

ALL SAINTS CHURCH BOYNE HILL MAIDENHEAD

PARISH NEWS

www.allsaintsboynehill.org.uk

Issue 63 23 June 2021



Dear Parishioners and Friends of All Saints, Boyne Hill,

As many people struggle with the on-going suffering and doubt caused by the Pandemic and indeed by the deep sadness that life can throw at us, I am going to share with you the content of the sermon I preached last weekend. The sermon was based on the texts of Job the man who seems innocent in the face of suffering and the calming of the storm found in Mark chapter 4. This sermon was written in the context of a young family who have suffered the tragedy of losing a vibrant and much-loved young boy of fifteen.

Over the last couple of weeks, I have been trying to support a mother and family who have lost their loved one. A young boy of 15 who lived life full of joy, laughter and love. He loved his family, friends, his football (supporting Arsenal and enjoying banter with his Spurs supporting stepfather), his rugby at Maidenhead, where they kept two minutes silence for him before a recent match, and his love of dancing. He was a natural dancer who moved to the tune of the beat and in rhythm and with a smile. Those of you that know me know how much I struggled to keep to the rhythm of the music when I tried, largely unsuccessfully, the popular Salsa dancing. No doubt many of the opposite sex still walk with a limp as a consequence of my lack of timing.

The story that has moved me most though is of this young lad taking a girl to McDonald's on a date and buying her a burger. He came home with money left over (and presumably hungry) as he had not purchased a 'Big Mac' for himself. 'Why not?' asked his mum. 'I was too nervous and had butterflies in my stomach' came the reply. 'How will I know if she likes me?'. 'Oh, she likes you if she has gone to McDonalds just as a couple', replied mum.

These are just some of the memories and experiences shared with me about a young person whose life has been cut short by a tragic accident. When I met last week to listen to the mother, the grandmother, stepfather and a dear friend who has overseen the improvement in care at Larchfield Care Home I was humbled to listen to their faith story. They all had faith but now in the storm of life they asked questions that have been asked since the time of Job and for years before.

How can I make sense of this now and for the rest of my life? I'm angry with God and how can I go on? These questions, so natural in the stages of grief are questions that all of us would ask in the storm and suffering of life. What surprised and moved me was that as a family, although in the early days of grief, they are finding signs of God's loving presence. They hold a belief that they can go on with purpose to celebrate this young boy's life.

It is important to focus for a moment on the question of anger. Nearly thirty years ago I did a pastoral placement in London with CARA and the London Lighthouse, two organisations that supported people living with HIV and AIDS in the 1980's and 90's. A young man who I went to visit in hospital had been diagnosed with HIV and had lost his job, and the love of his family and his friends probably through the stigma attached to the illness. He was alone, frightened and angry. He had little faith and had been asked in the hospital if he wanted to seek forgiveness by the chaplain. He didn't want forgiveness, but his anger drove him to ask questions. He had no one he felt he could talk to, so he lashed out in anger and found someone outside of himself who he later named God. It was his anger that had led him to awareness of the presence of God in his life.

This experience led this young man to come through the storm of life and he taught and educated young people about drugs, sexual relationships and also about living life positively. He found another job and remarkably he gained promotion not once but twice as he lived life as if the best is yet to come. He lived life in the presence of God and in the hope of New and transformed life.

Faith with a sense of politeness is what many of us seek. We see in our minds people of great faith as being calm, no matter what storms hit them. We hear faith in the person that says oh everything is for a reason. That is the faith of Job's comforters but let's be clear that is not the faith of Job. Job's friends or comforters are like people who believe in meritocracy. You get out of life what you deserve. Job instead asks questions, he protests, he complains, he speaks up, he feels abandoned, he expresses depression and frustration and abandonment.

Faith is not theoretical or academic in a way I have frequently tried to preach. If we want to accept the grace of God, we need to be honest and genuine with an open heart if we are to live courageously. We might with faith, with the support of a community develop the character to cope with sleepless nights, hard work, afflictions, traumas and perhaps baseless accusations. We won't escape suffering and the storms of life but perhaps we will learn to recognise the presence of God in each of our crisis'. This is why it is so very important that the church gathers together in community to share worship and pastoral care of each other.

Moving to the disciples in the boat facing their storm, one of them asks Jesus, 'Do you not care that we are perishing?' Over the last fifteen months many have been asking God 'Do you care about the traumas, the loss of life, the fear, the confusion that we are facing in this pandemic? God can indeed seem fast asleep, even if we accept that he is not the God of meritocracy? As I said to the family (They knew already) we cannot explain the loss of their loved one or the other stormy events of life. We can though follow the example of this family by looking to Christ who emptied himself in the form of a servant, to come alongside humanity as a vulnerable baby boy who grew and was nurtured by his mother and family to grow to be a man who gave his life that we might have new and transformed life. On the cross he said, 'My God, My God, why hath thou forsaken me? They are the words of the God that is with us. This is God incarnate. This is the greatest gift the Christian faith offers, that we are not alone.

The storm of life produces horrible anxieties, a sense of hopelessness and yet Jesus says, 'Why are you afraid?' I am the creator of heaven and earth. As Isaiah says in chapter 41 'Do not fear I am with you' 'Do not fear I will help you', and in chapter 43 'Do not fear I have redeemed you.' The mother of the young person said words to the effect 'I am trying to learn to accept that God see's the bigger picture, that we cannot see or understand. The mother whose words of faith encouraged me went onto say 'The mother Mary who nurtured her child (Jesus) and allowed him to go his own way, stayed with him in suffering and in death at the cross and she is with me now as I have lost my loved one.'

Let us pray that this community of All Saints and all church communities take suffering seriously not by trying to silence the pain but walking together as pilgrim people to the Kingdom, knowing that Jesus' victory has won New Life for us. As Isaiah says 'Do not fear for I have redeemed you.

The sermon is finished but our faith journey goes on. My prayer is that all of us at All Saints Church will indeed return to the gathered community whether in the parish centre, the BBQ's in the Quad and to the re-opening of the church so that we can be a community of welcome leading to belonging.

It is with sadness that we say goodbye this week to Melanie, our Parish Administrator for the last eighteen months. Melanie has worked hard to help with the ministry of welcome and communication from the office and then from home during the Pandemic. Melanie has been of good support to both me and the church community as well as offering helpful assistance to the wider community seeking information for baptisms, funerals and weddings as well as other pastoral issues. We give thanks for Melanie's administrative work and her polite and helpful manner within the life of the church community. We wish Melanie God's blessing as she seeks to further her career in the next step of her life. May Melanie, Pete and Eva, their daughter, be blessed by God in their family life together.

Vicar's email address

Please CHECK the email address on emails claiming to be from Fr Jeremy. He will only send from jeremy-harris@outlook.com . Please do not reply to any email from him with a different email address.

RESOURCES THIS WEEK

Sunday 27 June The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

9.30am Eucharist in the Parish Centre

It will also be possible to watch on zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82041922070?pwd=blhkaGRnUWVNbmJ6K2JBQTdDamExZz09>

Meeting ID: 820 4192 2070

Passcode: 587930

11.00am Eucharist in the Parish Centre.

4.00pm Our Second Summer Parish BBQ in the Quadrangle

We will begin with an All Age service for children and adults followed by the BBQ. All are welcome.

6.00pm Sundays@Six led by the Revd Sally and the people of St Luke's

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83960514349?pwd=YUxYSVZSVjF1cDVTdS85cDRIZm95UT09>

Meeting ID: 839 6051 4349

Passcode: 945101

Monday 28 June 8.00pm Night Prayer on Mondays on Zoom on the Eve of SS Peter & Paul

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85011600714?pwd=Y0x2VWpMQ3JFUSStsQ0plbEFLOEQrQT09>

Meeting ID: 850 1160 0714

Passcode: 553120

Psalms 125, 2 Timothy 4: 6-8, 17, 18 and Matthew 16: 13-19 Hymn All for Jesus

Tuesday 29 June 8.00pm

Bishop Olivia speaking at Maidenhead Synagogue

Wednesday 30 June

10.00am Eucharist in the Parish Centre

FUTURE DATES FOR BBQS IN THE QUAD @ 4.00pm on Sundays

25 July & 29 August – If we are lucky we may be able to find some sunny weather in September.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

Prayers from Roots resources

Eternal God, we adore you for your incredible, life changing love. A woman in the crowd is called daughter. Parents are given back their beloved child. You care enough to heal those considered unclean. You care enough to ensure a fragile child is fed. You are mighty in power and yet so gentle. God our creator, our redeemer and our comforter, we adore you, and we give thanks. Lord in your mercy.

God of the streets and crowds of the world, we come to you in sorrow and in shame for the times we have allowed prejudice to distance us from those you would draw close to. We bring to you the times when we have been too proud to ask for help and too distracted to help others. We acknowledge the times we have been quick to judge those we don't easily identify with, and ignore those whose plight we have not taken to heart. Raise us up to love and serve you. Lord in your mercy.

We continue to hold up in prayer the ministry of welcome at All Saints. As we begin planning with our PCC the return to church in the Autumn, we pray also for our activities and worship throughout the summer. We pray for the Tiny Saints return in the quadrangle and the chance for families to gather once again and for the BBQ in the Quad and an opportunity to share hospitality. We pray Lord that people will once again enjoy fellowship at All Saints and feel a sense of belonging within the community.

We give thanks for the work of Cliveden Conservation and for all those helping with the floor restoration project. We give thanks for the generosity of the church community to enable us to look forward to a church that can welcome all people for worship and mission. We give thanks for George Street's complex of buildings enabling worship to the glory of God, education of the young and pastoral care.

We pray for those in need at this time. We remember Mandy Rogers, Danielle, Nick, Fr John, Sister Mary Philip, Roger Baldery, Albert, Dave Hill, his wife Eliza, Dave's parents and Chris and Ann Rawlings, and for Paul Latham. We pray too for the families of Tara Theogarajan, Jordan Shawn Mhlanga- Viera.

We pray for the recently departed Tara Theogarajan, Jordan Shawn Mhlanga-Viera, Enid Barber and Johanna Raffin and for all those whose anniversary of death falls at this time. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Charlie Mackesy 'Imagine how we would be if we were less afraid.'
May we all be blessed by God's love this week.

Fr Jeremy

Worship for Sunday 27 June The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Sounds of Worship

Brian Graves

Today's theme is about the power of faith to restore health and even life itself. The gospel gives us two stories for the price of one. First there is the woman suffering from haemorrhages who is cured by just touching Jesus' cloak. Her faith drew on Jesus's powers without his prior intervention. Nevertheless, he is aware of what happened and blesses her for her faith. In the absence of Jesus' physical presence, we can touch his cloak in faith through prayer and worship. The second story concerns Jairus who seeks Jesus' help

to heal his dying daughter. On his way to Jairus' house the incident with the woman with the haemorrhages occurs after which a message is received to say that the daughter has died. Unperturbed, Jesus continues on his way and brings the daughter back to life. Interestingly, Jesus asks the family to keep this even more miraculous event secret from the world at large. Faith may do great things for us, but it is part of our personal relationship with Jesus and whilst we should rejoice and be grateful, we should avoid letting such emotions become boastful and conceited. The power of faith is available to everyone in equal measure.

I have chosen two hymns which reflect on the power of healing and wellness. The first is, "Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old was strong to heal and save" AM 520 words by Edward Hayes Plumptre (1821 – 1891) set to the tune St Matthew by William Croft (1678 – 1727).

Plumptre was chaplain of King's College, London, from 1847 to 1868, and the hymn was written in June 1867 for use in the chapel of King's College Hospital. It was first published on a fly-sheet and appeared in the Appendix (1868) to the First Edition of the hymn book *Ancient & Modern*. Since then, it has become one of the most widely known hymns for the sick. In the original text, there was a penultimate verse emphasising that miracles no longer happen, and healing takes place through scientific knowledge. This verse is generally dropped.

The hymn avoids mawkishness and strikes a positive note, with words such as 'strong', 'calmed', 'almighty', 'deliverer' and 'soothe' stressing both the power and gentleness of God. Like several of Plumptre's other hymns, it achieves a strong sense of inclusiveness. The first verse describes the sick, with their various afflictions, coming together to seek healing from Jesus. The second verse draws in both those who are able to go about their business and the bedridden, 'in crowded street, by restless couch' and links them to those healed in the past 'by Gennesareth's shore' (See Mark 6 53-56). In the third verse, both the healers and the sick ask for God's help and support and take part together in praising him. This breadth of vision gives the hymn a strength which has ensured its enduring value¹.

Plumptre was the son of a solicitor. He was educated at home, at King's College, London, and at University College, Oxford, where he took a 'double first'. He was a Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford (1844-47). He married Theodosia, the sister of the theologian F.D. Maurice, in 1847. He joined the staff of King's College London, where he was chaplain (1847-68), Professor of Pastoral Theology (1853-63) and Professor of Exegesis (1864-81), and where he did much to encourage higher education for women. Ordained in 1844, he was appointed assistant preacher at Lincoln's Inn in 1851, prebendary of St. Paul's in 1863, rector of Pluckley, Kent, in 1869, vicar of Bickley, Kent, in 1873, and Dean of Wells in 1881, where he made an outstanding contribution to the life and work of the cathedral. His contributions to theological scholarship included membership of the Old Testament revision committee, 1869-74, and numerous theological works².

William Croft served as a chorister in the Chapel Royal under John Blow, and in 1700 became a Gentleman Extraordinary, and later organist, of that institution. On Blow's death in 1708 Croft succeeded him as Composer and Master of the Children. In the same year he also succeeded Blow as organist of Westminster Abbey. From 1700 to 1712 he was also organist of St Anne's, Soho.

In 1713 Croft was awarded the degree of D.Mus at Oxford, on submission of two odes ('*Laurus cruentas*' and '*With noise of cannon*') celebrating the Treaty of Utrecht. In 1724 he published a two-volume collection of his church music, engraved and in score format, under the title *Musica Sacra*.

Although Croft composed accomplished songs, keyboard music, sonatas, and theatre music, his reputation rests mainly upon his church music and odes. These include an anthem, '*I will give thanks*', celebrating the battle of Blenheim (1704), and two more, '*O clap your hands*' and '*The Lord hath appeared*', marking the

victory at Ramillies (1706). The major influence on him was that of Purcell, on whom some of his works are directly modelled.

The tune St Matthew was originally printed in 1708 in the *New Version of Psalms by Dr Brady and Mr Tate [New Version, Supplement]*, the contents of which are anonymous but this tune is attributed, with relative certainty, to Croft³.

1. Your hands, O Lord, in days of old
were strong to heal and save;
it triumphed o'er disease and death,
o'er darkness and the grave:
to thee they went, the deaf, the dumb,
the palsied, and the lame,
the beggar with his sightless eyes,
the sick with fevered frame.
2. And lo, thy touch brought life and health,
gave speech, and strength and sight;
and youth renewed and frenzy calmed
owned thee, the Lord of light;
and now, O Lord, be near to bless,
almighty as of yore,
in crowded street, by restless couch,
as by Gennesareth's shore.
3. be thou our great deliverer still,
thou Lord of life and death;
restore and quicken, soothe and bless,
with thine almighty breath;
to hands that work, and eyes that see,
give wisdom's heavenly lore,
that whole and sick, and weak and strong,
may praise you evermore.

Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old AM 520 St Matthew <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8pS2XynNxs>

The second hymn is "We cannot measure how you heal" AM 522 words by John Bell (b1949) and Graham Maule (1958 – 2019) set to the Scottish folk melody Ye Banks and Braes, harmonised by John Bell.

This wonderfully comforting hymn comes from *When Grief Is Raw* (1997), having first appeared in *Love from Below (Wild Goose Songs 3)* (1989). John Bell explains that it was originally intended for use in Iona Abbey at services of prayers for the sick with the laying-on of hands. A hymn was needed to allow those who needed to move forward in the Abbey during the service. It was subsequently used to great effect at a broadcast service in March 1996 from Dunblane Cathedral after the terrible massacre of sixteen children and their teacher at the local Primary School. Since that time, Bell added, it has been frequently used on occasions of bewilderment and loss.

The hymn speaks gently but powerfully both to those who are suffering from conditions that need help, and to those who have experienced what Bell rightly calls bewilderment and loss, often as the result of some

unexpected happening. In this it is greatly assisted by the Scottish folk-song tune *Ye Banks and Braes (The Banks O' Doon)*, a tune used by Robert Burns in which the lover is 'sae weary, fu' o' care'⁴.

1. We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.
2. The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends
the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind.
3. So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends,
as hands which shaped and saved the world
are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain,
and make your broken people whole.

We cannot measure how you heal AM 522 Ye Banks and Braes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exr0oxZwZKA>

"We cannot measure how you heal"

Words: From *Love From Below*, 1989 © 1989 WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH Scotland <www.wgg.co.uk>

"Ye Banks and Braes" Harmonisation: From *Love From Below*, 1989 © 1989 WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH Scotland www.wgg.co.uk

Used by permission. CCLI Licence No 60056

- 1 Sheila Doyle. "Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old." *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*. Canterbury Press. Web. 29 May. 2021.<<http://www.hymnology.co.uk/t/thine-arm,-o-lord,-in-days-of-old>>.
- 2 Sheila Doyle. "Edward Hayes Plumtre." *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*. Canterbury Press. Web. 29 May. 2021.<<http://www.hymnology.co.uk/e/edward-hayes-plumtre>>.
- 3 David Greer. "William Croft." *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*. Canterbury Press. Web. 29 May. 2021.<<http://www.hymnology.co.uk/w/william-croft>>.
- 4 JRW/Anne Harrison. "We cannot measure how you heal." *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*. Canterbury Press. Web. 29 May. 2021.<<http://www.hymnology.co.uk/w/we-cannot-measure-how-you-heal>>.

COLLECT

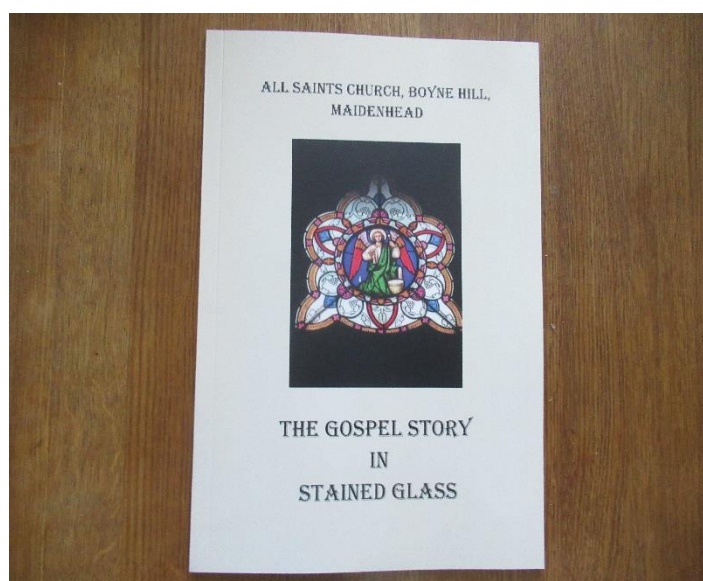
O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that with you as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not our hold on things eternal; grant this heavenly Father, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

EPISTLE **2 Corinthians 8: 7 - 15**

You excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you – so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something – now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has – not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, ‘The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.’

GOSPEL **Mark 5: 21 - 43**

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the lake. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, ‘My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.’ So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, ‘If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.’ Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ And his disciples said to him, ‘You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, “Who touched me?”’ He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.’ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?’ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, ‘Do not fear, only believe.’ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, ‘Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.’ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha cum,’ which means, ‘Little girl, get up!’ And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.



As a further fund-raiser for the floor project Ken Smith has created a pictorial record of ALL the stained glass windows in the church, including the angels in the cerestory windows and a record of the original windows that were installed by Street prior to their being replaced by the St Augustine window and the Annunciation window. The book consists of 48 A4 pages on semi-gloss stiff paper, most photos are page-size and all are accompanied by an appropriate biblical text. This is the only pictorial record of the windows that exists and only 100 copies have been printed.

Each copy is £10 and as the cost of production has been met by Citygate Automotive every sale will go towards the floor fund.

Sue Stannett has kindly offered to manage the sales so if you would like to purchase a copy of "The Gospel Story in Stained Glass", then please send an email to sastannett@gmail.com with the following information:

1. How many copies you would like to order.
2. How you would prefer to make payment, i.e. Bank Transfer, Cash or Cheque.
3. Whether you would like to collect the book or have it delivered. The collection times will be Sunday after 9.30am service, after 11.00am service or on a Tuesday afternoon, by arrangement, from the Church Vestry Door.
4. If you are without email, perhaps you could ask a friend or neighbour to request one on your behalf?

MAIDENHEAD CARE IS BACK IN OPERATION

From Thursday 1st July the Maidenhead Care telephone line will be open again. **07538 418 448.**

Maidenhead Care is a "Good Neighbour" volunteer scheme providing support for the people of Maidenhead. It was founded in 1985 by the Reverend Peter Hudson, a former Minister at Maidenhead High Street Methodist Church. We were delighted to be granted in 2009 the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK. Pre-covid we averaged over 50 jobs per week.

Our volunteers can help with the day-to-day problems of life and thereby help maintain a client's independence. Requests for help can vary from providing transport to hospitals, doctors, dentists, collecting prescriptions; to help with shopping; or just visiting the lonely and having a chat.

Each new request for help is carefully considered as the scheme is designed to help those who would have difficulty in doing a task for themselves. Their difficulties, and the availability of

other sources of help including relatives and friends, are taken into consideration to ensure that priorities are maintained.

All of our volunteer drivers are DBS vetted. If you would be interested in becoming a volunteer, please telephone us on 07538 418 448.

All Saints Church Representative: Jan Moss

CAN YOU HELP?

Female congregant who moved away from Maidenhead is looking to return. If anyone could potentially provide accommodation, even in the short term, or a house-sitting opportunity, would you please give details to Jan Moss (jan.moss@btinternet.com)



CHRISTIAN AID UPDATE

30,000 STEPS CHALLENGE

Thanks to everyone who sponsored the Revd David from URC and the Revd Joan from the Church of the Good Shepherd, and some of her family. To date Joan has raised £900 before Gift Aid, and is very grateful for your support.

PSALMATHON NEWS FROM THE ORGANISER, MARTIN ASHFORD

This is a BIG THANK YOU to those who took part in the Great Christian Aid Psalmathon during Christian Aid Week in May this year.

Contributions have continued to flow in (both online and offline) over the past few weeks since the Psalmathon, and we know that the event raised **at least £6,740 in total**. Amazing!

With your support, we have been able to help communities around the world who are facing poverty and injustice and struggling with the effects of climate change. Communities like that of Florence Muthiani in Kenya, where the building of an earth dam has changed lives for the better.

Please do pass on our thanks to all of your supporters. The Psalmathon JustGiving page is still open should anyone wish to make a late donation. <https://www.justgiving.com/team/Psalmathon>

QUENCH CHRISTIAN BOOKSHOP HAS REOPENED: Monday to Saturday 11.00am – 4.00pm

Please support them if you can; they have an excellent selection of cards and gifts for all occasions as well as the books.

FOODSHARE NEEDS are in the Maidenhead Advertiser each week.

REFLECTION by Greg Hurst

Something in their manner conveyed intimacy. This was a private moment.

It was in our garden, where we were celebrating my mother-in-law's 85th birthday with her family. I approached my nephew and niece who were standing around a table but instinct made me hold back. I didn't want to interrupt what was happening. She had driven up that morning from North Devon while her brother had driven from Hertfordshire. Just then my niece looked up and gave a shy smile. "We're exchanging Christmas presents," she said.

We all laughed at this. Here we were, in mid-June, with the sun hot and the sky deep blue, about to eat a barbeque, watching them open presents in Christmas wrapping paper.

The following morning it was our turn. Our son, who stayed overnight, produced a bag of Christmas presents. He looked embarrassed. They'd been chosen with care. But he'd wrapped them six months ago and hadn't written labels. He couldn't remember whose was whose. He had to squeeze each one, like a game of pass the parcel, and ask his girlfriend to jog his memory.

After this topsy-turvy year and a half, bizarre episodes such as this are still a regular feature of family gatherings. It is fascinating how we love our traditions and routines and will go to great lengths to restore these if they are disrupted.

The deeper lesson, though, is the strength and enduring power of love, friendship and family bonds. So many families have experienced great sadness or hardship during this pandemic. But love is strong.