading. How I wish that it simply described the past, as bad as that is, and is not in some way a prophesy of the present. I quickly add that not all police officers are violent murderous bullies. There are many fine police officers, just as there are many faithful Christians that make up their number. However, there is something wrong within mainstream Australia and America. Something deeply wrong with our institutions; including those set up for our wellbeing. It is systemic racism.

Most people I know would not accept that they are racist, and many take deep offence if you suggest that they might be. Systemic racism operates at the deepest levels of our society. Systemic racism, or institutional racism, by another name, refers to how ‘white superiority’ functions as the norm. It is the lens by which we see all things. It shapes the political system, police force, the educational system, legal system, employment practices, and, yes, even our church. It shapes both you and me. All our
social contexts are dominated by the, often unspoken and unrecognized, premise that being ‘white’, with all its associations, is inherently normative. This is why ‘Black Lives Matter’!

People of colour are just not seen as being on the same level of those who are not. The basic institutions of our society were established to serve and protect the dominant ‘white’ culture. ‘Black Lives Matter’ because we need to focus our thoughts and actions on those who suffer the most. People will be quick to say ‘but all lives matter’; and, of course they do. However, it is far too easy to gloss over the particular when we focus on the general. This is why we also focus on violence against women, but we all know violence against anyone is wrong; we focus on the protection of the children, but we all know that all people need protection from any form of abuse. Focusing on the particular helps us to address the universal. Jesus said ‘... just as you did it to one of the least these who are members of my family you did it to me’ (Matt 25: 40).

The 432 First Nations people who have died since the ‘The Aboriginal Deaths in Custody’ report was released, like George Floyd, have names, families, and stories of their past. They had hopes and dreams, and problems and issues. Many were arrested for relatively minor crimes. They were human beings with feelings, thoughts and blood running through their veins. They had possibilities for change. They are not just numbers. They were like you and me. They were God’s children.

‘The Aboriginal Deaths in Custody’ report made 339 recommendations of which only a few have been enacted, and, clearly, given the continued deaths in custody, have not addressed the core issues. What should we Christians do? For my part, Jesus provides the model. Jesus showed solidarity with the poor, the outcast, the marginalized, and rejected (Luke 4: 18 – 21). Surely, in our context, that is the First Nations peoples, and other people of colour. As Christians we should be some of the strongest advocates for justice for First Nations peoples, and work tirelessly and prayerfully to see the end of the senseless deaths in custody. Write to your state and federal parliamentary member and ask them what they are doing about it. I am! We also need to ask the hard questions of ourselves. As a church when it comes to systemic racism we also have some ‘logs to take out of our own eyes’ (Matt 7: 5). We have significant changes to make in our own church. As people of the light we can begin to walk in the light, and drive out the darkness (John 1: 4).

‘Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that’
Dr Martin Luther King Jr

+Chris

First published on the Anglican Board of Mission website on Thursday 4 June 2020.
Push For Better

There are always parts of life that we know are important, but perhaps haven't learned as much about as we should. It might be taxes, or cars, science or critical thinking. One of my areas is mental health. Obviously, I know it's important, and have written about it before, but I felt I needed to learn more.

When I saw a post online for the headspace 'Push For Better' challenge, I thought I would give it a go. It has a few components, including an element of fundraising, the challenge of doing the push-ups, and the information that is attached to each day's target.

Mental health not-for-profit organisation headspace provides you with some information about mental health daily, or the consequences of poor mental health, and a related statistic which becomes the basis for the target.

Today's target, for example, was 130 push-ups because in 2018-2019 headspace provided support for 130,000 young Australians.

What has been striking me as the information comes in is the incredible prevalence of mental health concerns, and the way in which so often we contribute towards them. By 'we' I mean we as a society, we as individuals towards others, and we towards ourselves.

By we as a society, the information that struck me the hardest was the way we use technology. I am a personal fan of technology, but using it to excess significantly impacts sleep schedules, with poor sleep leading to poor mental health outcomes. However, we are creating a society that feeds on the technological addiction.

Many of the most vulnerable people when it comes to mental health are vulnerable because they are in some way different from the expectation. Sadly, this too often leads to social ostracism or outright bullying, putting significant stress on people. This is one of the reasons why sexually and gender diverse young people are so often over represented in mental health statistics – because they have been ostracised or bullied. This was explored in the 2019 Church of England 'Valuing All God's Children' report, which showed that 84 per cent of trans young people and 61 per cent of lesbian, gay and bi young people have self-harmed. And, that 45 per cent of trans young people and 22 per cent of lesbian, gay and bi young people who aren't trans have attempted to take their own life.

Finally, one of the ways we can put ourselves into a good mental health space is sticking to the things that do help, for example scheduled quiet time, regular exercise and being open to pastoral or professional support.

Editor's note: Support is available for those who may be distressed by phoning Lifeline 13 11 14; Mensline 1300 789 978; Kids Helpline 1800 551 800; and, beyondblue 1300 224 636.
You could say that I am a late starter with my painting. In 2000 and at the age of 56, I started with lessons at the 50+ Club at City Hall. I had never painted in my life. It was a revelation and I have never looked back. After two years, I found an exceptional art teacher and a whole world opened up to me. I paint using heat-set oils following severe asthma caused by normal oil paints.

I am very much an artist of opportunity. That is, I see something that inspires me, and so I paint it. It can be a tree, a flower, a grandchild or an image a travelling friend has sent to me. Whatever ‘grabs me’, I feel compelled to attempt an adequate interpretation. Sometimes I will change the picture to suit my mood, excitement/ or inclination. My focus is always on the play of light on my subject. Light, and the source of light. Faith and the source of faith.

Even though my life has seemed to be full of medical disasters, I know I never lost my faith in a Higher Being, call Him what you will, but my spirit was badly shaken at times. I even turned away from my faith for a while because I was very angry with God. However, it would not be denied and it kept me going, and when I was through it all I was able to encompass a WHOLENESS of my faith that wasn’t there before. Because, you see, to lose the fear of dying is to lose the fear of living.
I would never profess to being very intellectual about my faith. To me it is very much a coal-face faith. But it is very deep and it is very real. It is just something: a certainty that I have that there is a purpose to everything. I do not necessarily understand it, but there is a reason for these things to happen.

My art and my faith are definitely intertwined. One without the other is just not possible. And, art and faith and healing are also irrevocably intertwined. A lesson I have happily learned over time.

I have a rare condition causing severe muscle weakness, so I use a motorised wheelchair for mobility. Somebody once asked me if I could face being healed. My first thought, funnily enough was 'I already am'. Because I don't look at healing as being healing of the body. I look at healing as being healing of the spirit, and if you've got that, you can cope with anything that life throws at you.

It is the healing of my spirit that has allowed me to get on with my life. It is the coping skills I learnt over those tough years that have enabled me to continue forward. It is the constant disregard of the loss of my life skills that makes me determined to prove that the decay of my body will never destroy that spirit.

For one reason or another it has been a few months since I picked up a paint brush. However, there are plenty of sparks in the mind's eye waiting for the canvas...and a commission I must start very soon...

For more information on the author’s art, please email Elizabeth Mosely.

Reflections • Wednesday 10 June 2020

Overhead projectors and wheelie walkers

I spent much of my younger years unwell on a Disability Support Pension due to a number of interrelated autoimmune conditions that rendered me fatigued, in chronic pain and dealing with unpleasant ‘plumbing’ issues. The worst symptom was the persistent ‘mind-fog’ – I was so out of it that I didn’t realise I was out of it. It was only when I tried to read a Garfield comic strip in a newspaper six times repeatedly, unable to understand it, that I ‘discovered’ that something was wrong with my cognition.

During this time, I was part of a tight-knit church community in another state. My experience of this community was mixed, largely because of how different church leaders and community members treated me. I hope the following insights and suggestions assist church leaders with understanding some of the unique challenges that parishioners who are unwell or living with a disability have to navigate, as well as how to support and include these people, who have much to offer.

Be flexible with expectations, while offering opportunities to contribute

While my church service and gathering attendance was not reliable enough for me to be rostered on for tasks or delegated timebound duties, I still wanted to contribute to the life of my community.

Sometimes clergy and lay church leaders make the very well-intentioned error of not asking chronically unwell people or those living with a disability to contribute at all, likely out of fear of not wanting to additionally ‘burden’ the person.
I also experienced the opposite – a married couple who were church leaders constantly telling me that I should make weekend and weekday church gathering attendance my number one priority, even over the one unit of university study that I was somehow managing to sustain while I was unable to work. The pressure got so bad from this couple, that a more senior community leader, upon finding out what was being said, intervened to politely tell them to pull their heads in, which they did. I was very grateful for his swift and clear action.

Such difficult times, were offset by lighter moments, including the time I was asked by the praise and worship team leader to run the overhead projector. Knowing that I could not stand for long periods, he understandably delegated me a job that required sitting. This task involved putting many A4-sized sheets of plastic film (with song lyrics written on them) on glass one by one, with light and a mirror then ‘projecting’ the lyrics onto a screen. When I am well, I have terrible spatial skills - when I was unwell with poor cognition, my spatial skills were non-existent. Due to the mirror effect, the film had to be put on the glass in a particular way, otherwise the text appeared upside down and back to front on the screen. Unfortunately, the ‘mental rotation’ required of this task proved too much for my parietal lobe to handle. For an entire hour-long praise and worship session, I persisted, albeit in vain. Knowing that I see the lighter side of life, the whole congregation was in fits of laughter as I stubbornly persevered with the task mouthing ‘I am so sorry’ and shaking my head apologetically to everyone as I kept trying to get it right, sometimes having to adjust a single film two to three times. The one instance I put the film on the projector the correct way the first time, the 200-strong congregation broke into spontaneous applause and cheered, at which point I got up and curtsied. Many people approached me after the service to either hug me or pat me on the back, saying that they had not laughed so intensely for ages. Sometimes involving unwell people or those living with a disability in church activities means things don't quite go to plan. This is okay – and sometimes it is unexpectedly fantastic.

As I was unable to attend many gatherings and events, my primary contribution to my church community was intercession from home. This was really all I could manage, but of value nonetheless. I was always able to pray, and, in hindsight, my prayer life has never been so blessed as when I was unwell. Looking back now, I see God’s sovereign hand as he gave me the grace to find purpose in what I was going through – as only God can. While my friends moved on in a more ‘linear’ fashion with their lives, graduating from university, travelling, and pursuing their careers, instead of seeing myself ‘stuck’, I imagined myself ‘moving’ like a tree’s roots going deeper into the soil through prayer. In the boughs and foliage, I kept all the people I prayed for – either imagining them to be birds safe in their nests or small marsupials napping peacefully among the protection of the branches.

It is very common for God to bless unwell people with rich interior lives – especially when they have to endure long periods confined to bed, as I did. However, this oft goes unseen and isn't something the person is likely to voluntarily speak of or to speak about in detail if asked.

My most important suggestion for clergy and church leaders here is for the need to balance flexible and realistic expectations with understanding that unwell people or those living with a disability have much to contribute and, indeed, the right to participate. This may be in the way of intercession; art or other creative handwork; rostered or unrostered light-weight duties, depending on what the person prefers; writing for the church newsletter or anglican.focus; administrative tasks that can be done from home; assisting with kids’ church; being part of a phone tree; reading church notices; or, helping with social media.
So, please ask the person in your church community who is living with chronic health issues or a disability what their gifts and skills are, and how they wish to participate. If needed, have this conversation with a discerning friend or family member present, offering possible suggestions during this chat to help with the flow of conversation.

**Being unwell is expensive – be mindful and understanding of this**

Anyone who has lived with chronic illness or a disability knows how expensive it is, with GP, specialist doctor and allied healthcare costs; pharmaceutical drugs; vitamins, minerals and herbal supplements; mobility and ergonomic aids; diagnostic tests; and, other expenses all adding up. This is further complicated when an unwell person has to transition to part-time work or cease working in order to cope, as I had to do for a number of years.

The impact of financial constraints on a person’s ability to join in community activities can be quite significant. There were times I was well enough to attend a small church event but I didn't go because I couldn't afford the $5-10 cost or the ingredients to put together a ‘pot luck’ dish. I was also unable to participate in planned giving and when I did contribute to the ‘plate’ at church, it was a meagre amount. When you are chronically unwell, right or wrong, you sometimes feel that your ‘pride’ is all you've got. Thus, it isn't easy to come forward and express your inability to afford what for most others is a paltry amount.

While priests and other church leaders cannot be expected to read minds, it may be helpful for them to be conscious of the possibility for this. A discreet conversation with the unwell community member at the right time could really help. Perhaps let the person know that you understand the financial constraints of being unwell or living with a disability and that they are welcome to attend gatherings without the pressure of paying the door fee, bring a meal or ‘give’ regularly.

**Arranging appropriate discipleship support**

In the church community I belonged to, a person of the same gender who was more mature in their faith was assigned to each individual to support them in their spiritual journey. I wish more consideration had gone into deciding those assigned to me.

The first person assigned to me was appropriately 15-20 years older and more mature in her faith, but she was terribly indiscreet. I discovered by chance that she was sharing with her husband everything I told her, including regarding my more personal physiological symptoms. This was unacceptable to me, so I moved on from her.

Another person assigned to me was, oddly, comparable in age and faith maturity, but I decided to go with the flow regardless. She was much more conservative, serious and regimented than I was. I met with her a few times until I discovered that the people responsible for arranging the discipleship partners, the pushy married couple, had an agenda to get me to be more like her.

As a result, I requested that I be partnered with a person of my choice – a woman who understood the importance of discretion, common sense and open mindedness. The ensuing arrangement worked very well, with the person I chose becoming an absolute blessing in my life due to her sensitivity, generosity, flexibility and acceptance. Years later I was able to help return her kindness when she needed help.
My advice to church leaders arranging discipleship partnering is to ask the unwell person for the name of a preferred person or, if this is unknown, what preferred qualities are sought in a person who is to walk with them on their faith journey for the given time.

**Practical support structures**

One of the most wonderful aspects of being part of a faith community is the way people pitch in and practically support each other when the chips are down and a parishioner is struggling.

Unable to drive, I was very grateful to my friends in the community who drove me to medical appointments and church services or picked up groceries for me. I also appreciated the meals lovingly made with my dietary constraints in mind, which were then dropped off with an encouraging note or a warm smile. Decades later, I still remember every single one of these good folk and their kindness. The memory of such gestures stays with you.

My suggestion for church leaders is that they ask the person who is unwell or living with a disability what kind of support is needed. Each person will have different needs, depending on their existing support structures. As my family lived interstate and because I was unable to drive, my primary need was mobility assistance; however, everyone will be different. Fortunately, I had many church community friends willing to assist me with lifts to church whom I could call myself, but not everyone has this kind of network.

**Understand and respect the unwell person’s wishes**

When you are chronically unwell, especially when pain is a symptom, the mental challenges are as tough as the physical. So, when I was well enough to leave the house, I didn't want to talk about being sick and sore. I just wanted to ‘pretend’ I was well and enjoy myself as much as I could in the moment. Because I was clear about this, most people respected my need for this kind of ‘space’.

There was always the odd person after church or at fellowship events who thought it was their job to corner me and explain with proselytising zeal how I should take care of myself. Sometimes this was well intentioned and sometimes I suspected it was more about assuaging guilt, perhaps because they felt that they should be ‘doing more’ for me and lecturing me made them feel that they had done something to ‘help’. My strategy was to avoid such people when possible, with a discreet church friend ‘worded up’ in case a ‘rescue’ was ever required.

I will always remember the discerning priest who, after I received communion, reached out and gently squeezed my hand with a kind, knowing look – I think upon seeing strain on my face. Sometimes a sincere and subtle acknowledgment is all that is needed, especially when discipleship partnering and other support structures have been arranged.

My suggestion for clergy and church leaders is to ask the unwell person every so often and in a sensitive way how they want things to be approached. Everyone will be different, but my experience is that many unwell people just want to be treated with a level of normalcy during fellowship gatherings and at church events.
Make the environment accessible and seating flexible

Unwell people and those living with a disability commonly experience significant mobility challenges. During the brief periods when I needed to use a wheelie-walker, I chose not to go to church, instead staying home to pray or rest.

When you experience such difficulties, you start ‘seeing’ spaces with a different set of eyes. Even to this day, I still ‘see’ tripping hazards when out and about before others do and I immediately notice aisles or footpaths that a person using a walker or wheelchair would struggle with. I also anticipate related needs automatically – for example, when the bus pulls up at the bus stop to pick up a passenger waiting in a wheelchair, I always get up and lift the seats in the allocated disability area so the person can more quickly and easily position their chair.

It is also common for unwell people to have mobility limitations or postural-related symptoms that make standing up and sitting down in church services difficult, or possibly dangerous if there is an associated risk of fainting. It is very annoying when a churchgoer taps you on the back during a service and tells you to stand up when you can’t. This happened to me a few times, likely because I was young and the shoulder-tappers assumed I was being disrespectful.

I encourage clergy and other church leaders to think about how accessible their church spaces are to people who live with mobility challenges; to anticipate needs when possible; accommodate seating requests; make it clear that people may sit or stand, as they wish; and, to seek advice from those in their congregations directly affected, as well as professional experts, if required.

Even though I was told upon my diagnosis that I would likely never be well enough to work, I now live a very functional life. I still live with some symptoms every day, but I have a full-time job that is as much a vocation to me as a career, and I am always busy, with a child to care for, social justice commitments, fitness activities, and a faith community. Even though I live in a different state now, I remember and remain grateful to all those who prayed for me and supported and included me during the years I was so unwell.

10 ways to include, support, encourage and welcome people in your congregations who are chronically unwell or living with a disability

1. Above all, help identify and provide opportunities for the parishioner to contribute in meaningful and enjoyable ways that are within the person’s skillset, without expectation or firm deadlines. Ensure the person is sincerely acknowledged and thanked for their efforts – what may be a ‘small’ effort for a well person may be the energy-equivalent of the ‘widow's mite’ for a parishioner who is unwell or living with a disability.
2. Ask the person how they can be practically supported (e.g. with lifts to church) and, if required, delegate routine tasks to sensitive, sensible and reliable types.
3. Be mindful that being unwell or living with a disability is very expensive, and often compounded by a person’s inability to work. Let the person know in a discreet way at an appropriate time that small event ‘door’ fees and regular giving are optional and that lack of financial resources are no barrier for attendance.
4. When arranging discipleship support, ask the parishioner if they have a preferred person in mind, or if unknown, what qualities they are looking for in such a partner.
5. Understand and respect the person’s wishes if they say they want to be treated in a given way (and sensitively remind others of these boundaries when required), while also being mindful of confidentiality.

6. Discreetly step in and advocate for the person when overbearing types forget their manners. This can make all the difference to a person choosing to stay with a community or choosing to move on.

7. Unwell people often have special dietary restrictions, such as gluten-free, dairy-free or FODMAP requirements. Offer food-friendly items for such parishioners, clearly labelled with ingredients, during fellowship gatherings.

8. Ensure that paths are clear for wheelie-walkers and wheelchairs and that accessible areas are free of potential hazards. Check in with the person re any particular needs they may have and seek professional advice if required.

9. Consider announcing at the start of church services, and noting in your pew bulletins, that people have the choice to stand or sit.

10. Arrange for gluten-free hosts to be provided, with ‘spares’ kept in the tabernacle or aumbry.

Features • Wednesday 10 June 2020 • By Frances Thompson

Three Anglican priests, 10 siblings, a dog named ‘Satan’ and hundreds of letters

“This photo was taken in August 1913, the week before Avice married Cyril: (L-R) Bernard, Cyril, their father The Rev’d Dr Cox, Avice, Cuthbert, Vera” (Image courtesy of the Bodleian Library)

Introduction

Frances Thompson remembers her grandfather writing a letter to his cousins in the 1980s for ‘The Budget’ (a series of letters full of news collectively written by different people), but at the time she didn’t know that the letters dated back to 1906. A decade later Frances learnt, from her Aunt Judy, that the collection of letters dated back to her great-grandfather’s generation and were in Oxford at the
Bodleian Library, one of the oldest libraries in the world. Frances first gained access in 2007 (not easily done), but could only spend one day at the library, as she was on holiday with small children. She quickly realised that a fascinating 80-year social history had been preserved, and that more library visits would be necessary – this took some planning, considering the Bodleian is 16,000km from Brisbane, where she lives.

Meet the 10 Cox family siblings

Picture, if you will, a large extended family on holiday in Porlock, Somerset, in the south west of England. The date is August 1906 and the family have taken rooms at Birchanger Farm for a month where they have been enjoying excursions, bicycling, walking and bathing.

This is a story of the Machell Cox family; told through the hundreds of letters that the siblings wrote to each other, starting in 1906 and continuing until the 1980s.

Let me introduce the family to you. The Rev'd Dr John Charles Cox and his wife Marian have 10 children, who grew up playing cricket and tennis all day long, cared for by domestic servants. They live in the large 19th century Victorian rectories adjacent to the rural Anglican churches in the villages where their father ministered for nearly 20 years. Enville, Barton-le-Street, then Holdenby. By 1906 the 10 children are now adults, the British Empire still holds sway and three “foreign brothers” live in “the Colonies”, leaving seven siblings in England. Neville works for the railways in South Africa, Wilfred builds roads in British Columbia and The Rev'd Aldwyn is an Anglican missionary in Nyasaland in Africa (now Malawi) ministering to the local Indigenous people.

In England we have Enid, Edmund (another Anglican priest who later named his dog ‘Satan’), Arthur, Bernard, Cuthbert, Avice and Vera; seven siblings aged between 22 and 37. Mother is a kindly, staid Victorian woman in her 60s, terrified of modern motor-cars, accustomed to servants and a life of privilege; yet able to run a household of servants and multiple children, whilst patiently dealing with her difficult clergyman husband who could never be described as a “modern man”.

Father can be tyrannical; he is a born controversialist with a flaming indignant passion for causes he feels to be unjust. In his younger years he was a politician, campaigning for improved rights for the agricultural labourer.

His character developed during his Derbyshire political days in the 1870s, he is a fount of knowledge with regards to Derbyshire churches, as well as being a noted antiquarian. He somehow found time, in between publishing books, to be an Anglican parish priest. Now retired, still publishing books as well as writing for the Church Times newspaper and The Reliquary periodical, he is a kindly but stubborn man with a great dislike of housemaids who attempt to tidy his study.

Back to Porlock in Somerset. If you have been to Somerset, you will know that it is green and idyllic. It is a sunny August afternoon in 1906, as long ago summer days always seemed to be. The family members are in a meadow near Porlock Weir with a picnic; the older generation (including several maiden aunts) are reclining under parasols with lemonade, whilst the younger generation are playing cricket.

“Cuthbert, you’re out,” calls Vera, looking hot and dishevelled and distinctly un-ladylike. She would rather be playing hockey, but cricket is an acceptable second-best.
Avice is exhausted after getting 10 runs but knows she can't give up and be the one to let the side down.

Meanwhile Dr Cox, Father, climbs over the stile and joins the group. He has just returned from visiting the church in the next village, Luccombe, where his own father was the parson, many decades ago. Dr Cox has just walked through the garden adjacent to the church, for old time's sake, with its three alternate paths leading from rectory to church, named 'low church', 'high church' and 'broad church'. The Rev'd Cox senior named the three paths whilst Dr Cox was still a small boy; the affectionate titles appeal to his argumentative personality and make him smile.

Dr Cox pats his pocket to check his notebook is still there. He has been making notes on Luccombe church for his next book English Church Furniture, which his friend Algernon Methuen will publish in 1907. There is nothing that Dr Cox enjoys more than exploring a country church and making notes on the fabric and furnishings. It is an essential activity to be completed on every holiday, in every county. He can easily lose a day reading the registers in the vestry as well. Dr Cox has not yet completed ‘How to write the history of a parish’ and is still unaware that his book will be a runaway success in the world of the Anglican Church 100 years ago.

Dr Cox looks at his sons, daughters and nieces playing cricket. It is quite a recent thing for upper-class families to allow their daughters to play sport and to ride a bicycle. Dr Cox wasn't sure at first, thinking it would affect their marriage prospects, but his wife, Minnie, convinced him otherwise. It is just as well that he did, as Vera will soon be made captain of the England Ladies' hockey team, and Dr Cox will brag to all his friends about his daughter, “the International”.

Cuthbert enjoys cricket and likes to think he is athletic; he is a schoolmaster at Berkhamsted and plays football for the Old Boys team, but it is awfully hard work keeping up with Vera.

Their cousins Ka and Hester reluctantly join in; neither are as keen on cricket as Vera. Ka Laird Cox is preoccupied with thoughts of the place she has gained at Newnham College, and going up to Cambridge at the start of term. It is a radical thing for a young woman to be going up to university in 1906, but she is already a feminist and will soon become a supporter of the suffragettes. Ka doesn't yet know that she will soon meet the poet Rupert Brooke, embark on a tempestuous relationship with him, become a member of the wildly unconventional Bloomsbury Set and generally shock and alarm her traditional Anglican family.

Bernard is out, LBW. He mops his brow with his handkerchief; his noble moustache is damp and glistening. Bernard is a London stockbroker and is not as fit as some of his brothers and sisters. He wishes Neville was with them – he is a good cricketer. Next year, Bernard. In 12 months Neville (sibling number four), will be home from Africa on leave and you will be able to play cricket with him then.

Vera is the youngest of the 10 siblings and a very good bowler. She is very athletic and can outrun all her brothers. She could out-cycle them, too, if it wasn't for the long skirts she is obliged to wear.

Dorothy is next up to bat. She is married to Arthur, who holds position number three in the family, after Enid and Edmund. She watches intently as Vera prepares to bowl, then at the last moment changes her hands and her position and bats lefthanded, to howls of protest from the fielding side.

“Dorothy, that's just not on!”

“Arthur! We've had this discussion before!”
Arthur shrugs his shoulders whilst Dorothy grins, watching the fielders scramble to locate the lost ball. His wife is very much the ‘modern woman’. She does things her way and there's little he can do about it, even if he wanted to, which he doesn't. Arthur is a big fan of cricket and contemplates how it is much more enjoyable to play with the family than it is to teach cricket to small boys at Garfield House School in Plymouth, where he is both Headmaster and owner.

Later that evening, they can be seen through the window of the comfortable farmhouse drawing room as Cuthbert entertains the family by singing a few songs in his fine baritone voice, and Avice plays the piano. With no TV or radio or social media, families make their own entertainment. The maids have cleared away the meal and Mother is talking about her idea that her children should begin a Budget, as Avice and her fellow students from teacher training college have done.

Readers, you are probably perplexed as to what a ‘budget’ is. Let me explain. In the 1800s the word ‘budget’ referred to a collection of news or letters. The Pall Mall Budget used to be a London newspaper. So a ‘family budget’ was an ongoing collection of letters sharing family news that was circulated around, and written by, different family members. The use of the word ‘budget’ to refer to government financial plans came later.

“But Avice, your students start their budget with ‘Dear Beetles’ or ‘Dear Buttercups,’ protested Cuthbert. He is a schoolmaster at an expensive private school, and thus finds such things silly.

“You can write ‘Dear Family’, or ‘Dear Brothers and Sisters’,“ says Mother patiently, “I am not as young as I was, and I will not always be able to write a letter each week to every one of you.”

“But I like your letters, Mother,” says Avice.

“Mother will continue to write to us,” explained Bernard, “but our family budget will just be for the brothers and sisters, not the parents.”

“Humph. Sounds like a lot of nonsense.” Father is not impressed.

“Enid will be delighted with the idea,” states Vera, who is always matter-of-fact.

“But what about Edmund?” (Neither Enid nor Edmund – the two eldest siblings – are spending the August holidays with the family in Somerset.)

“That is precisely the reason for my suggestion,” Mother explains to her children.

“I have been worried about him ever since he travelled to Kansas and became a cowboy, and then there was that terrible shotgun incident during the Opening of the Cherokee Strip.”

“I was surprised he came back and decided to enter Holy Orders,” declares Father, “I thought he was happy running a store in America.”

“But he did return,” insisted Mother, “He somehow passed his compulsory Greek, he likes his parish in Derbyshire, despite no one else of his class living nearby. But most of you rarely see him. Enid hasn't seen him for years and he is losing touch with you all. I will write to him and insist that he participates.”

And if a Victorian matriarch declared something would happen, it generally did.
The Family Budget was started in September 1906 by Bernard, who wrote the first letter and then posted it on to Cuthbert, who then wrote a letter and then posted both on to Arthur, and so it would continue. Vera wrote a letter, then Avice and then finally Enid, who was last on the list. The package of letters would then be despatched by Enid back to Bernard, who would then begin the next round. Each sibling wrote with their own news, whilst also commenting on everyone else’s news.

Letters would be despatched to the “colonial brothers” in British Central Africa, South Africa and British Columbia, telling them of the new family enterprise. All three loved the idea, and eagerly awaited each Budget being posted abroad for them to read and contribute to, in turn. Disastrously, some Budgets are lost in the post; the Budget becomes a living, breathing creature to the siblings, and they grieve each loss acutely.

Edmund, my great-grandfather, would be told by Mother that he was obliged to join in. He would also be informed that, like the others, he would have just one week to read the letters, write his own contribution and then post the parcel on. He agreed, joining the Budget in its second round, in October 1906. Entertainingly, Edmund became a real delinquent, forgetting to write and was regularly told off by his younger brothers and sisters for taking too long. The 10 contributors developed a lifelong habit of writing for the Budget.

Spoiler alert: the siblings wrote Budget letters for the rest of their lives. As they died, their children continued the habit, and the last poignant letter was written in 1987.

“I like this idea,” mused Vera, “We can tell each other all our news. I shall tell you all about hockey, Bernard will tell us about the Stock Exchange, Arthur and Cuthbert will tell us funny stories about what the schoolboys get up to.”

“Enid will tell news of Liverpool, Edmund will talk about what happens in Derbyshire and Avice will describe all her little dodges as a governess,” continued Mother.

“As long as no one criticises my handwriting,” said Cuthbert firmly.

Arthur grinned. Cuthbert was an entertaining and clever wordsmith, excellent at poetry, and he thoroughly enjoyed writing long and informative letters, but he knew Cuthbert’s handwriting to be generally diabolical. He was already eagerly anticipating the entertaining criticisms that were bound to arise.

“I like the idea of writing one letter which goes to everybody. That seems so much easier than having to write so many letters to all of you.” Avice already thought it was a good idea.

“But you never do, Avice, although you do really mean to,” declared Vera. “You must admit that you are disorganised and always late and that you rarely get around to writing to us.”

“That's true,” lamented Avice, to peals of good-natured laughter from her family.

Author’s concluding notes:

20 years ago my aunt told me about a pile of family letters in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England. So far, I have only read a small portion. I still have another 50 years of letters to read, when air travel opens up and I can return to Oxford again. A fascinating prospect – I have many more tales to read about ‘my’ 10 siblings.
Whilst I am enjoying writing about the 10 siblings whom I have introduced above, I get distracted when the post arrives with a second-hand eBay book written by Dr Cox, my great-great-grandfather, 100 years ago. I am finding him a fascinating character, who surprisingly detested carol singers, and used to chase them from his porch. He wrote widely on churches, but I must admit to being perplexed as to how it is possible to write a whole book just on bench ends.

I am currently reading all of the letters written by Aldwyn, sibling number seven, who lived and worked in Africa for 56 years as an Anglican missionary with the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). In 1892, aged 12, Aldwyn read a book by Livingstone, the great African explorer, and decided to go to Africa and work as a missionary when he grew up. He goes on ‘ulendo’ (travelling) between African villages, helping to sort out marriage disputes and bribing villagers to build a school or a church by shooting game for them to eat. He learns to deal with the tribal issues of witchcraft and slavery, as the Mission builds hospitals and schools and encourages the villagers to educate their girls as well. He and his colleagues listen to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on the radio, having somehow obtained new batteries the week before. “God Bless our new Queen,” says Aldwyn in 1953.

Along the way I have made contact with an African bishop in Malawi, writing a PhD on the church history of his diocese. He is very keen to find out what I have discovered about this English missionary, who died 60 years ago at St Peter’s Cathedral on the island of Likoma, in his diocese.

My great-grandfather, Edmund, sibling number 2 was another Anglican clergyman, who spent 39 years in the same parish, baptising, marrying and burying the villagers of a Derbyshire working class community. Sadly for me, he is not such an interesting character. He struggles to make friends, as no one of “his class” lives nearby, and probably suffers from depression. His letters pale into insignificance alongside his more intelligent, vivacious and fascinating siblings. However, I wish I could ask him why on earth he named his dog ‘Satan’.

I am currently working on a podcast, which I will be launching soon, called 100 Years of Cox, in which I will be reading ‘The Budget’ letters. If you would like to find out more, please email me via machellcoxletters@gmail.com.

Two ‘Budget’ letters (written by Bernard and Cuthbert)

Bernard is the eldest of “the younger family”, followed by Aldwyn, Cuthbert, Avice and Vera. Aldwyn is an Anglican priest and in the summer of 1906 has just sailed for Africa, and a new post as a missionary. He will be working in Kota in Nyasaland, now modern-day Malawi.

Cuthbert is a schoolmaster at Berkhamsted School, which in 1906 is still quite a small school. Cuthbert went to Berkhamsted School as a schoolboy, then spent three years at Magdalen College Oxford, then went back to Berkhamsted School as a Master. He later becomes Headmaster, and then a Governor, and never leaves.

Bernard, 29, Threadneedle St, London, 19 September 1906 (Budget No.1)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have been asked by a portion of the family to start the “Budget” on its travels, so here goes.

The Budget will make its way around England and once all letters have been read by the “home” members, a package will be despatched to Aldwyn and Neville. Before Aldwyn’s sad departure for Africa (tearfully...
farewelled at Folkestone by the little girls, Cuthbert and myself) he expressed his deepest desire to be kept informed as to the family perambulations and news.

I have written a letter to Wilfred and am awaiting his reply regarding his involvement. Mother has written to Neville.

You will probably think that I cannot be very busy, as you note the address of our offices above, and you will be right. Business on the Stock Exchange just now is non-existent. If any of you want to make a change in your investments, please hurry up and contact me, as Messrs Hunt, Cox and Co. will be pleased to advise. I expect I shall now be told by various budget members not to write shop, or not to advertise! We have two new clerks and it remains to be seen whether they will be acceptable; as to one of them, I have my doubts.

There is very little news from home. Our holiday party has broken up. Cuthbert returned to Berkhamsted last Sunday, and Avice to Hertford yesterday. Perhaps some of you may like to hear about the winter clothes which she purchased from Enid's dressmaker in Liverpool. She has two perfect ducks of hats. One is black beaver and the other I cannot describe, but the general effect is blue. It has a very saucy shape. She has also had a new coat and skirt made, with which, an unusual thing for her, she is quite enraptured. The colour has been variously described as purple, heather, maroon, heliotrope and mahogany, also beetroot. She will be able to tell you herself which colour is correct. It is very well cut and shows off her admirable figure to advantage. Another purchase is a flannel blouse with a detachable flannel collar. This pleases her very much although she was rather afraid she looked like Vera! Doubtless there are other garments, but these are all I know of. I don't think Vera has prepared for the winter yet, beyond embroidering a little white horse to wear on her hat when she plays hockey for Kent.

Mother has bought a new smocked waterproof of the usual shape and hue. I believe a new hat arrives today which will be very exciting. Our great anxiety is to know whether it will sit straight.

Poor Father is suffering from severe headaches, which come on regularly every evening about 7 o'clock. He is trying various remedies. Arthur will be interested to hear that the very latest is Oxo. Father had a great to-do in the hallway yesterday, as Gladys continues to attempt to clean in his study, and Father insists that he will not have it.

A long and interesting letter arrived from Aldwyn last night. He seems to have had a rough time of it during the latter part of the journey to Africa, but it is pleasant to note his highly developed sense of humour. The lost cork of Miss Parson's tea-bottle seems to have caused him as much amusement as the old Portuguese man's abandoned fruit.

It is always tiresome to return to the office after a perfectly delightful summer holiday spent in the bosom of one's family. I do believe that Birchanger Farm was an extremely good location and I enjoyed the many excursions. The bathing was excellent as indeed was the cricket, and our rooms were first-rate; even Cuthbert was on his best behaviour. Arthur brought his usual collection of threadbare trousers and Avice continued her habit of being late to breakfast.

I believe we are to make use of the budget for passing on the names of interesting books. Here are some I have lately read –

The Viper of Milan – M.Bowen – very good

The Fifth Queen (of Henry VIII) – F.Madox Hueffer – Decidedly interesting. Should like to read a sequel to it, though I am told that the heroine became too bad for more to be written.
Dick – G.F. Beadby – a Rugby boy on his summer holiday in Norfolk. Delightful.

Voyage of the Discovery – Capt. Scott – If any of you have not read this, get it now if you care at all for travel and exploration. The most interesting book of the sort I have ever read. (South Pole)

I greatly anticipate reading the literary outpourings from my dearest brothers and sisters and eagerly await the return of this budget to me, at our humble abode of St Alban's.

Your affectionate brother

B. Machell Cox

Cuthbert, 2 Chapel St, Berkhamsted, 22 September 1906

Dear Family

I am enthusiastically enjoying this budget already and indeed, although I have only recently seen many members of the family, I am pleased to promptly receive news from Bernard. I am writing my letter early, so as not to be late and over-run my week's allowance.

Here is rather a neat bon mot for you. A certain boy in the Junior School here has been a perpetual nuisance for some two terms and has again and again been threatened with expulsion. Well he met his fate the other day and the Head of the Junior School told the boy's long-suffering form-master the welcome news in these words: 'Psalm 37, verse 39', which is: "and the end of the ungodly is they shall be rooted out at the last."

Our senior maths man is supposed to be a genius, and is certainly mad, and the stories of his doings are the chief topic of conversation on the staff. (The boys by the way call him 'Bunions' because of his extraordinary walk). He is horribly absent-minded and was discovered the other day standing in front of a public-house he has to pass on the way to his rooms, busily correcting papers and whistling, quite oblivious of the fact that there was quite a crowd looking on and laughing. Honestly this is not exaggerated in the least. He is far too awful both in manner and experience to be a school master and I hope he won't stop long. Imagine him standing around outside a public house, it is quite too entertaining for words.

I have joined Smith's Library here and have read several books which though no longer new, were new to me.

Salted Almonds – F. Austey – very amusing, mostly from 'Punch'

The Viper of Milan – M. Bowen – a very delightful book

The man from America – Mrs de la Pasture – an extremely pleasant book

In the Days of the Comet – H.G. Wells – pedantic and stilted, one of the dullest books I have read in a long time. I am interested in what others think of this book.

Vera, I am sure you will be interested to learn that I have just ordered a new suit from a new tailor – the reasons for the change are obvious. It is a perfectly sweet thing in tweed, but there I must not begin on this subject as my pen is running dry.

Your affectionate brother

Cuthbert M. Cox
Whitney and Britney Chicken Divas visit Coomera Anglican College

Coomera Anglican College Early Learning Centre recently participated in National Simultaneous Storytime, joining with communities to read the story Whitney and Britney Chicken Divas by Lucinda Gifford.

Dora is extremely perplexed each morning when she drops in on her chickens to find them sleeping and counting sheep. Why do they seem to sleep all day long? Dora decides to go in disguise to snoop. Following her chickens, Dora discovers Witney and Britney, dazzling the crowd with a Jazz number at ‘Club Sparkles’. During the day they snooze and rest, but once night falls, they are ‘Foxy and the Chickettes’!

This colourful, engaging story highlights the creativity, imagination and fun that reading and literacy offer children. It can transport them into another time and place far from the reality of the real world. Between the pages of a book, we can become immersed in the lives of fictional characters and learn about a culture entirely different from our own. Not only does a book act as a comfort and a friend, it also acts as a teacher and can teach children all about themselves, their world, and the cultures within it.

Late last month, we were surprised and delighted to welcome two gorgeous chooks, Fluffy and Silky, with stunning good looks, along with the elegant Dora von Dooze, their wonderful neighbour.

Our special visitors read, danced, and sang their way through the CAC Early Learning Centre up to Prep and Year 1, reveling in the excitement, the cheering and fun. As they disappeared up the hill to
Prep, a young man from the Early Learning Centre turned to his teacher and said, “I love the pink chicken the best. She is beautiful!”

Our celebration of ‘National Simultaneous Storytime’ at Coomera Anglican College was one to remember! Children and adults alike enjoyed an entertaining performance from Whitney and Britney, Chicken Divas. After the turmoil that the past months have brought us, it was warming to see the children's faces light up when Kindergarten Teachers Jessica Gibbs, AKA ‘Whitney’, Tarryn Botha, AKA Britney, and Loren Gilmore, AKA Dora von Dooze entered the classroom in costume.

To date, 2020 has been filled with many unprecedented events that have influenced and changed our lives. The one thing that never changes is the pure delight of reading aloud to young children.

News • Monday 8 June 2020

How this mum inspired her daughter to become a healthcare worker

Long-term Anglicare SQ Bundaberg staff member Vailo Kalepo inspired her daughter Cyrene Kalepo to follow in her footsteps and become an EEN at Meilene Residential Aged Care Home

Anglicare Southern Queensland recently shared a touching story of a mother who has been an endorsed enrolled nurse (EEN) with Anglicare Southern Queensland for the past 16 years and how her daughter followed in her footsteps at the same residential aged care home.

Vailo Kalepo is a mother to six wonderful children and has been an EEN for Anglicare Southern Queensland's Meilene Residential Aged Care Home for the past 16 years. Her daughter Cyrene is a personal care worker at Meilene Residential Aged Care Home and has loved every minute of it.

Vailo previously worked as a personal care worker before pursuing a nursing qualification.
“I became a nurse to further my skills and knowledge in healthcare and to provide the best inclusive care imaginable for individuals receiving care,” she said.

“Being a nurse is an extremely rewarding career because there's always opportunities to further educate and expand my knowledge as well as working alongside other nurses that also contribute to expanding my skills within the workplace.”

Vailo said she has six wonderful children and appreciates every single one of them.

“Becoming a mother is an inexplicable feeling. It's a mix of emotion that includes undying and infinite love but also a hint of craziness when my daughter leaves her dishes in the sink and says she will clean them later but never comes back to it,” she said.

“Being a mother made me appreciate my mother and all the sacrifices she made for me as a child.

“My mother was like my best friend, she shaped me into the mother I am today as she always wanted the very best for me and wanted me to be happy, and I hope my children feel that way about me.

“It’s an amazing feeling to be a mother to girls, my daughter is my best friend.

“Knowing she wanted to pursue a career in healthcare because of me made me extremely happy and proud of her. As long as she’s happy with her choices I'll always support her.”

Cyrene said she was inspired by her mum's dedication to helping people and how much joy her job brought her, which helped her pursue a career in healthcare.

“I currently work alongside my mother and I can honestly say it's a privilege to work with her,” she said.

“I got into healthcare because of her and wanted to pursue a career in nursing as well.

“I enrolled into university to become an RN, but I've recently changed my decisions to become a paramedic.

“My mother is my main influence with my career choice because I always saw how much joy her job brought her and I asked her if she truly enjoyed her job, and the smile that was on her face when she was talking about her job when I was a child was mesmerising.”

Cyrene said her mum is her best friend and that “sometimes we act like sisters more than a mother and daughter relationship.”

“I laugh my hardest laugh when I'm around my mum,” she said.

“I eat the best food with my mum as she always provides the best food for myself and my siblings.

“When it comes to my mum, nothing can fix a bad day of mine more than a hug from her.

“Growing up, my mum was and is my biggest supporter. Whenever I cried, she would cry with me.
“When I laughed, she was laughing. Whenever I wanted to give up, my mother was always there to push and encourage me and made me believe that I had no limits and could do anything I set my mind to.

“Any time I hang out with my mum is always a favourite mother daughter memory.”

Cyrene said she tore a ligament in her ankle last year and couldn't dress it herself, so her mum came over to her place at 11pm and dressed it and did her hair.

“At the age of 22, I'm still her baby but that night really showed me that a mother's love for their kids is infinite and nothing can compare to the love of a mother,” she said.

“I hope I'm half the mother she is to my kids in the future.”

Cyrene and Vailo appeared in the News-Mail last month.

First published on the Anglicare Southern Queensland website in May 2020.

International • Tuesday 9 June 2020

Communities coming together to fight COVID-19 in Kenya

This story about the Anglican Board of Mission's work with one of its partners in Kenya provides a typical picture of how COVID-19 is affecting people in many poorer countries of the world, and what action people are taking to deal with the challenges. It shows the value of working long-term with communities to develop relationships of trust, and strong community structures.
Anglican Development Services, Eastern (ADSE), is a development arm of the Anglican Church of Kenya, working with poor farmers living in a climate change-affected, semi-arid region in Eastern Kenya. It supports them to overcome the challenges of living off the land by helping them build dams and to access more water for crops, livestock and household consumption. ADSE also provides seeds for more drought-resistant crops, and encourages groups of farmers to band together to learn new agricultural and marketing practices, and helps them to form small savings and loans group to grow their capital. Over the years, this approach has led to great gains in the livelihoods of the farmers, who have begun to leave poverty behind.

However, COVID-19 is starting to change all that. Many project activities have had to be postponed. Social gatherings have also been banned, causing village savings and loans groups to stop meeting, and ending training in new farming techniques and climate change mitigation.

Christine, a member of a village savings and loans group, says: “We are facing tough financial moments now as [we have] no group meetings, nowhere to take our goat or chicken since the markets are closed and the hotels too. We are just praying to God to help the situation pass so that life goes back to normal.”

Some are driven to holding their village savings and loans group meetings in secret because of their financial and social need to keep the groups, and they do not want to be seen by village elders and local government officials not to be observing physical distancing.

ADSE's John Kinyoki reports, “Since we are integrated into our communities, we have used our networks, shared preventive measures in collaboration with public health departments, local leaders, community group leaders and church leaders to promote helpful information so as to reduce stigma and fear...in managing the COVID-19 spread.”

Some of the ways ADSE has been working to raise community awareness of COVID-19 is by facilitating training of community health workers to provide important health information in villages, using public address systems and reproducing government health posters.

Frances, a leader of a group of community health volunteers, says, “Volunteering is not easy [due] to the vastness of the area. We are trying our level best to ensure each household has a tippy tap and a functional one. We have improvised simple tippy taps to showcase to the households [so they can make their own].”

Where there is Internet access, they are also using mass text messaging in local languages to convey the latest information about the coronavirus to communities they work with, and let them know in advance what village awareness-raising activities they are planning.

Some people have expressed fears that the project will not resume, and that this will affect basic services such as access to water in arid areas, reduction of food production, and abandonment of climate change mitigation strategies. Even water for handwashing is starting to run out, since water storage has not been replenished for some months and the building of larger water storage facilities has been put on hold.

ABM has been able to support these communities to stay safe during COVID-19; however, funding is running low. This year, we have devoted our annual tax-deductible appeal entirely to helping our partners during this time in order to assist the most vulnerable communities around the world.

To find out more or to make a donation to this appeal, visit the ABM website.
Meet a saint for our times – Evelyn Underhill

Evelyn Underhill (1875–1941) is commemorated in our liturgical calendar on the day she died, 15 June. Thirty-five years after her death, Michael Ramsay, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, reminded members of the Church of England that this amazing woman was still relevant, and profoundly worthy of her reputation in her own time as a scholar, a teacher, a writer, and a mystic:

“She did much to extend the tradition of ‘spiritual direction’ which elicits people’s own spiritual capacities and helps them find themselves in paths of freedom...She was able to use the insights...from her own studies for the expression of theology and spirituality of a distinctively Anglican kind. Few in modern times have done more to show the theological foundations of the life of prayer and to witness to the inter-penetration of prayer and theology. She has a place of her own, and it is an important one.” (Allchin & Ramsay, 1977, p.22).

Her prolific literary output during her lifetime testifies to all the above. Between 1901 and her death, she wrote or edited 39 books, over 350 articles and book reviews, and hundreds of letters, many of which have been collected into two fascinating anthologies: The Letters of Evelyn Underhill (edited by Charles Williams, 1956), and The Making of a Mystic (edited by Carol Poston, 2010). A large number of the early letters were written to her first spiritual directee, Margaret Robinson. These began as early as 1904, at which stage she was passing from passive resistance to religion to a dangerous dabbling in ritual magic via ‘The Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn’ between 1904 and 1907. For her it provided fellowship – many members were, like Evelyn, disenchanted with the established religions, but still sought spiritual sustenance. Several did return to their churches. Evelyn herself left hoping to join the Roman Catholic Church. Fortunately for Anglicans, she chose to return to the church of her baptism.
It was not until 1921 that Evelyn recommitted herself to the Church of England. Possible reasons, apart from a longing for spiritual fulfilment and stability, are a breakdown she experienced after World War I, and the death of her dearest friend and spiritual confidante, Ethel Ross Barker. And, perhaps the paradox of her religious life was catching up with her. She had never had a spiritual director of her own, yet for years she had dispensed such advice to others. However, her writings had firmly established her as an authority on theology, spirituality, and most matters religious.

Her success had been achieved with multi-generic acclaim. Evelyn wrote three novels: *The Grey World* (1904); *The Lost Word* (1907), and *The Column of Dust* (1909). These books resounded with mystical and magical themes and occurrences, and reflected a search for meaning, for spiritual identity, the opportunity to live life on a higher plane, and even a quest for Eternity, for ‘the Other’, for God.

However, her quest really began with her annual excursions to Italy and France with her mother. Through art and architecture, her soul was gradually growing “into an understanding of things.” In her first letter to her first spiritual directee (Margaret Robinson), she admitted:

“...this state of spiritual unrest can never bring you to a state of vision, of which the essential is peace...and struggling to see does not help one to see. The light comes, when it does come, rather suddenly and strangely....” *(Letters, 1956, p.51)*

Thus, it is not surprising that she was preparing to tackle her *opus magnum, Mysticism* (1911); and in what must have been God's extraordinary planning, Margaret Robinson became Evelyn's secretary, with her trusty typewriter, and her ability to translate the works of the German mystics.

In May 1911, she wrote to another friend, Mrs Meyrick Heath:

“Is it not amazing when one can stand back from one’s life and look back down it – or still more, peep into other’s lives – and see the action of the Spirit of God: so gentle, ceaseless, inexorable, pressing you bit by bit whether you like it or not towards your home? I feel this more and more as the dominating thing...” *(Letters, 1956, pp. 126-7).*

What does it matter really that it was another decade before Evelyn finally surrendered to the call of God – to recommit to the Church of England? Then, with her enigmatic, unpredictable and inexplicable capacity for paradox, she asked the revered Roman Catholic scholar and writer, Baron Friedrich von Hügel, to be her spiritual director.

From then on, she went from one triumph to another. In 1921 she became the first woman to deliver the Upton Lectures at Oxford University. In 1927 she was the only female speaker at the Anglo-Catholic Congress, and in the same year she was part of the Commission promoting the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer* (which was rejected in England, but could be used in the Australian Church). To crown a glorious year, she was made a Fellow of King's College, London. From 1929 to 1932 she was the religious editor for *The Spectator* – a prestigious position.

However, her most significant work began in 1924. She conducted her first retreat at Pleshey Retreat House, in Chelmsford Diocese. She was in such demand that she gave retreats at various houses at least three times a year. Some of her most popular books – for example, *Light of Christ* – were reproductions of her retreat addresses.
In a time when the Church was very much a male-dominated institution (and eager to remain so) one can only imagine what it meant to women in the earlier half of the 20th century to have a spiritual guide like Evelyn. To one of her ‘lambs’, she wrote:

“The Christian life is something so rich, deep, supple and altogether lovely....and not anything which asks more than we can do...So keep calm like a good child, won't you.” *(Letters, 1956, p.192)*

And to another:

“My poor lamb, I am so terribly sorry for you. I know it is horrible, but it is really all right.” *(Ibid, p.224)*

Evelyn and her husband Hubert Stuart Moore never had children. They had cats instead – which is why she realised one distressed directee was much in need of “a paw in the dark”. Clearly her methods of direction did not preclude adopting a maternal role. However, her ‘lambs’ did not escape the stern reminder that the spiritual journey would be rough and require discipline. After all, she was speaking from experience!

“...if you choose Christ, you start on a route that goes over Calvary, and that means the apparent loss of God as a bit of it...This means total sacrifice. So face up to it, and thank Him...for the privilege of being allowed to taste a little bit of Christ's suffering...” *(Ibid, p.224)*

She was a truly exceptional person. The Cropper biography *(The Life of Evelyn Underhill, 1958)* assisted in my own return to the Anglican Church. After writing my Master's thesis on her, I went to England to undertake further research at King's College, London – her alma mater – where I held in my hands her original journals and letters. As I read her Will, tears rolled down my cheeks. She asked that any surviving cats be humanely put to sleep, if they could not be rehomed. I, too, love cats. I have been to Pleshey twice, and handled a newly discovered batch of her letters which formed the nucleus of the Poston book. I have stood outside her home at 50 Campden Hill Square, where the round blue plaque on her former home signifies that a famous person once lived there; and, I have placed flowers on her grave in the Cemetery of St John's Parish Church, Hampstead, and wished I had known her.

But, of course, we *can* know her through her writings; and these spiritual gems will help us to know God better as well.

Happiness

 Whenever one of her kids announced a plan for their life, be it to do with a course of study, a career change, the forming of a relationship or a relocation, my mum would ask us just one question, ‘Are you happy?’ For my mum, happiness was the greatest good; the measure of all things. I later discovered that this focus on happiness made her an intuitive Aristotelian. This is because Aristotle held that happiness is the end goal for everyone.

Anya Leonard summarises Aristotle’s approach to happiness in this way:

“All human activities are done in order to attain something that is good. We don’t do something because we think it will be bad for us. In addition, most of these activities are not the main objective, but rather a means to a higher end. Consequently, the activity that is an end in itself, writes the prolific philosopher, is the highest good, and that good is happiness. We aim at happiness for its own sake, not because it will achieve something else. Happiness, therefore, is our greatest mission.”

My mum and Aristotle both understood that happiness is more than a feeling. It is something that is related to the core of our being. They also knew that the path to happiness was related to the making of choices; the making of ‘good’ choices. That is, the making of choices for good. Aristotle suggested that the path to happiness was accessed through the living of a life of virtue. And that the pursuit of a life of virtue was based in one’s disposition, one’s approach to life.

In other words, to be truly happy is to have a deep-seated sense of feeling good about oneself; a feeling that develops through doing the right thing.
So, for example, happiness comes from exercising honesty when honesty is not required by others; when it is ‘done in secret’, as Matthew’s Jesus would say. Examples of such an expression of honesty include not claiming a tax deduction one could ‘get away with’, ‘because everyone does it’, or chasing after a person who dropped a $10 note on the street to return the note even though no one other than you saw it fall.

Our Christian faith summarises this approach to life in the words, “love your neighbour as yourself”.

All this means that true happiness is linked to the sense of deep contentment that comes from attending, for good, to that which the moment or life requires. It is not associated with living an easy, or the easy, life. Happiness, as understood by my mum, Aristotle and Jesus, is not the same as joy. Even during very difficult times we can feel ‘happy’ despite the fact that we are facing complex and challenging issues. Happiness, therefore, is not dependent on outside forces, the actions of other people and is not produced through an attachment to things.

The search for happiness eventually teaches us that we do not need to be subject to the whims of other people. For other people might not be seeking to live a life of virtue. They might not be seeking to love others. Instead they might be treating others with the lack of regard they have for themselves. I often find myself saying that the problem with the idea of loving others in the same way as we love ourselves is that too many of us do exactly that. We do not love ourselves and so treat others with the same lack of respect and care.

We are assembling this edition of The Eagle as our nation seeks to moderate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our population. Seeking happiness in the face of this disaster, as so many parts of our normal life are stripped away, is a difficult call. May we each find the deep contentment, the happiness, that comes from attending to this moment in history; by seeking to care for those less fortunate than ourselves, by staying connected to those facing isolation and striving for just outcomes for those whose livelihoods have been stripped away.

First published in the April 2020 edition of The Eagle, the magazine of St John's Cathedral. Read the latest edition of The Eagle online.
WCC Executive Committee issues 'Statement on Racial Justice in the USA'

Following the death of George Floyd and widespread demonstrations in the US, the World Council of Churches (WCC) Executive Committee has issued a statement reiterating its call for a conversion that will end all forms of racism and racial discrimination.

“The deepening of the crisis during these days compels the executive committee to observe that, despite important work undertaken by the WCC to combat racism, including with US member churches and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA to draw attention to the four hundred year history of racism in the United States, much more needs to be done,” the statement reads.

“With the African Methodist Episcopal Church, we affirm ‘Broken nations, broken health care and educational systems, political and economic systems ruled by racism, economic inequality, and the widespread practice of white privilege put people of color all over the world ‘at risk’. White supremacist business as usual, is no longer acceptable.’”

The WCC Executive Committee conveyed its support to all US churches pursuing racial justice.

“The executive committee commends to WCC member churches the many statements of pain, outrage and solidarity published by religious leaders, religious institutions and member churches in the United States,” the statement continues.

“The executive committee commits itself to continue monitoring developments in this context and to identify means of taking appropriate action, in close cooperation with the member churches and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, in light of the gravity of this crisis and the urgent need to address its underlying root causes.”
WCC and MECC appeal to EU for firm stance against Israel’s annexing of occupied Palestinian territory

In a recent joint letter to foreign ministers that are part of the European Union, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) appealed for a firm and principled stance by the European Union against any annexation by Israel of occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank.

The organisations are “calling on the EU to ensure that any such annexation is met with real consequences, at least commensurate with those adopted by the EU in response to Russia’s annexation of Crimea.”

The letter also expresses the WCC and MECC’s commitment “to the vision of a just peace for all people in the Holy Land.”

The unilateral annexation of yet more of the territory that remains to Palestinians cannot lead to justice or to peace, but only to greater injustice, dispossession, escalating tensions, regional destabilisation, and the further erosion of respect for international law, the letter notes.

“The EU must not be complicit – by inaction or inadequate reaction – in this outcome,” the letter concludes.
Anglicare Australia says that today’s HomeBuilder announcement has left renters and people on low incomes high and dry.

Anglicare Australia Executive Director Kasy Chambers said that the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 have significantly compounded the existing rental housing crisis, with today’s announcement a lost opportunity.

“Renters are on the frontline of this downturn. Many are losing their incomes, and some are scared of losing their homes,” Ms Chambers said.

“Anglicare Australia’s 2020 Rental Affordability Snapshot shows that renters on low incomes were in crisis even before the pandemic. With this downturn due to last for years and so many Australians losing their jobs, record numbers of people are at risk of poverty and homelessness.

“There was a simple solution to this problem: social housing. Building social housing would have kept a roof over people’s heads and given a badly-needed boost the economy.

“Today’s announcement was a lost opportunity to end our social housing shortfall and help people in need. Instead we’re back to business as usual – handing out money to people who can already afford to renovate or invest.”

Ms Chambers said that payments to first home buyers and renovators won't give enough of a boost to the economy – or tackle the housing crisis.

“Social housing projects would create more jobs than renovations or grants for new builds. Modelling released just yesterday shows that social housing investment would boost construction by $15.7 billion and boost GDP by $6.7 billion.

“It would also create 24,500 jobs in the regions that need them the most.

“This kind of boost is much stronger than lining the kitchens and bathrooms of people who can already afford it.

“There is no time to waste. We have a shortfall of 500,000 social and affordable rentals across the country, and a homelessness crisis that will only get worse.

“Investing in social housing is a no-brainer. We will keep calling for investment ahead of the Federal Budget – and pushing the Government to invest in people who need it most.”
Greetings from England! I have fond memories of doing ‘Leading your Church into Growth’ in Queensland a few years ago. But suddenly the way churches grow has transformed, so we need to transform as well!

Around 85 per cent of Church of England benefices appear to have taken their church services online during our ‘lockdown’. Estimates are very tricky to make, but from a survey I’m conducting, it looks to me that just under 30 per cent of Anglicans in the UK are not accessing their church’s online service, either because there isn’t one, or they are unable to, or choose not to. But, even after allowing for this, total ‘attendance’ online appears to be around 50 per cent higher than in-person attendance pre-lockdown.

Some of this huge increase is people attending more often – it’s back to the 1950s when there was nothing else to do on a Sunday! But some, probably at least half, are new or returning churchgoers. A recent population survey estimated that 24 per cent of the UK population has accessed a church service online or on TV or radio since our lockdown began in March. This is the largest, quickest growth in churchgoing we have ever seen – after years of decline. Mostly, churches in the UK are using YouTube, Facebook and Zoom.

Most churches are conducting church meetings, small group gatherings and after church coffee by Zoom – which crashed under the load on the morning of Sunday 17 May! And there seems to be a major wave of online Alpha and similar courses. My own village church struggled to get more than two or three people on an annual course pre-lockdown, but currently has 15 doing online Alpha.

And many churches are seeing major changes to their ministry and community support. St Mary’s Bramall Lane, an inner-city church in Sheffield, has seen a huge increase in people accessing their free
meals programme. They were running out of food from the supermarkets and made a giant order to buy food they couldn't afford. Just before they placed the order they got a phone call offering a ton in weight of food, including every exact item on their list.

We are finding God is with us in all we do in these dark, yet strangely exciting times.

Because of these huge changes, because our previous programmes and way of life have stopped, and because there will be a new and more complicated world to do mission and ministry in when the buildings are back in use, I'm encouraging all churches to re-imagine their life and future during the comparative calm of the UK lockdown.

It's clear that most churches should continue to run an online element along with in-person church, as we have found a route into the living rooms of the nation and the nation has responded. We can't go back to merely hiding away in our buildings. Apart from that, every church's response will be unique, but it is helpful to pray and think about it under the following four headings.

1. **Wider Doors:** We've opened a new doorway linking churches and homes. How can we maintain and widen our doors of welcome, both online and off it?

2. **Deeper Wells:** The times are more serious, so people have been seeking God and a deeper spirituality. How can we offer spiritual depth and encourage encounter with the living Jesus? There is little point in welcome if there is no well for the newly thirsty to drink from.

3. **Wiser Programmes:** How can we continue to reach more people through an integrated in-person/online model of church? Can we also take the chance to review all church programmes and only start and re-start those that open the doors wider and dig the wells deeper – become less frantic, more focussed?

4. **Smarter Structures:** How can we change our leadership and organisational structures to support the church of the future rather than the church of the past?

I've been a church leader for nearly 50 years and I've never seen anything like this! The opportunities and the challenges are greater than they have ever been. Churches that rise to meet them will flourish and grow in wonderful new ways.

For a fuller account of these observations, thoughts and suggestions, read the two documents ‘Everybody Welcome Online’ and ‘Everybody Welcome to the Future’ on the Durham University website.
Sunday Devotions • Wednesday 10 June 2020 • By The Rev'd Stewart Perry

Sunday Devotion: 21 June 2020, Third Sunday after Pentecost

Nothing to hide

Main Readings: Genesis 21.8-21; Psalm 86.1-10, 16-17; Romans 6.1-11; Matthew 10.24-39 [Jeremiah 20.7-13; Psalm 69.7-10 (11-15) 16-19]

Supplementary Readings: Psalm 93; Romans 1.20-32; Psalm 69.7-19; Genesis 21.22-33; Matthew 10.9-23

“...for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.” (Matthew 10.26)

As one of the main speakers at a large youth camp was speaking, I noticed a small group of teens chatting amongst themselves and not paying attention. Being a responsible young adult at the time, I went over to see why they weren't listening to what I thought seemed like a very engaging and personal story. When I approached the group I asked if everything was ok…they whispered back...

“Yeah, but we've heard this story before – in an email!”

It seems they'd caught out the speaker passing off someone else's story as his own. As much as this Gospel passage reminds us we can't hide anything from God, it also seems like it's pretty hard to hide something from a sceptical teenager. Jesus is calling us to be authentic, open and honest.

The fact that God knows us so intimately and completely that nothing can be hidden can sometimes be scary, particularly when we often pass ourselves off to the world as something more than we actually are. It can, however, be liberating when we realise we can just be who we are and who God has called us to be. God is used to using broken people, in fact God seems to prefer us to be that way and pretending that we are something other than we are won't fool God, and it also won't fool most people!

Rejoice in who you are and allow God to be the one who changes your story – there'll be no need for embellishment.