

TIDINGS

June 2020

JUNE 2020

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Longbenton Methodist Church and Balliol Youth and Community Centre

The magazine of
Longbenton Methodist Church,
West Moor Methodist Church,
and St. Andrew's Methodist / United Reformed Church, Benton

DEAR FRIENDS,

I'm finding a different perspective while reading Bible passages during our current circumstances, and the passage for Pentecost Sunday is particularly poignant, because it begins with the sentence: "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place." (Acts 2:1)

This caused me to pause, and lament that we are currently not able to meet "all together in one place". I really do miss seeing you all, and letters, phone calls, texts, emails, and speaking to a video camera, even though these are great ways of staying in touch and sharing together, are just not quite the same.

But then I read the next verse: "Suddenly a sound like a violent blowing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting."

When the Spirit came, they were not sitting in a church building, or in the temple courts, or in a special "holy place", but in an ordinary house. Therefore we can be confident that as we sit in our homes, and worship in whatever ways we can, the Spirit that Jesus promised to send comes to us, assuring us of God's unfailing love, comforting us, and strengthening us in God's service. May we be open to the renewing power of the Spirit for all that lies ahead, and be united by the fellowship of the Spirit.

Most of you will be aware that I was due to be on sabbatical for three months from the beginning of June. Given the current crisis, I am only taking half my sabbatical (and hope to take the rest next year) and so I will be "away" from June 1 until July 18. During that time my circuit colleagues will be available if needed. Deacon Andrew Carter (284 9275) will be the first point of contact for St. Andrew's (or the Rev. Peter Holwell if he is unavailable), and the Rev. Janet Jackson (07809 277655) will be the first point of contact for West Moor. (But since I'll not be able to travel far, they will be able to contact me if there is anything they can't deal with!)

I will not be able to do much of what I had planned (which included a three week long distance walking retreat through the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales) but I hope to still spend some time on my songwriting and recording, as well as getting out for some one-day walks.

I'll also be looking after my wife, Tracey, who will be recovering from major back surgery.

You may have heard that, in the government plans for gradually lifting the lockdown, churches are in the groups of organisations that will certainly not open before July 4. However, I am sure that you will realise that, even when the government says we are allowed to open our buildings, it does not mean that all will be able to do so safely straight away. Given the demographic of our congregations, and the heightened risks for transmission of the virus posed by indoor gatherings, it will be some considerable time after this date that most churches are able to reopen, and this will need to be a careful and gradual process. A large percentage of the people we depend on in leading and hosting our worship services are over the age of 70, and therefore in what is considered the "vulnerable" category, as well as a majority of our congregations being largely in this group. We will need to carefully work through the guidelines when they become available, so please continue to pray for wisdom for all in leadership through these very challenging times.

With every blessing,

Gavin

DIARY **Daily Bible readings and hymn suggestions**
from the Methodist Church Prayer Handbook

MAY

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

Sun. 31	PENTECOST John 20: 19-23	Psalm 104 <i>StF 371 Breathe on me, Spirit of Jesus</i>
JUNE		
Mon. 1	Luke 1: 39-49	Psalm 113 <i>StF 186 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!</i>
Tue. 2	Romans 5: 1-5	Psalm 18 <i>StF 390 My God! I know, I feel thee mine</i>
Wed. 3	Luke 9: 1-6	Psalm 33 <i>StF 412 See how great a flame aspires</i>
Thu. 4	John 7: 37-39	Psalm 146 <i>StF 388 Let every Christian pray</i>

Fri. 5	Romans 8: 12-17	Psalm 100 <i>StF 392 O Holy Spirit, Lord of grace</i>
Sat. 6	Romans 8: 22-27	Psalm 139 <i>StF 400 Wind of God, dynamic Spirit</i>

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Sun. 7	TRINITY SUNDAY Matthew 28: 16-20	Psalm 8 <i>StF 5 Father, in whom we live</i>
Mon. 8	Genesis 18: 1-15	Psalm 112 <i>StF 7 God, who made the stars of heaven</i>
Tue. 9	Exodus 3: 1-15	Psalm 29 <i>StF 14 Sing to him in whom creation</i>
Wed. 10	Isaiah 6: 1-8	Psalm 73 <i>StF 3 Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory</i>
Thu. 11	Acts 11: 19-30	Psalm 112 <i>StF 407 Hear the call of the kingdom</i>
Fri. 12	John 16: 12-15	Psalm 93 <i>StF 9 Hail! Holy, holy, holy Lord!</i>
Sat. 13	Revelation 4: 1-11	Psalm 150 <i>StF 13 The splendour of the King</i>

THE GLORY OF THE LAMB

Sun. 14	METHODIST HOMES SUNDAY Matthew 9:35 - 10:8	Psalm 100 <i>StF 410 Lord, your Church on earth</i>
Mon. 15	John 1: 1-18	Psalm 53 <i>StF 181 Of the Father's love begotten</i>
Tue. 16	John 1: 35-51	Psalm 54 <i>StF. 350 I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship</i>
Wed. 17	John 2: 1-12	Psalm 55: 1-8 <i>StF 572 Author of life divine</i>
Thu. 18	John 2: 13-35	Psalm 55: 16-22 <i>StF 326 Jesus comes with all his grace</i>
Fri. 19	John 3: 1-15	Psalm 56 <i>StF 361 Man of sorrows! What a name</i>

Sat. 20	WORLD REFUGEE DAY John 3: 16-21	Psalm 57: 1-3, 7-11 <i>StF 346 Christ is the world's light</i>
<i>LIVING WATER</i>		
Sun. 21	SANCTUARY SUNDAY Matthew 10: 24-39	Psalm 69: 7-18 <i>StF 535 God, when I came into this life</i>
Mon. 22	John 3: 22-30	Psalm 61 <i>StF 182 On Jordan's bank</i>
Tue. 23	John 3: 31-36	Psalm 62 <i>StF 32 Meet and right it is to sing</i>
Wed. 24	“Eat, Pray, Love” prayers. See District website Luke 1: 57-66, 80	Psalm 80: 1-7 <i>StF 73 Fill thou my life, O Lord my God</i>
Thu. 25	John 4: 1-26	Psalm 63: 1-8 <i>StF 330 Joy to the world!</i>
Fri. 26	John 4: 27-42	Psalm 65 <i>StF 457 Author of faith, eternal Word</i>
Sat. 27	John 4: 43-54	Psalm 66: 1-12 <i>StF 336 Son of God, if your free grace</i>

SENT BY THE FATHER

Sun. 28	METHODIST CONFERENCE SUNDAY Matthew 10: 40-42	Psalm 89: 1-18 <i>StF 695 Come now, you blessed</i>
Mon. 29	Matthew 16: 13-19	Psalm 125 <i>StF 322 How sweet the name of Jesus</i>
Wed. 30	John 5: 1-18	Psalm 67 <i>StF 466 Have faith in God, my heart</i>

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Please send your articles for the July-August issue of “Tidings” to Margaret Burchell (tel. 266 5193) by Tuesday June 16.

It looks as though the vast majority of “Tidings” copies will have to be sent by email for the foreseeable future. If you begin to use email, please give your email address to Margaret Burchell straight away. *Ed.*

LONGBENTON NEWS

HELLO, EVERYONE!

Tel. 0780 927 7655

A much loved friend of mine and my husband's died last week. Not due to coronavirus, but the situation is the same. We can't go and comfort his wife. We can't give her the hugs she so desperately needs and this leaves me feeling upset, angry even. Many people might say, “Why has God allowed this virus to exist?” or “Why has he not stopped it spreading?” or “If God can do anything, why not this?”

What sort of a God do we believe in? For me it is a God who cares. God did not invent this virus, nor did he want to see it spread. This planet we call home is a volatile place; earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes are all part of the natural flow of our planet. If our planet did not have a molten layer it would be a cold, dead planet and we wouldn't exist.

But saying that, God is there in the midst of all that happens and it is through us that he works. In this crisis he works through doctors and nurses to save lives, he works through governments around the world to make decisions that will help us keep safe, he uses scientists to create tests for the virus and hopefully soon a vaccine against it. God is also working in communities around the world and in our neighbourhoods to ensure that the lonely are contacted, the hungry are fed, the ill are looked after and all God's children are given the best possible care.

Keep up the good work. Your phone call today can make a great difference to someone else's life. Your offer of shopping can be the difference between someone having bread to feed themselves or going hungry. God is here, with us, Emmanuel, always has been, always will be.

God bless, stay safe!

Janet

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

On the whole, the folks at Longbenton are well and following Government guidelines, but Dora Reed died at home on May 18. Her daughter, Alison, was staying with her and held her hand as she passed away. We send the family our loving sympathy and the assurance of our prayers. A tribute to Dora will appear next month. *Paula Bennett*

WHAT LONGBENTON MEANS TO US

The editor thanks those who have responded to the suggestion that they write about their experiences of Longbenton Church and the Balliol Youth and Community Centre and hopes that others will feel emboldened to add their own contributions in the near future.

A Tribute from an Early Youth Club Member *Corrine Forbes*

I am writing this as a testament to Edgar and Connie Wilson, who were very influential and amazing people in Longbenton Church and Youth Club. They worked tirelessly to ensure the church, Sunday School and youth club were places for young people to feel safe, have fun, learn, feel involved and thrive. They ran the youth club, organised the circuit eisteddfod, led short breaks to Thropton and walks up Simonside, took us on trips to London for the Methodist Association of Youth Clubs Weekend in the Albert Hall, and also took us for weekend Bible Study at Cliff College in Derbyshire. Due to their continued support and dedication the church and youth club were a hive of activity for the children of Longbenton Estate for decades.

I have fond memories of them both, and of Connie playing the organ at my wedding. I am now sixty years old, and my two sisters and I found this amazing couple selfless and compassionate people who will always be remembered in our hearts.

Corrine Forbes

Friends I Remember *Eileen Fletcher*

When we moved from Heaton to Longbenton my younger daughter, Diane, joined the Sunday School and Youth Club in 1970. Corrine was the one who took her along in the first place.

My late husband Dick and I were invited to a coffee morning to raise funds for the Youth Centre. There we met Connie and Edgar Wilson. Edgar was the paid Youth Leader and also the Senior Church Steward then. Connie, who was a pharmacist, was a voluntary leader and taught the Senior and Young People's Departments of the Sunday School.

They made us very welcome and said they needed help with both Sunday School and Youth Club. We said we were willing to help and through them we became very involved with the church and the Youth Centre. We transferred our membership from the Church of England and became members of the Methodist Church. We had lots to learn, but Connie and

Edgar were great mentors. I became leader of the Senior Sunday School Department with a class of 25 pupils, and Dick took over as Church Treasurer, a position he held for many years.

Connie was also an accomplished musician and played the organ for the evening services (which we had in those days).

The Youth Club was for people aged 11-21 and open Wednesday and Friday from 7 till 10 p.m. We had a waiting list of people wanting to come in as others left or grew too old. Edgar was at the Centre most days and even on a Saturday (his day off). We took car loads of young people into the countryside and walked up the Cheviots and Simonside. He and Connie always walked the extra mile: we used to say it wasn't a job with Edgar, it was a way of life. We became very close friends, almost like family. When Edgar retired we still saw them every week and after Connie died in 1992 Edgar used to spend the weekend with us.

I also had another great friend and mentor when I became involved with the "Young at Heart". Grace Hannah asked me to help with them and we got on famously. Grace was President at that time and Connie played for our hymns. In time Grace took over as Treasurer and I became President. It was a joy to meet and talk to the over-sixties and we shared many happy times with them. Grace and I always got hugs and kisses as they went home. My friendship with Grace lasted over 32 years, only ending with her death in 2006.

These three people had a profound influence on me and my family and are still greatly missed. I have just had my 92nd birthday and I'm nowadays housebound. Some of my former Sunday School and Youth Club members still keep in touch. Just this week Corrine Forbes dropped off a bag of goodies for me and returned a few days later to tidy and weed my back garden and even put some plants in. If Connie was still here she'd be saying, "You're reaping your harvest." She had a vast knowledge of the Bible and always came up with an appropriate quote. To this day Diane and I often say we can hear Connie's voice in our heads when we come up against a dilemma.

I spent many busy, happy years at Longbenton Church and I'm so sad that the building is closing. I only hope it is put to good use in the future. But "The Church" is the people, and I'm sure they'll continue to worship elsewhere. Connie would say, "It's all part of God's plan for us." And we know God moves in mysterious ways.

Eileen Fletcher

Memories from the Rev. Stan and Mrs. Mary Brown (1985-1990)

Mary and I came to Longbenton (with Dudley and Dinnington) in September 1985 straight from Queen's College. We were expecting our son David who was born at the very end of the year. He is now a Dad, and we are proud grandparents! Longbenton was the church where I first presided at Holy Communion, at a baptism and at a wedding – and probably my first church funeral too but I don't remember! I was last in the building about six or seven years ago when I visited the circuit as a connexional chaplaincy officer. I took a photograph of the Cradle Roll still on the church wall as our son's name was there. The memories came flooding back. So many memories... appointing Gareth, the youth worker at that time... trying to persuade the Council to support a detached youth work project going beyond the walls of the centre (they never quite got that)... working with local schools, the social services, community groups. Thank you, Longbenton, not just for so many great memories, but also for your patience and wisdom in helping to form a very young and inexperienced minister. Thank you and God bless.

Stan and Mary Brown

Balliol Memories

Irene Feehan

I started at Balliol Youth and Community Centre as a volunteer in the late eighties. The youth worker then was Gareth Carson. We had a lot of volunteers in those days, which made it possible to run the youth club four nights a week providing facilities for young people aged from 6 to 18. Gareth did a lot of residential work with the older youths.

When Gareth left, John Farrer came to Balliol. John made people laugh. He always had time for young people and staff alike. We went "on residential" with John and everywhere we went he would tell the kids a bedtime story: it was always about the place we stayed in and the youngsters thought it was real. John also helped my son, Paul, and Carol Atkinson's son, John, to go to summer camp in America. This was offered to disadvantaged children. They spent two months there; it was a great experience for them. Balliol decided a female youth worker was needed to work with John: that's when Pam Johnson joined us. She was a bubbly person who got on with everyone: we had so many happy times with John and Pam.

John and his wife Michelle liked to travel the globe, so they went off on their travels. Sadly, John wasn't coming back to us as the funding wasn't there to secure his job.

Pam got some lottery funding in 2000 which made it possible to pay me and Micky Mason for two youth sessions a week. In June 2007, Pam and Micky were on a residential with some 16-year-olds. Pam was complaining of headaches and sadly she passed away, aged 39. I lost a true friend and still think about her today. I have so many memories of the work we did together. This was a very tough time for me.

I kept the youth club going for the next two years with help from Micky Mason, Ashley Lane and some young volunteers. In 2009 we got a new youth worker, Diego Melo, and Simon Ebbelwhite (Ebby) came as a volunteer. Ebby suffered from mental health issues and sadly took his own life in 2013. Diego got funding for Apple computers and we had a lot of help from the YMCA, Martyn Railton and the lovely Rachel Wood. Rachel had a lot of good ideas and we worked well together: she became a good friend.

In 2014 everything changed again. We got a new youth worker, Matthew Mahoney. Matthew, a caring person, loved to get messy when doing activities. He didn't think about the mess he was creating as long as the young people had a good time. (Ooh, better tidy up: don't let Irene see it!) He did a lot of fundraising for different projects and we had some good family days out. When Matthew left, I worked with Alex Holding. We kept the youth club and holiday clubs running but we were struggling. We had no volunteers and our numbers were increasing on Tuesday nights. We kept going for a year but our funding was getting low. Alex was made redundant in August 2019. He was a big miss not only for the staff and service users but especially the young people who loved his "fun" disposition and sense of humour.

The Rev. Janet Jackson and I ran sessions up to early January this year. Janet then went on sick leave. I must thank Rachel Taglione, who has worked very hard and given me great support. I also got some help from Helen Parry, who works with Justice Prince, but numbers were increasing and I didn't have any more volunteers to ask for help.

Balliol has been a huge part of my life. I have learned a lot in the years I've been there and have so many memories both happy and sad. This will leave a huge void in my life.

Irene Feehan

My Story of God's Work in Longbenton

The Rev. Joan Thornton

- War years – Wesley Deaconess worked in a Wooden Hut in the Roundway.
- 1950s – A minister was appointed. The church building was opened in 1956.
- 1963 – A Government programme (seeking to care for young people in poor areas) built Balliol Youth Centre. It was opened by the Minister of Education, one Christopher Chataway.
- In the 70s and 80s a variety of work was done by local church and community people, always fully supported by the Circuit and a minister.
- 1980s – There were two probationary ministers allocated to Longbenton as their main Church. They built up the church and youth centre – a Management Committee ran the centre with much support from the Circuit and District.
- 1990s – Lack of finance in the Circuit required a new minister to look after 2 other churches, with Longbenton allocated much less time. I agreed to be the Chair of the Management Committee to help out. The Youth Centre roof was leaking and we had no money. The Circuit joined us in prayer. I wrote to Chris Chataway and eventually we got £35,000 to reroof and update parts of the building. 75 people of all ages came to the thanksgiving service I led as a Local Preacher. A minister was needed with time to develop the obvious work at Longbenton.
- The circuit could not pay one. People who cared prayed and eventually I accepted the daunting challenge to offer, train, be ordained and work non-stipendiary at Longbenton. David, my husband, committed to support and care for me, working beyond retirement age. The testing and training took several years but in 1996 I was stationed in the Circuit as minister for Longbenton. I led worship, prayed and worked with the church folk every week. We were supported by the whole Circuit and several individuals in particular. We founded Friends of Longbenton who put money in our bank account regularly. Our work was valued by the officers who managed the EU £60M Regeneration, who awarded us a grant of £45,000 to upgrade the property. At one point we managed to pay two full time youth workers. It was hard work but richly

blessed and can be summed up in this letter that I gave to everyone at my last service.

A Letter to the Church at Longbenton – August 2004

(with acknowledgements to St. Paul – see his letter to Philippi)

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I thank God for the privilege of working with you, and particularly remember

your faith in continuing your work despite great problems,

your courage in accepting enormous changes,

your honesty before God and each other,

your love that overcame differences and diversity,

your hard work, seven days a week, in the service of God's kingdom.

My heart is full as I leave, but I rejoice that my going creates space for others to open different doors and bring new blessings.

I commend to you our brother Chris and his wife Sylvia, whom God is sending to work with you in the task of furthering his kingdom on the Longbenton estate.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

With love and prayers,

Joan

- Since 2004 I have not been fit to do much practical work but did challenge last September's Circuit Meeting to address the rumours of closure that were causing much distress on the estate.
- Despite many efforts to find a way to honour our commitment as a church to a needy estate, the sad fact is that the Longbenton Methodist Church and Balliol Youth and Community Centre are being closed. The Methodist Church is hurting and neglecting people who have neither the money nor the ability to protest. This should be a cause for great concern. Where is connexional care and the love of Jesus?
- Please pray for everyone involved in all future difficult decisions.

*As we praise God for all that is past,
we shall trust Him for all that is to come.*

Joan Thornton

The Church and the Centre

Rachel Taglione

In summer 2012, I first took my kids along to a scooter and skateboard session with wooden ramps and music, thankful for something “local” for my lively eight year old boy to enjoy. The Youth Team, Irene Feehan, Diego Melo and Rachel Wood, offered a warm welcome, a kind chat and cups of tea to us parents, and soon our daughter Freya was coming along to join her school friends in youth sessions. I thought youth clubs in England were non-existent and to find one right where we lived was a revelation. I loved mine as a teenager, in an old Wesley Methodist Hall in Cornwall. Soon we found ourselves part of a new “family” right in the heart of Longbenton. A Family Day Trip to Beamish, with a coachful of chatter and laughing, was one of the many highlights. As in about 2014 a new team formed around the ever constant Irene Feehan, with the Rev. Rob Hawkins, Joan Keltie joining as administrator and a new Youth Worker, Matthew Mahoney, it felt as if a new burst of life had come to encourage all that was constant – the Youth Club, the Young at Heart, the Lunch Club.

Fresh ideas such as the Art Club and the Knit and Natter sprang up and I soon became one of the many volunteers who enjoyed working alongside the team at Balliol. Joan was determined to keep the Lunch Club going after Hand In Hand lost their funding, and I loved every single minute of my dishwashing and tea-making, with cooks Kevin, then Penny and more recently Irene and Sheila making awesome dinners every Thursday. Mik, Irene’s husband, it turns out is one of the world’s greatest living artists, right here in Longbenton, and he shares his skills and banter with us all. Oil paints and laughter... all welcomed and nurtured.

Rob Hawkins and Paula Bennett organised and led us on our first prayer walk around the estate. Not even literal heart attacks could stop big-hearted men like Rob and Mik from sharing of themselves. Friendships formed and new people were drawn to the centre. Young at Heart came to help with Youth Club sessions. Graham Clelland, Alex Holding and Matthew created a large new mural and painted a dove on the main doors and the church welcomed new visitors. On one of many Community Days the Youth Team transformed the Centre into a winter wonderland of Narnia, complete with trees and a step through the wardrobe.

I smile as I remember so many things. Jean Brown and Ella Wombwell greeting us at the door. Givemore Chitengu, Colin Farthing and Dora Reed singing so beautifully on a Sunday morning, and the Rev. Alison Wilkinson teaching us new songs. Mary Burdon and Sue Payne playing

hymns on the pipe organ, Marion Luscombe and Geoff Mitchell on the piano. Wonderful Bible studies from Paula, Alison, and the Rev. Janet Jackson, teaching on the emotional intelligence of Jesus. All of these ladies co-working alongside the team, serving and getting to know and love the community. Norma Dodds and Jean Brown patiently teaching me and others to knit! So much creativity, with our community “lighthouse” and “church” banners, hundreds of knitted angels given to local people and a knitted poppy cascade that was shared in local school assemblies and respectfully placed in Benton Cemetery, near the War Graves. Joan and Mik finding funding for some flower planters and June and Wilf Hodgson, with Hilary Dunn, looking after them. Givemore organising aid supplies to Zimbabwe after Cyclone Idai caused chaos last year. Singing in Shona and sharing food with our Zimbabwean brothers and sisters...

Fast forward to now, in the middle of a worldwide pandemic and everything with a social aspect on hold, and I feel very emotional reflecting on all the totally social activities and events that I have been blessed enough to be part of. And that’s just in my very short chapter of the Longbenton story. Even more inspiring for me is to have heard about all the other amazing “chapters” since its beginnings in a “hut” in the 1940s. Joan and David Thornton and Mavis and Frank Sykes have events to recount. Vi Colquhoun is remembered by many as the main protagonist of a community who never really asked for much.

It really is a love story, a true faith epic with simple Wesleyan values. It is the personal stories of the all the good souls who have served and kept things going that have enabled me to comprehend a loving God and the living Jesus in a meaningful, tangible way. A poster with words attributed to John Wesley, which is sometimes put up on our noticeboards though now faded from the sun, comes to mind.

*Do all the good you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all the times you can,
to all the people you can,
as long as ever you can.*

I really do feel that **all** the people who have been part of Longbenton Methodist Church and Balliol Youth and Community Centre have done just that.

Rachel Taglione

Memories

Joan Keltie

Since receiving a call in 2014 from the Rev. Rob Hawkins inviting me to meet with him and Colin Raistrick, my working life took on a whole new meaning. My job at Barnardo's had been made redundant and God clearly had a new plan.

I feel sure the staff didn't know quite what to expect but we soon became friends. Irene Feehan had been around for about 25 years and knew so much about the history of Longbenton. Following a nasty accident she had returned to work starting in the early mornings, cleaning the centre and church with a little help from her husband, Mik.

There had been a divide between the church and the youth centre which I felt needed joining up. I made a point of attending morning worship at least once a month to get to know the congregation.

Katie Hawkins opened up a Tuesday morning crafting group. Although its numbers were small, everyone who attended enjoyed learning a new skill, and conversations were interesting, to say the least. I enjoy freshly made soup for lunch, so we decided that Irene would make scones and I would make soup each Tuesday, and this is when "Lite Bites" began, encouraging our crafters to eat together at noon. We had a prayer dice which Rachel Taglione would throw and one of the diners would pray before we ate.

Matthew Mahoney joined us in October as Youth and Community Worker and the youth sessions grew. Graham Clelland and Alex Holding joined us as apprentice youth workers, and Dale Martin and Lucy Prescott came in as volunteers. (Incidentally, Dale and Lucy fell in love. Dale changed his surname by deed poll to that of his foster parents, Eaton. He and Lucy married and they have now become parents to baby Frankie.) We had wonderful youth sessions both in term time and in the school holidays. Outings were organised to include parents and children, together with members of the church congregation.

Over the last couple of years the teenagers moved on but younger children were coming, with Irene having to make a waiting list for joining.

During our weekly team meetings so many ideas came to fruition. Mik, who is an excellent artist, was encouraged to take the lead opening up our Art 4 Fun session each Thursday morning. It grew from strength to strength when word got around the area. Artists' ages ranged from 22 to 92; all abilities and nationalities were welcome. Very soon we welcomed Irene's

son, Tony, on board. He volunteered to do odd jobs and he rose to whatever challenge he was given. Mik and Tony used to cut the grass and when a grant was given to us by Proctor and Gamble they set to producing raised beds and a garden seat from planks of wood. The beds were planted up with help from Rachel Taglione, her family and friends. Donations of plants were well received which made such a difference for all who lived near or walked by.

Hand in Hand had held a lunch club at Longbenton for many years but this became unsustainable. I realised that some of the diners relied on this. Not only was it the only hot meal some ate in the week but it was a social occasion for those living in loneliness and isolation. I asked the team whether they thought we could do this ourselves if a volunteer cook could be found. Rachel said she was happy to help. A friend of mine, Kevin Lightley, said he would love to cook, so we opened our "Lunch Bunch". The tables were laid and dressed with wild flowers gathered by Rachel, who took pride in making things nice for everyone. Sadly Kevin passed away, but Matthew found Penny Walters to take over, we continued and had some very successful events and Christmas lunches involving the community and wider church congregation. We hosted Ministerial Synod and the District Methodist Women in Britain serving three-course hot lunches.

Matthew secured a grant for young people to open up a café, getting funding for a Barista machine, hot chocolate machine and milkshake machine. We started to have monthly coffee mornings which were well attended and with the help of funding from Longbenton and Killingworth Rotary Club purchased colourful cloths for the tables, fine china crockery and teapots, together with three-tier afternoon tea stands. We hosted afternoon teas during Easter, summer and Advent with freshly made sandwiches, cakes and scones. My nickname is Hyacinth (Bucket) because I used to insist on sandwiches being cut from cookie cutters. These were shaped like eggs, bunnies, Christmas trees and stars – but the one which we had for the Queen's Jubilee was the Queen's head like a postage stamp!

When Penny got paid employment Irene started to cook Thursday lunches. There is no I in the word "TEAM" and that's the way we work: although we have individual roles we all work together to do whatever job needs doing. On Lunch Bunch day it's all hands on deck whether it's peeling veg, setting tables, serving dinners or washing pots. Many of the Art 4 Fun members joined us for lunch and Mik, following his morning

teaching painting, often ended up at the sink with the Rev. Alison Wilkinson drying as he washed!

Last year I was on sick leave following a badly broken leg. Sheila Colquhoun (Vi Colquhoun's daughter) stepped up helping as much as she could with Lite Bites, Lunch Bunch and any other tasks requested by the staff. She continued this even after I returned to work.

Our plan once we ceased to worship and closed the centre was to have a celebratory service and tea inviting past and present youth members together with everyone who supported us over the years. Sadly the pandemic appears to be preventing this. Let's just pray that this can still take place before the end of the year. *Joan Keltie*

A PLEA FROM PAULA . .

I am at present collating a booklet covering Longbenton Church and the Balliol Youth and Community Centre from their beginnings with the help of information and memories provided in a booklet compiled in 2006 for the 50th Anniversary. I need to take pictures when I can gain access to the building to complete the project. However, if anyone has anything they would like to share for the "memory section" you can contact me via email: pjbben@gmail.com or 'phone: 284 8061. *Paula Bennett*

. . . AND ANOTHER FROM THE "TIDINGS" EDITOR

Having read pages 6-16, do you feel that some aspect of the Longbenton story is still missing? Please telephone me on 266 5193 and arrange to let me have your account on or before Tuesday June 16, in time for the July-August issue of "Tidings". *Margaret Burchell*

* * *

A PRAYER

May the grace of joy be ours,
may the grace of peace be ours,
may the grace of patience be ours,
may the grace of kindness be ours,
may the grace of goodness be ours,
may the grace of faithfulness be ours,
may the grace of love be ours.

Holy Spirit of sevenfold power, pour out on us your light.
Each day, every day, keep us faithful and true, now and always. Amen.

WEST MOOR NEWS

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Although news is limited because of the current situation it has been good to receive your texts and phone calls. Here is a little round up of the news I've gleaned.

We were sorry to hear that Rita Stage had collapsed on the floor. She was found there by a neighbour and taken to hospital. We are thankful that after a few days in Cramlington Hospital, where she was diagnosed with an infection and treated for it, she was allowed back home. It has been difficult to get first hand information or to speak to Rita herself as her phone goes on ringing until a message informs the caller that the answerphone is full. I have spoken briefly to Joan, her neighbour, who says that Rita has carers in twice a day. Ian, Rita's son, visits regularly. Joan also pops in with food and drink. She says that Rita is very tired. I popped a card through Rita's door to tell her that her church family are concerned about her (especially as we have not been able to contact her) and that she is not forgotten. We will keep Rita in our thoughts and prayers, hoping that she will soon be better.

Janet Hay has had a nasty fall, tripping and hitting her face on the pavement. She has been left with a painful face and nose, plus a loss of confidence. It is a worrying time for Janet as she is concerned about her brother-in-law, who is unwell, in care and unable to have visitors. We wish you well, Janet. May you have a speedy recovery.

Jean Heslop is concerned about her brother, Tom. He is back in hospital and unable to have visitors. Tom has not been too good for some time. We send love to Jean, Tom and her other brothers, who are not in the best of health.

On the brighter side, it has been lovely to hear how some of you have been making use of the current lockdown situation.

Jackie Stobbs has been able to keep up with her granddaughter's milestones by watching Phoebe on her iPad. Although it's not the same as being with her, she can follow her progress, and although hugs are not permitted Phoebe can still send a wave to Grandma.

Cilla Colquhoun is keeping well and busy, just having finished a jigsaw of Henry VIII and his six wives. That should be good to help you with quiz answers when we get back to normal, Cilla!

Many of you, including Margaret McGregor, are keeping up to date with your gardens, while Joyce White makes me hungry when I hear what she has been baking or cooking.

Tom and I enjoy the Wednesday and Sunday evening Zoom quiz hosted by our son, Anthony. He now has over thirty followers including people in Manchester, Cumbria, Essex, the North East – and Sweden. In addition, with his encouragement, we can now spot military aircraft flying over our empty skies.

Please let me know if you have anything you would like included in “Tidings” and I will forward it on.

Keep safe and smiling!

Ann Brown

* * *

FLAME OF LOVE

At the centre of all things –

God is

illuminating the darkest corners

with liquid, pulsating light.

With a warm, loving heart
and gentle caress of mothering love
we are cradled and nurtured.

With fathering care the cries of the world
are heard.

With changeless love the needs of all
are known.

God is

always and everywhere
hearing the smallest cry,
aware of the deepest fear,

sharing and comforting the pain and sorrow,
dancing and celebrating the dearest joy.

God is

forever shepherding and guiding, leading
towards the shining pool of light,
where everything is made clear, eternally.

Judy Tasker

ST. ANDREW'S NEWS

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

It is good to report that after some time in a care home Evelyn Ayre is back home in her flat (with the help of four carers) and enjoying making and receiving telephone calls. She is anxious about her daughter, Elaine, who is never really well and is having to “isolate”.

Lilian Michael broke her arm in a fall some time ago, but the plaster is now off and she is doing well. After their falls, Sandra Wallace and Joan Knox still have some pain, but are improving.

Betty Gillies had a cancerous growth on her cheek. Amazingly, the hospital diagnosis was followed by immediate treatment. She then went home to recuperate. What a day! Her face is healing well. Praise God for the NHS!

Sheila Finlayson and Jean Green are still having trouble with their eyes. May God grant them patience as they wait for hospital appointments.

Mike and Christine Addison, formerly of Christ Church, have become grandparents. Their elder son, Stephen, and his wife, Amy, welcomed the arrival of twin boys, Lachlan and Finn, on April 29. All are well and are now home from hospital. Congratulations all round!

Congratulations too to Joan Willis, formerly a member of our church, who was 80 on May 9.

LOOKING FORWARD:–

LITTER PICKING

St. Andrew's Church was planning to hold an official Litter Pick on the afternoon of Saturday May 23. But picking up litter does not need to be organised. Make it happen any time you have one hand free and can dispose of the offending item safely – and then wash your hands!

The Hope Group

LOOKING BACK:–

THANK YOU SO MUCH, BETTY!

Betty Fellows' “birthday bash” on March 15 saw the whole church family celebrating together after what turned out to have been our last morning service before Covid-19 changed the rules. What a wonderful memory to take with us into lockdown!

Noreen Henderson

AT HOME . . .

LOOKING FORWARD:–

ADAPTING MATTHEW 18:20

A traditional reaction to a disappointingly low attendance at a church event has been to quote “For where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.”

In these unusual days we need a new translation: “Where anyone is self-isolating there am I with them.” *Ian Morris*

NEW MINISTER JOINS THE TEAM AT KINGSTON PARK

The Rev. Annie Gray is now ministering at St. John’s Church. She was licensed by Bishop Mark in a service held on Zoom, with over 70 people attending.

THE METHODIST CONFERENCE

The Methodist Council has announced that the Conference cannot meet as planned in Telford in June and July. It is likely to meet virtually.

Some District Synods have not been able to meet and give full consideration to “God in Love Unites Us”, so the debate and voting on the provisional resolutions will be deferred until the 2021 Conference.

Methodist Recorder (MR)

NEW RACE RELATIONS ADVISER FOR THE LABOUR PARTY

The appointment has been announced of Methodist Doreen Lawrence, mother of Stephen Lawrence who was stabbed to death 27 years ago. She became Baroness Lawrence in 2013 and sits in the House of Lords. *MR*

HELP TO BEAT COVID-19: TWIN YOUR TAP FOR £60

Toilet Twinning has launched an urgent appeal for people to “twin their tap” to fund a global handwashing and hygiene programme being set up in some of the world’s poorest communities.

For details and to donate see the www.toilettwinning.org website – or send a cheque for £60 to Toilet Twinning, 1052-1054 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BH7 6DS.

LOOKING BACK:–

CELEBRATING EASTER (continued from last month)

In Hexham

I live in a friendly cul-de-sac, have a reasonable singing voice and a sufficiently strong character (i.e. I’m daft enough), so I took a deep breath and decided to sing hymns outside my front door.

I mentioned it to my next door neighbour when we were applauding the NHS on the preceding Thursday, and she liked the idea. So I printed the words for *Thine be the glory* and *Christ the Lord is risen today* and put a copy through every door in the street with a note inviting anybody who was interested to join in and promising those who didn’t like it they could just turn up the telly and it would soon stop!

In fact, about half the street came out and joined in, some singing, some listening. It worked! There were a few grateful text messages afterwards, so I think the majority of folk did enjoy it. I just hope they don’t expect me to do something like that every week... *Tony Buglass*

In Hanley

The Methodist Book Centre had to lock its doors to customers, while still taking orders online and by phone. In the shop there remained 130 Fair Trade Easter eggs plus 5 sharing boxes. The manager appealed on the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District website for offers from people who would pay to donate an egg: she would give the eggs to the foodbank and the Salvation Army hostel. In two days, every egg was sold, plus a number of boxes of tea bags and jars of coffee. She was thrilled, and the people who received the eggs were able to read the complete Easter story. *MR*

ROWENA FRANCIS SENDS HER GREETINGS . . .

The Rev. Rowena Francis was the previous Moderator of the United Reformed Church Northern Synod and now works in Wells. She reminds us that the Easter season lasts for the seven weeks up to Pentecost.

Happy Easter, don’t eat too much chocolate! I suspect many of us will put on weight during the lockdown. Rather, I hope you find ways of connecting and experiencing joy that you can take with you back into the wider world when that becomes possible. This Lent we have certainly had to give things up and die to lots we thought important; perhaps this is enabling us to discover what actually brings about full living. Let’s hope we can take what we are learning forward. End of sermon!

Wells United Church has finished its refurbishment, apart from odds and ends and the inevitable snagging. I have moved into the small flat: I have fitted in everything I brought – about 20% of what I had. It was not as painful to let the books go as I had thought. Flute practice will have to be done in the living space: the 12-foot-high ceilings give it a spacious feel and the acoustics for music are wonderful.

It is unclear whether I will get to Israel/Palestine later in the year for my Sabbatical. It will depend on the government.

I pray that you and yours will keep well and hope-filled. Have a lovely and blessed Easter.

Shalom.

Rowena

... SO DO DAVID AND KATHLEEN BLACKLOCK

Greetings from David and Kathleen Blacklock in Kings Lynn, Norfolk.

First of all, may we say a big “Thank you” to all the team compiling and distributing “Tidings”? Amazingly, the magazine has been sent to us ever since 1998, when we left Newcastle. Your faithfulness and kindness in remembering us has been appreciated. Through the magazine we have read of the ongoing work in all three churches, the circuit and the wider world, but more personally of the joys and sorrows of people we have known.

We came to live in Forest Hall in 1993, and David ministered at Benton, West Moor and Longbenton. Kathleen’s mum, Olive, joined us and was part of the church family. We look back and see God’s provision for us as Mum eventually went to live at the Methodist Home in Cramlington, where she ended her days peacefully.

There were many happy memories while we were in Newcastle but it was also a time when God taught us so much. He is still changing us.

Sadly, through the years many of the people we loved have died, but their legacy lives on. Though we have decided not to receive the magazine in the future we do send our loving greetings to all those who remember us and had a part to play in our lives.

Every blessing to friends old and new.

We close with the words of the hymn by Joseph Hart.

*’Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We’ll praise him for all that is past,
And trust him for all that’s to come.*

MHA NEEDS OUR HELP

Sam Monaghan, the chief executive of Methodist Homes for the Aged, has requested support for MHA staff, residents and their families, to ensure that the most vulnerable and those working on the front line to care for them have access to the correct and necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing. MHA will continue to need to source PPE from commercial organisations, costing much more than Government supplies, because those supplies have proved inconsistent and inadequate.

He encourages people to sign MHA’s petition to ask the Government to ensure adequate and consistent supplies of PPE and ample testing for residents and staff by going to the www.mha.org.uk/ppe-petition web page.

Donations to help MHA to purchase the vital PPE can be made by following this link: bit.ly/2wLej68. Or you can send a cheque to MHA, Epworth House, 3 Stuart Street, Derby DE1 2EQ. MR

WHEN I NEEDED A NEIGHBOUR

Brian Frost, who died recently at the age of 84, was both a Methodist local preacher and a lifelong Anglican. He was a frequent guest preacher at St. James’, Piccadilly, when he lived in London.

During World Refugee Year, 1960, he joined Christian Aid as one of the area secretaries for England. He later became area secretary for Greater London. In 1965 he commissioned Sydney Carter to write a new hymn. The result, *When I needed a neighbour*, appeared on an illustrated leaflet published by Christian Aid in 1966, used in a beat and folk festival in Trafalgar Square attended by 28,000 people. MR

Could there be a more appropriate hymn for the present time? Ed.

A NEWSPAPER REPORT IN APRIL FIFTY YEARS AGO

Blind local preacher, 22-year-old student David Blunkett, a member of Southey church in the Sheffield (North) circuit, has been chosen as Labour candidate for Southey Green in the Sheffield municipal elections. If elected, he will be the youngest member of the City Council. “My politics,” he says, “come directly from my religion. As a Christian I see myself as a Socialist; not exactly a Donald Soper, but that way inclined.” MR

And what happened to him? He is still going strong. He was interviewed on the “Today” programme on April 11, 2020 and again in May! Ed.

. . . AND ABROAD . . .

SCHISM IN THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA

After years of uneasy relationships, the churches of the Coast region have formed a new Coast Region Conference, its churches and ministers declaring autonomy.

The Rev. Andrew MacKenzie, who served as a mission partner in Kenya from 1967 to 1979, explains: “For decades the people of the Methodist Church at the Kenya Coast have felt that they have been dealt a poor hand. Those at the seat of government in Nairobi would joke, ‘All the Coast people do is sit under the trees and wait for the coconuts and mangoes to drop off.’ When I moved from working inland at Meru to Ribe in the Coast, I found the people there much more ‘socialist’. It was frowned upon to talk about ‘my cow’ or ‘my land’ – it was not yours, it was your clan’s, your family’s, held in common for the benefit of all. They laughed a lot, talked a lot, were ill a lot because of the climate, and were not too bothered about status and what passed for ‘progress’. So, knowing full well how they are regarded by outsiders, they feel a sense of grievance to all authority which originates from outside.”

A spokesperson for the Methodist Church in Britain said: “The Methodist Church in Kenya is an autonomous Methodist Conference. We hold our sisters and brothers in Kenya in prayer at what seems to be a difficult time for them, as we know they hold us in their prayers at what is a difficult time for the world.” *MR*

CHURCHES WORKING IN PRISONS, ZIMBABWE

Maximum Salvation United Methodist Church in Manresa is the first church of its kind in the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area. It has been deliberately planted near the Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison and the Zimbabwe Republic Police Support Unit, to evangelise to inmates and also to prison officers and their families, who are often confined within the prison campus and suffer psychologically.

Cranborne United Methodist Church in the Harare East District has been working with inmates and their families for the past four years, tending to their physical and spiritual needs. The outreach started after a church member was incarcerated at Chikurubi female prison. The congregation has changed its perception of prisoners: the stigma has been removed. *MR*

. . . IT'S GOD'S WORLD

LOCUSTS AND COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic has spread to Africa, and now a second wave of desert locusts is sweeping across the continent from breeding grounds in Somalia. Kenyan officials have said that the Covid-19 crackdowns have slowed efforts to fight the infestation, as crossing borders has become harder for humans (though not locusts) and pesticide deliveries are held up.

There has been a surge of Covid-19 cases across Pakistan, where few hospitals are equipped to handle the virus. Sindh province, one of the poorest rural regions and already devastated by the first locust invasion, has been the hardest hit. The UN has warned of an impending food crisis in East Africa and a state of emergency is continuing in south west Pakistan. *MR*

DEBT SUSPENSION IS NOT ENOUGH

The decision by nations belonging to the G20 group of the world’s richest nations to suspend debt repayments by some of the poorest countries has been described as a “welcome first step” by the Jubilee Debt Campaign, which believes, however, that much more must be done in response to the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Christian Aid, “The G20 risks kicking the can down the road. Debt payments for 2020 should be cancelled outright.”

The suspension covers debt payments by 77 countries to G20 and other governments from May 1 to the end of 2020 (an estimated \$12 billion). The payments will become due to be paid between 2022 and 2024, along with interest accrued in the meantime.

The Jubilee Debt Campaign has calculated that 64 countries currently spend more on debt repayments than they do on healthcare. Ten countries spent more than 20% of government revenue on external debt payments in 2019: Angola, Sri Lanka, The Gambia, The Republic of Congo, Ghana, Zambia, Laos, Lebanon, Pakistan and Cameroon. *MR*

FIGHT COVID-19 WORLDWIDE THROUGH CHRISTIAN AID

Between them, members of the Rev. Hazel Hanson’s church are being sponsored to walk, cycle and run the distance from York to Nairobi. The Rev. Ron Forster and his wife, Shirley, formerly of Morpeth, are between them running the equivalent of ten marathons. Can YOU send a cheque to Christian Aid, 42-44 Mosley Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1DF?

FORGOTTEN AND FEARFUL – UK OFFERS HOPE TO SOME

When Mujo Hrustanovic was transferred in 1997 to the Jezevac refugee camp in **Bosnia** he thought he would be there for just a few months. Today he is still there. A survivor of the genocide in Srebrenica, when Serb forces massacred thousands of Muslim men and boys, he shares a dilapidated flat with his wife, son, daughter-in-law and their two children in one of the 50 buildings in the camp built by international organisations near the city of Tuzla. Such apartments, intended as a temporary solution for displaced Bosnians, have instead become a permanent home for hundreds of Srebrenica survivors. “They’ve abandoned us,” says Hrustanovic’s son.

More than two thirds of the migrants fleeing **Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador** have experienced the murder, disappearance or kidnapping of a relative before their departure, according to a study by Médecins Sans Frontières. US officials are returning asylum seekers to dangerous Mexican border cities, where many are kidnapped and preyed upon by drug cartels.

In January this year an Islamist militia group attacked four villages in the eastern **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, hacking 36 people to death. In April another killed over 50 villagers in **Mozambique**. *The Guardian*

Young Ali and his family belong to the Hazara people, who are often persecuted in **Afghanistan** because of their ethnicity. When men with guns beat and tortured him severely, his parents got him smuggled out of the country. When he reached the UK, the Home Office did not believe he was under 18 and he was locked in a detention centre for nearly two years and made several attempts to kill himself. He had no-one to turn to until he came into contact with **Freedom from Torture** (111 Isledon Road, London N7 7JW). For three weeks a specialist doctor saw him every day, then prescribed individual and group therapy. Meeting other torture survivors his own age helped him to feel safe and understood. Legal advice can help to lift from him the worry that he will be sent back to Afghanistan.

Dalia had lived in Kirkuk province, **Iraq**, until ISIS murdered her father and confined her to her home. “ISIS would slaughter people, rape women,” she says. “My daughter, Mila, was one year old. She and I were just waiting for our turn to come. In October 2015 a friend warned me that ISIS were coming: I had five minutes to get out. I walked and walked carrying my daughter.” Arriving in the UK, Dalia was given nothing by the Home Office but a telephone number that did not work. It was January, cold and raining. **Refugee Action** (11, Belgrave Road, London SW1V 1RB) made the Home Office find Dalia and Mila a flat and make it habitable.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE CLIMATE – OR IS IT?

The UK government is committed to cutting the UK’s carbon output to net zero by 2050, and emissions have been falling for three decades. But that does not take into account about half of Britain’s true carbon footprint, the “invisible” side, which comes from international travel and the carbon produced overseas to make goods used here. Requiring electronic goods to be repairable and recyclable would help. So would fewer food imports.

Ivybridge Church in South Devon is the first Methodist church to decide to end its investments in fossil fuels. Faith institutions make up 29% of the growing “Fossil Free” divestment movement in the UK. The European Investment Bank, the US insurer Chubb, the National Trust and 78 of the UK’s 154 public universities have said they are to divest from fossil fuels. Axa will divest from coal over the next two to three years.

The Royal Shakespeare Company and National Galleries Scotland are to end their sponsorship deals with BP (which last year successfully lobbied to weaken environmental laws in the United States). The National Theatre is to end its partnership with Shell. In the last 30 years BP, Shell, Chevron and Exxon together have made almost £1.54 trillion in profits from exploiting fossil fuels, but BP’s new chief executive has pledged that BP will be a net-zero carbon emitter by 2050.

Drax power station, North Yorkshire, is ending all use of coal by March 2021. Instead it will use “sustainable” biomass – wood pellets imported from the US are the cheapest source. But how can cutting down trees in America and shipping them across the Atlantic to be burnt to make electricity be justified? And the UK government has approved a gas-fired power plant at Drax as well, which could produce 75% of the UK’s power sector emissions. Environmental lawyers ClientEarth are to sue the government for overruling its own planning authority by this decision.

The UK government has at last abandoned its 4-year opposition to subsidising new onshore windfarms, provided these have local consent.

With the Woodland Trust’s support, the Colne Valley Tree Society volunteers have since 1964 been out every Saturday in winter planting native species in their area. They plant about 6,000 trees and shrubs a year.

Verity Smith reports that local residents have planted apple trees in the grounds of Forest Hall Library. Now the gates are locked and there has been so little rain, able-bodied gardeners have had to climb over the railings to water their trees.

mostly from TG

TO MAKE US THINK

A STORY FROM JOHN WESLEY'S JOURNAL, RETOLD

On Tuesday June 27, my travels brought me to All Saints Church in idyllic Belton. As I was speaking I heard that three young children had been left at dinner by their mother. The children had wandered off and came upon a well nearby.

The youngest, leaning over the wall, fell into the well and in making frantic efforts to rescue this child the other two also tumbled down into the well. They were all three taken out of the well about half an hour later. It was found that the youngest had been trapped under the bucket and had quickly drowned. The other two had clung on to the sides of the well as best they could but in time had sunk below the water. All three appeared lifeless.

Now when I was informed of this while still in the church, I immediately advised that the rescuers rub the bodies with salt and breathe strongly into the children's mouths. This was done and, although the youngest was beyond help, I rejoiced to see the other two revive. Two hours later they were as well as ever.

Colin Ella, MR

Now:

1. Read 1 Kings 17: 8-23.
2. Go and learn modern resuscitation techniques. You never know when you'll need them.

Ed.

TRUE LOVE

**Jesus loves you the way you are,
but loves you too much to leave you that way.**

Lee Venden

SOCIAL DISTANCE LIKE A WESLEY!

Avoid all the people you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can,
in all the places you can,
at all the times you can,
as long as ever you can.

Author unknown, MR

SO WHAT'S THE STORY?

Bruce McIntosh

Am I just a very lucky person or do I have a guardian angel looking after me? Many times in my life I have marvelled how potential disasters have been averted and turned into triumphs.

I was reminded of this recently when I was asked to write down an example of my "luck" which I had quoted in a talk I had given.

Here goes.

I was 19 years old at the time and I was a young, inexperienced officer in the Indian Army. WW2 had just ended and my Battalion 3MAHAR had been posted to Fort Sandeman to join the Zhob Frontier Brigade. Fort Sandeman was a remote outpost in a volatile tribal area of North Baluchistan just south of the Afghanistan border.

It was a sunny Sunday morning and I had a free day with no duties to be done so I was sitting relaxing, dozing, without a care in the world. I heard footsteps fast approaching and opened my eyes to see the Adjutant's runner, who said, "Makan Tost Sahib, the Adjutant Sahib wishes to see you ek dum, Sahib."

The Sepoys always claimed that McIntosh was too difficult to pronounce. "Makan" (butter) and "tost" (toast) was much easier. They always seemed to have a smile on their faces when they said it. I still receive Christmas cards addressed to me in the same way. Pretty good improvisation, though, which never worried me.

I smartened myself up and reported "ek dum" (immediately) to the Adjutant, who quickly told me it was the CO who wanted me. Gracious me! Things are going from bad to worse! Why all this activity on a lazy Sunday morning?

The CO wanted to confirm that I had never sat on an Army Court of Enquiry. (My answer was "No.") He had been asked to provide a junior officer to be the third member of a Court of Enquiry to be held in Loralai on the coming Tuesday. Loralai was a Battalion outpost some 80 miles east of Fort Sandeman. I asked what it was all about and received a vague reply about interference with army transport. I think I made a pretty innocuous comment which seemed to upset him, and he in no uncertain terms indicated that I was perhaps too immature for the task ahead. He then dismissed me, putting the burden of all the arrangements in my hands. He also gave me some very stern advice: "You are going to represent the Zhob

Brigade and 3MAHAR, but most of all, *me*. Do not let *me* down. My advice to you, McIntosh, is to follow the lead of the Senior Officer, who will be highly experienced in these matters.”

So my restful Sunday was over and it was a frenzied rush to organise the journey to Loralai for the following morning. The road to Loralai was just a rough dirt track, up and down high hills, round bends with big drops at the side down into dried up nullahs. The average speed was estimated at 10 miles per hour. The whole journey was across restricted territory, where a full armed escort was needed. My own Company could provide the manpower for the escort but had to be back in Fort Sandeman by nightfall, so they could only escort me halfway. That meant arranging an escort from Loralai to meet us at the halfway point. Transport had to be arranged with the Brigade Transport Unit, catering had to be arranged, and also liaison with the Zhob Militia Posts in the hills so that they could track us. It was endless.

Monday arrived. All the arrangements worked fine and the journey was completed without difficulty. I met the Chairman of the Court, a senior Major, who on a first impression looked very old and weary. He told me the case was about a damaged bicycle. I was aghast, as I had already expended enough time and money to buy a dozen new bicycles. He gave me a stern talk on how small things had to be put right so as to avoid bigger things happening, with the extra advice that I should just follow his lead, just as the CO had told me. The other member of the Court was a Sikh Captain who seemed a reasonable fellow.

The next day we met at 10 a.m. in a practically empty Company Office. It was bare apart from a table and three chairs for the Committee and a desk for the clerk who was recording the proceedings. There was a paper pad and pencil for each of us to jot down our thoughts.

There were a number of witnesses called, ranging from the Officer in charge to the Sepoy who had issued the bicycle. They all gave similar accounts of the incident. It was simple – the bicycle was in good order when it was issued, and it had been returned a few minutes later damaged and unusable. Hardly rocket science, and no need to use the paper and pencil! Everything had been done in a polite and civilised way and I was quite content. The miscreant, a very young Sepoy who could have been no older than 18, was marched in at the double by the Havildar (Sergeant Major), who was screaming at him in a very loud voice.

The mood changed. The Sepoy was trembling like a leaf and totally out of his depth. He said the bicycle had wobbled and this had caused him to fall off and hurt himself. The Major now, in a most aggressive mood, put forward a different scenario. “It wasn’t the bike that wobbled, it was you that wobbled. I have seen it all before. You were drunk, and it was you that wobbled, not the bike.” The Sepoy tried to disagree but the Major yelled, “Get him out of here!” and he was marched off at the double. A totally unexpected turn of events.

The Major then in a quiet manner said we would break for half an hour for refreshments, and that when we returned I, as the junior member, would sum up the case and give my verdict. Talk about putting pressure on the junior member, but that was procedure. So, 30 minutes of agony for me. No substantive evidence had been produced and my nature could not possibly allow me to find against the accused. If he had been one of my Sepoys I would have been on my feet defending him with all the strength I had. But this was the Army and rule number one is “Obey Orders.” Both my Colonel and the Major had made it pretty clear to me what I should do. The CO would eat me alive if I returned having messed things up. I did not enjoy the break at all. What could I do but put up a silent prayer for help? This was a real moral dilemma.

We returned and I was invited to speak. Inspiration suddenly came and I suggested we should actually see the bike before I proceeded. I knew little of the workings of Military Law, but I knew a lot about bikes, having had one from a very early age and being able by now to do repairs with my eyes shut.

The Major reluctantly agreed to this. The bicycle was wheeled in and put against the wall. It was an old bike of WW1 vintage, but still in good condition. The damage was clear to see as both pedals were hanging to the ground. As soon as I saw this I knew I was safe. The same thing had happened to my bike. It was clearly a loose cotter pin, which holds the pedals in place. “Could I have a hammer, please?” One was brought, and I gave the cotter pin a few good thumps, until it was as solid as a rock. I suggested that I should give it a test to see if it worked and this was agreed. I took it outside and rode it around the parade square. This attracted the attention of a lot of Sepoys, who had never seen a British officer riding a bicycle in Loralai. I was “on a high” and to show off my skills I rode round the square again “no hands”, relying on my balance. By now hundreds of Sepoys were enjoying the spectacle.

Then I went off to the Office to start my summing up. “The accident was caused by a loose cotter pin. I recommend that better maintenance provisions are introduced in the Transport Unit. I also recommend that the Sepoy is acquitted as he bears no responsibility for the damage.” I waited with bated breath for the Sikh Captain to give his verdict. Good fellow, he agreed with me, and the Major endorsed our verdict. It was indeed a great escape.

I returned to Fort Sandeman the next day, and after a shower I wandered over to the Mess. The CO was there holding forth, but when he saw me he stopped and gave me a hearty welcome, saying, “Shabash, shabash, shabash!” (Well done!) He had been kept up to date by the Brigade Major and was elated. He said, “We showed them, McIntosh, didn’t we?” and immediately ordered the Mess waiter to bring me a “bara peg” (double whisky), saying, “Put it on my account” – words never heard before in the Mess. I was his blue-eyed boy after that and could do no wrong.

Just luck, or was my angel working overtime for me?

GOD’S TIMING IS IMPECCABLE *Linda and Mike Craxford-Smith*

As you may know, we’ve been through some stressful times. However, as we have found several times in our past, God’s timing has been impeccable. The major things were selling our French house (in the short time, for France, of nine months) and finding our present home just where we wanted it to be (in Embleton); in spite of a general strike in France with lots of flights cancelled, being enabled to make a delayed return there at the end of our visit to the UK in late November and early December; as a result having to (and being able to) put back the removal date, which proved better for us; and being able to move from Sheila’s house in Forest Hall to here just as the lockdown started. We have so much to be thankful for.

We are blessed to live in such a beautiful part of the world, 25 minutes’ walk from the beach. We’re coping OK, living on a building site. Of the homes on this estate, ours is one of nine occupied, and building has stopped “for the duration”. Mike is reckoned vulnerable enough for supermarkets to do deliveries, and local businesses, too, deliver when we phone them.

Our best wishes to everyone. We hope you are all well and keep safe. We retain fond memories of our worship times and social events at St. Andrew’s Church. Although many will not know us by name, we may well be remembered as “the couple who moved from France”.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HANDWASHING

Religious handwashing rituals have been around for thousands of years.

For centuries, most people believed that disease was spread by bad smells in the air and that if one carried something sweet-smelling such as a posy of flowers one would be immune.

In 1848, a maternity ward at a Vienna hospital had an 18% death rate from childbed fever. A doctor in the hospital noticed trainee doctors were dissecting corpses and then delivering babies without washing their hands in between. He guessed that particles from the corpses were transferred by the doctors to the women’s bodies. He ordered the doctors to wash their hands and instruments, and the death rate fell to 1%.

His idea met with great resistance as doctors did not have a conception of themselves as carriers of germs. But in the next 40 years Louis Pasteur and Joseph Lister made scientific discoveries and Florence Nightingale revolutionised nursing. By the early 1900s handwashing had become something everybody was told to do.

In the early 20th century, because of the prevalence of tuberculosis, public health campaigns made people aware that their mouths, skin and hair carried germs. Young men stopped growing beards. Foods began to be individually wrapped. The development of antibiotics in the 1940s saw the death rate from bacterial diseases plummet.

After the second world war, however, a laxity crept into healthcare and everyday life. Hippies in the 1960s and 1970s thought hygiene bourgeois. Sexually transmitted diseases increased again. With the arrival of HIV in the 1980s everyone started again to concentrate on personal cleanliness, and we have become even more aware of its importance with the development of hospital “superbugs” and the resurgence of other diseases as they become resistant to antibiotics. Handwashing compliance fell again: a 2007 study showed hospital staff working in intensive care washed their hands as they moved from one patient to the next only 54% of the time.

How effective is handwashing in combating a pandemic? A 2017 review found that if a person washed their hands 5 to 10 times more than usual the risks could be reduced by a quarter. A professor said this: “Here is one thing you can do to lower your risk: wash your hands with soap before you touch your mouth, nose or eyes. It is important because it really does make a difference.”

taken by Miles Kington from an article in “The Week” based on an original article in “The Guardian”

LITANY FOR COVID-19

My street is quiet now.
Cars, buses, lorries,
noisy polluters of our very breath,
have fled in disarray.
Erstwhile pedestrians
fearing encounter
seek safety behind stern doors;
peering apprehensive from windows,
they put their trust in technology
and hope for supplies.

Can this be judgment
self-imposed upon a world
that would not share its wealth?
Uneasy power blocs,
ceaselessly watchful,
sharpen expensive weapons
whilst swathes of humankind
sink deep in wretched penury,
as the heedless live in comfort
or fall prey to luxury.

If Jesus came once more,
arose from stable birth
to point a better way,
it would be but in vain;
for when his voice was heard before
we paid it scant regard.
Neglected now as then
his wisdom stands,
an underused resource
in troubled times.

Can there be God?
If so he must forgive
Until we can forgive ourselves,
Discover true identity
alive by inspiration's hand.
Freed from the curse of narrow hearts
Rekindled love,
Compassion's fervent friend,
Shall urge a kindlier harmony
Than we have known before.

David Stevenson, writing in the Methodist Recorder

AMEN CORNER – we pray at home

- for all those more likely to succumb to illness because they live in poverty in overcrowded homes, slums, prisons, or refugee camps such as those in Lebanon and Bangladesh,
- for those trying to help them,
- for those whose mental health is suffering because of isolation,
- for those mourning the loss of loved ones,
- for those working to find an effective vaccine against Covid-19.

A GAELIC PRAYER TO THE TRINITY

*With the angels and saints each day and each night,
each shade and each light,
I bend my knee in the eye of the Father who created me,
in the eye of the Son who redeemed me,
in the eye of the Spirit who cleansed me,
in love and affection, in wisdom and grace,
in love and in fear, for ever and ever. Amen.*

God, give me grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
courage to change the things which should be changed,
and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.
Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time,
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it,
trusting that you will make all things right,
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
and supremely happy with you forever in the next. Amen.

Reinhold Niebuhr

Lord, you travelled light; you knew little of money and security and often you had nowhere to lay your head.
Lord, you know how easily we become tied to our possessions, how they can become the things that finally possess and control us.
Lord, you found your happiness in a simple life; your treasures were your relationship with your Father, your trusted friends, and the good earth, the broad skies.
Lord, help us to live more simply, so that all may simply live. Amen.