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The Rev Charlie Thomson has been appointed as the new Team Rector for Melksham. Charlie is married to Hannah and they have a son Freddy. His licensing service takes place in St Michael's on September 28th at 7pm. Please pray for all the family as they prepare to come to Melksham.

The service will be preceded by refreshments from 5pm at St Barnabas, Beanacre. For further information contact Stanford Cole 01225 702393 stanfordandruth@btinternet.com

Places at the service are limited. Please contact churchwardens for further information

Peter Maslen	St Michael's	01225 708142	maslen.family@btinternet.com
Margaret Willis	St Andrew's	07960 480887	willis_frank@hotmail.com
Netty Hucknall		01225 791977	mtmparishoffice@gmail.com

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Lockdown colour see page 8

FRONT PAGE: OPENING THE BOULES COURT CHURCH SERVICES SEE PAGE 34

AND THE SEASONS TURN..

Hello everyone. I hope you have had some time over the summer to rest, reflect and restore. Derek and I have been away on a narrow boat holiday with our family. Three generations gathered together in old familiar ways. Yet for some amongst us this was a new experience. Those born not long before the world changed were having to learn tribal life for the first time! It brought laughter, fun and an occasional need for space! Indeed for all of us there was a need to relearn that communal living that has become so alien to us. This made me think of church and the ways in which we too will have to rebuild relationships, relearn an open and genuinely warm welcome to those who step in. This was made all the more poignant when Derek and I went to visit a church on Sunday morning. Not a single word of welcome was offered to us from the body of Christ. We had coffee and stood, lost, alone, and wondered at how easy it is to be blind to the stranger in our midst.



For many of us this time has been about protection and safety. Life within our own walls has become a habit - almost a comfort blanket. We have been cautious in church, seeking ways to keep each other safe and yet hold together as a worshipping community. Those who have joined us online have found a new way of hearing the good news of Jesus, and for those isolating this has been a way to stay connected. However, just like my youngest grandchildren, I believe now is the time to begin to embrace the joy that being together brings our human hearts “to be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.” Ps31:24. Maybe you have fallen out of the habit of Sunday morning gathering, preferring a slow start with tea and toast and the Sunday papers. I invite you to re-enter the family gathering, to feel a part of the turning seasons of church life and to be a part of its re-energising possibilities.

As summer moves slowly towards its close, and the joy of autumn and all the delights that brings, we too move forward as a parish. Our new Rector Charlie will join us at the end of September. Together with Hannah and their son Fred, Charlie will step into the life of this parish full of love and hope for their ministry here among us. I can't wait to be a part of their story as they become a part of ours. Will you join in the journey?

Alison

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

I wonder what comes to mind when you think of the word mess? I often think of rubbish, muddy wellies, the sticky hands of children, or a clutter of laundry still to be put away.

I wonder what Jesus thought of mess - if he worried about making it, or about leaving it. If he found it refreshing or chaotic. Mess is all around us, it's a fixture in our lives and is unavoidable. We are all messy in some way, with messy lives and

families. As I coordinate Melksham Messy Church, I am constantly reminded and encouraged by God when it comes to mess!

We had a wonderful Messy Church Holiday Club in August, with families joining us for games, activities and take away activity bags. We loved exploring the adventures of Paul, the plan God had for his life, and the plan God has for ours! We loved being immersed in mess and creativity and I was reminded of the immense love that Jesus has for his people. Jesus loved messy people. He ministered to those who were struggling, alone, afflicted and shunned by society. He set an example for us to follow by loving people who were otherwise pushed aside.

Jesus came into the mess of people's lives and showed them an unconditional love and value. I feel so blessed to know that I can come to God in my mess - do you?



I pray for you to be encouraged by the mess in your life this week. Embrace it and know that Jesus is with you in all things. God sent his son into this messy world to rescue the broken, the hurting and all people in need of Him. Please continue to pray for the children and families in our town, that they can encounter God and know that in their mess, they are loved and treasured.

Hannah Tarring
Children & Families Coordinator
Melksham Team Ministry



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NO REST FOR THE AQUADEACON

The Ven Sue Groom, Archdeacon of Wilts, tells us: "My next swim challenge is to cross the Solent from Stokes Bay to Ryde Sands for Aspire on 4th September. Please sponsor me!"

In February 2019 Sue had a hip replacement. Later she swam 100 miles in lakes and pools over a fourteen week period. This year she plans to swim from Stokes Bay to Ryde Sands in the Isle of Wight on 4th September.

Sue said, "apart from paddling on holiday as a child I have done hardly any swimming in the sea. I wonder what am I letting myself in for." Sue's aim is to raise £1,000 to support Aspire.



Aspire is a national charity providing practical help to spinal injured people across the UK, supporting them from injury to independence. Every four hours someone in the UK is paralysed by a spinal cord injury.

Aspire services include: housing; independent living; assistive technology; welfare benefits advice; money matters; research. For more information about their work please visit www.aspire.org.uk."

You can donate to Sue's JustGiving page by copying and pasting this link in your web browser:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/sue-groom4>

Source: Grapevine

Grapevine is the Diocese of Salisbury's weekly newsletter, sharing stories of lives transformed in Christ from around Dorset and Wilts

WHAT DID YOU DO DURING THE LOCKDOWN?

Gwen and Ian McLean



What do you do during lockdown when the whole house has been cleaned again, cupboards organised, wardrobes sorted, cooker cleaned? I hate cleaning the cooker!

The obvious answer is to create a wild flower area in the front garden to attract all kinds of insects, butterflies and passing dog walkers.

The first thing to do is to select the kinds of seeds you want to sow. I was amazed at the

variety to choose from. I selected three boxes. Each box contained seeds with a variety of colours and attracted different insects and butterflies. We decided to mix all the seeds together. We found the biggest bowl we had and slowly and carefully added a few seeds from each box, stirring them hoping for the best.

Now the ground had to be prepared. I had done my bit so it was over to the man who does the hard work. The turf was removed and the weeds dug out. The soil was sifted and the ground flattened and levelled. It was marked out to ensure the seeds were evenly distributed. No mean feat. The seeds were then carefully scattered and rolled gently into the ground and regularly watered. The hardest part followed - patience. Will they grow? Have we left any gaps? Have the seeds been thoroughly mixed? Each morning we looked to see if there were any shoots appearing. Photo: wild flower garden.



Continues next page

Suddenly a few shoots did appear with tiny white flowers, followed a few days later by blue, purple, yellow and red flowers. Bees began to buzz, butterflies fluttered between the flowers and we had our beautiful wild flower garden.

We watched God's creation in full bloom and saw smiles on peoples faces as they walked down the lane. Some stopped to chat or asked if the could take a photograph.

The flowers are beginning to fade now but we have plans to add more seeds next year, looking forward to an even better wild flower garden. It certainly was worth the effort and has given us both a lot of pleasure.



COLLECTION BOXES IN MANY LOCAL SUPERMARKETS

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***Items are tinned**

YOU ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Photograph: Cathedral view from one of the secret gardens
Copyright Katharine Shearing

Friends of Salisbury Cathedral – Secret Gardens of the Close, and Green Fair

The Friends of Salisbury Cathedral's *Secret Gardens of the Close* event returns in September and this year there's a new attraction.

The event, which enables the public to visit gardens in Salisbury Cathedral Close that are normally hidden from view, will include a green fair comprising a dozen stalls with an eco-friendly theme.

Secret Gardens of the Close & Green Fair takes place on Sunday September 12 from 1pm to 5pm.

As well as touring some of the larger gardens in the Close and De Vaux Place, visitors can enjoy tea and cake on the lawn of South Canonry, the home of the Bishop of Salisbury.

The green fair stalls include Harnham Water Meadows Trust, Plantlife and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, whose representatives will be explaining what they do and how the public can get involved.

Salisbury Florilegium Society will be hosting an exhibition of members botanical paintings in the Medieval Hall, and musical entertainment will be provided by recorder group Close Consort, whose members will be playing in a number of the gardens.

Friends chairman Duncan Glass said: "The Friends are very much looking forward to holding our *Secret Gardens of the Close* afternoon following the disappointment of having to cancel last year due to the Covid-19 restrictions. The green fair will enhance this popular event and we look forward to welcoming everyone to our flagship event."

Tickets for *Secret Gardens of the Close & Green Fair* are £10 (under-16s free), and are available at the event. For more details, contact the Friends office on 01722 555190.

Threads through Creation exhibition at Salisbury Cathedral

Salisbury Cathedral is hosting an exhibition entitled *Threads through Creation*. The exhibition comprises 12 textile panels by textile artist Jacqui Parkinson. The panels re-imagine the days of creation described in the book of Genesis.

The exhibition runs until 26th September.

For more information visit www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/events



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LOCAL CLIMATE STRATEGY

Wiltshire Council is consulting on its draft Climate Strategy from 1st September for six weeks, as it aims to meet its pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Marc Read, Community Engagement Manager, says:

“The consultation is your chance to help shape the future of Wiltshire in its journey to becoming a carbon neutral county and more resilient to climate impacts. The council will be asking for your views on how you think residents, communities and businesses in the county can all play their part to achieve this.

“There will be a chance to attend engagement events to ask questions and share your views during the six weeks of the consultation period, along with an online survey, so please do get involved and help to spread the word.

“The full consultation documents and information will be available at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/green-economy from 1st September.

“We all have a responsibility to do what we can to tackle this global problem, and your support on a local level will be vital, so please do get involved!”

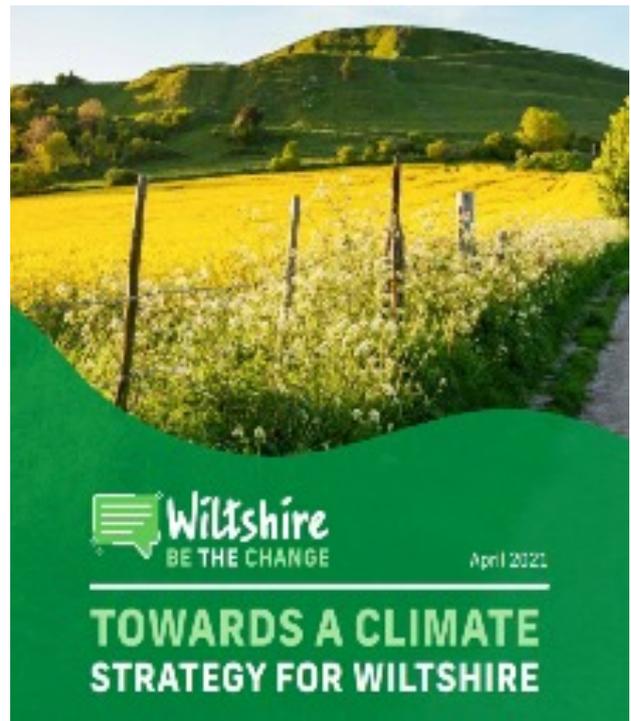
Locally, Peter Dunford is Community Engagement Manager for Melksham

Communities and Neighbourhoods.

Tel: 07827 958303

Email: peter.dunford@wiltshire.gov.uk

Web: <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=166>



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TRUST IN JESUS - by Philip Cairns

When we had our service at St. Barnabas after the lockdown, Alison Sowton spoke about trust and it made me think about the word itself. Trust is a good word, yet when we put the word into use it can become a challenge and make our lives difficult, as we have put our faith where our mouth is. Words can come easily and when we need to back them up with our faith, it is hard.

Early on in my Christian faith I was taught this acrostic.

F Forsaking

A All

I I

T Trust

H Him

If you remove the word Trust the acrostic loses its meaning. Starting with the letter 't' we need to know that this stands for Tree. In the Bible it says Jesus died on a tree for our sins, which makes the 't' the cross. This leads us to R and this stands for Resurrection. Jesus brings us resurrection from our sins. U stands for you and me, Jesus is quite specific he calls each one of us by name. The S stands for Salvation. Jesus calls us to receive salvation individually and Jesus is our personal Saviour.

This brings us back to 't' once again and this stands for our word Trust. Trusting in Jesus is the right way to go. Trust in our Father in heaven, trust in Jesus and trust in the Holy Spirit, trust that you have been forgiven and have received eternal life.

AND THAT'S JAZZ

According to a new study, the moody piano blues of jazz may influence you towards making better dietary choices. Apparently, a slow jazz melody played on piano can nudge people towards choosing a healthy meal, and to linger over it for longer.

Previous research has shown that background music can influence consumer behaviour, but this study at Aarhus University in Denmark is the first to link jazz with food choice.



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10:00 Opening prayer and silence in the church or garden

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12:50 Short period of silence

13:00 Service and meditation

13:30 Silence in the church or garden

15:00 Depart

A donation towards costs is welcomed

The postcode for Great Chalfield is SN12 8NH. From Melksham take the B3107, turn right through Broughton Gifford, past the Common, and then turn left to Great Chalfield about 1 mile.

For more information please ring:

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or Anthony Matthew 01225 782082

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THE TROUBLE WITH STOMACH ACHE!

Part 3 : Daily diet and recipes

The lockdown has given most of us the opportunity to experiment. I constantly look for ideas to fit my eating pattern. Vegan recipes often fit the bill, but I still need to keep clear of intolerant items like onions. I find recipes that I and my husband like and then try to keep a diary of the method and ingredients. Instagram is a good source of vegan recipes, especially pasta. Plant based recipes can usually be adapted to suit anyone who has a digestive problem.

Breakfast for me is usually fairly straightforward, mainly keeping clear of the dreaded sorbitol sweeteners and - strangely - honey, although maple syrup is fine. I try not to eat too much bread. Weetabix, Shredded Wheat and rolled oats are fine. I enjoy a cooked breakfast from time to time, eating foods in moderation. Eggs in all their guises I enjoy. We bake all our own bread and often use spelt flour recipes baking with whole grain. Spelt flour is a bit like working with whole wheat flour, with its coarser texture. White spelt flour is ground without the outer bran or germ, resulting in a finer-textured, lighter flour that is a better substitute for all-purpose flour. Banana cake made with spelt is delicious. Some people make sourdough. In a nutshell, sourdough is slow fermented bread. It is unique because it does not require commercial yeast in order to rise. Instead, it is made with a live fermented culture, a sourdough starter, which acts as a natural leavening agent. I haven't had the patience to make sourdough bread.

I drink lactose-free milk which requires more extensive processing than regular milk. Many of the disadvantages of drinking lactose-free milk are the same as with regular milk. New research suggests that an excessive intake of dairy products can increase the risks of cancer and heart disease.

All supermarkets stock the product. We find Lidl is best on price. I suggested last time that you might download the Monash University app. The app is direct from the research team that first developed the FODMAP diet and includes an easy guide to which foods are low and high in FODMAPs, and more than 80 delicious low FODMAP recipes.

Next time: More recipe ideas, eating out, and dealing with the inevitable. Ruth Jay - Ruth lives in Melksham and is a member of the local church. Please note the diagnosis of Irritable Bowel Syndrome should be made by a medical practitioner.

Sources: Monash University, Melbourne, Australia - fodmap app



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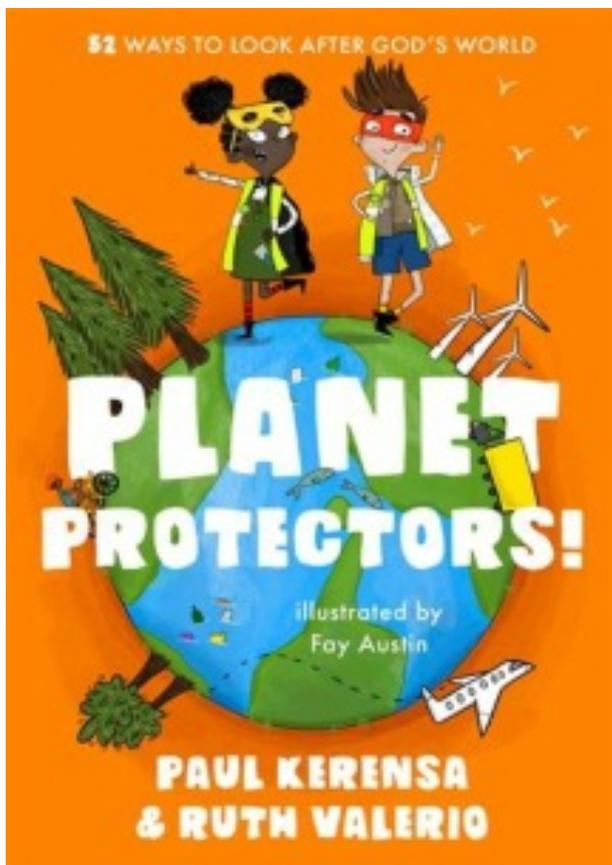
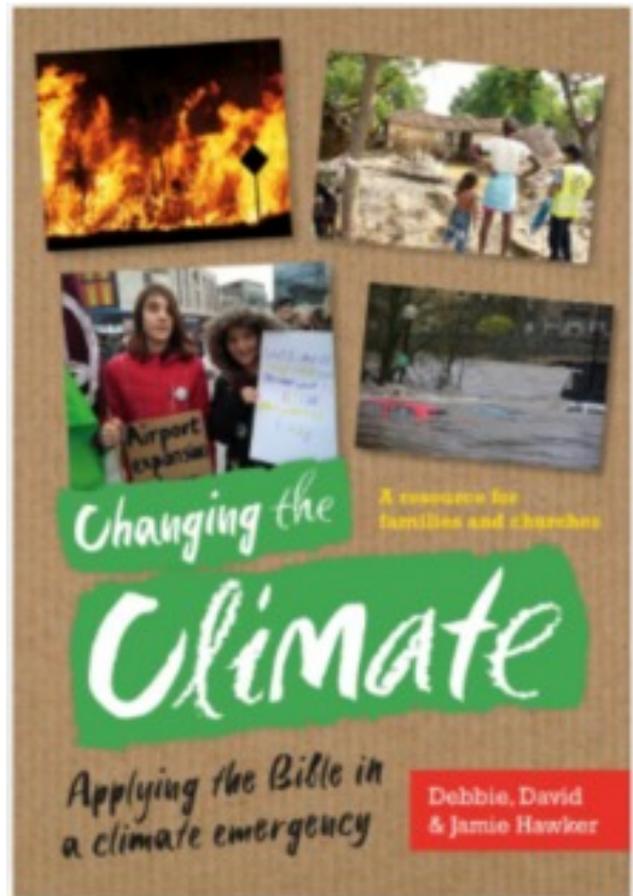
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Changing the Climate: Applying the Bible in a climate emergency

By Debbie, David and Jamie Hawker
BRF, £9.99

This book considers a series of Bible passages, unpacked to show the Bible's relevance to environmentalism, and how we can all play our part in limiting the negative effects of climate change. The climate crisis is one of the most important issues of our time, threatening lives and livelihoods. The Bible teaches us that God the creator put humans on the earth to take care of it; to show love to all, and to care for the poor and vulnerable.



Planet Protectors – 52 Ways to Look after God's World

By Paul Kerensa and Ruth Valerio,
SPCK, £7.99

This is a good book for summer reading.

It is a fun, fact-filled book for 7 to 9 year-olds that offers 52 'empowering' ways to become Planet Protectors that look after God's world.

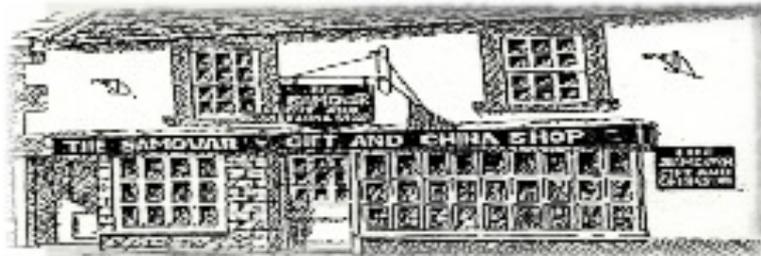
The book is a blend of interesting facts, Christian theology and practical tips on how to help the environment by living sustainably. The ideas for looking after the world include cycling more, choosing fair-trade, taking shorter showers, and recycling.

Children will love taking up a different challenge each week.

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Hard to tell

During a summer music festival, a punk rocker stopped at the front desk of the reception tent to ask if there were any messages for her.

The desk clerk handed her an unsigned note, and she asked for a description of the person who had left it. "That's easy," replied the clerk. "He wore tight pink leather trousers, high-heeled black boots and a T-shirt with strategically cut holes. There was a row of coloured safety pins through the outside edge of one ear, and he wore purple eye shadow. And his hair was orange and spiked."

"Oh, man!" she said, obviously disappointed, "that could be anybody!"

**

The purpose of the font

That Sunday our Family Service included two baptisms and many young children were there. In his talk, the Vicar asked the children if any of them knew what the font was for – and the answer came back: "For washing babies hair!"

**

What it takes

In some countries any man with a good voice, a large vocabulary and a microphone seems certain to develop into a political party.

**

Good and bad

An honest confession is good for the soul – but probably bad for the reputation.

**

Good camping advice

Going camping this month? Take along a tuba or a drum and carefully place it beside your tent. It will keep the spaces on either side of your tent well and truly vacant.

**

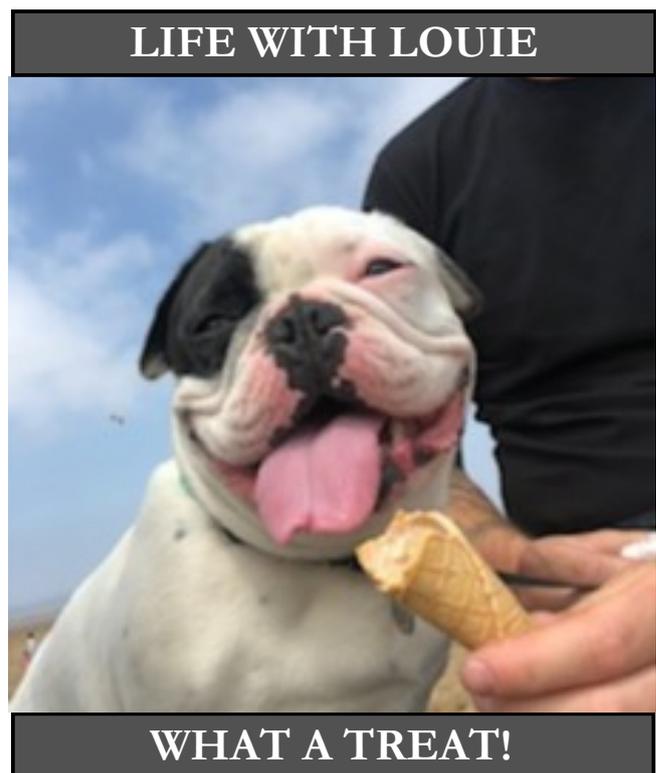
For sale

Notice in local newspaper:
Wedding dress for sale. Worn once by mistake.

**

Before – and after

Conscience is what hurts when everything else feels so good.



PATHS AND MOUNTAINS

Mountains are the most magnificent of God's structures. They are there to explore and reflect.

I imagine my life's journey, starting by travelling through the lower meadows and forests of a large mountain. I find it exhilarating, fresh and fun. There is a path that I feel drawn to follow. I can deviate from the path but not for long. The atmosphere of the mountain has a surreal feeling and envelops my senses. It is not unpleasant, it just adds to the mystery. Rocks and cliff faces seem to hang over me, streams and waterfalls are everywhere. Its always unexpected, awesome, beautiful. At times there is fear and foreboding and a sense of loneliness.



The path starts to descend, going through a darker fir lined area, then it starts to rise ever upward. I need to draw breath.

I meet others on the journey - pilgrims with the same resolve. Some appear to find it all so easy. Others struggle and literally fall by the wayside.

Somehow I keep going, asking myself why I do it, what is it all about? The path forks, then forks again. I choose one of the paths. My heart, sense of direction and resolve determine which one.

If you are fortunate you find a like minded person, a life partner, to walk with you. Supporting one another on the journey, sometimes over difficult terrain.

Those who appear to be finding it all so easy soon take another path. We decide to continue on the path that we have chosen. Thankfully we are with others who are following a similar route.

Rain, snow, wind and mist, strange sounds of hidden creatures, falling rocks and splashing water. The mountain is always dangerous, full of dead-ends and cul-de-sacs. The unknowing of what lies ahead is always there. We are drawn on. We must see what is around the next rock of the ascending path.

Birds, other fauna and wildflowers are everywhere, often in great drifts. There are hints of darker things. Some of it appears to lie away from the path. Sometimes you sense its on another path you want to follow. You get a strong feeling not to follow in that direction.

Thankfully there are two of us. Even so, there is still a dispute going on in our heads. They are thoughts that act like voices. The second voice says it is easier the other way - there is no need to keep climbing the path. The first voice encourages us to redouble our efforts.

The second voice says we are not skilled or do not have the stamina. Thankfully our resolve, and sometimes stubbornness, ignores it and we continue on.

The journey continues through hard work, stamina, and perseverance. The going sometimes becomes easier, bringing new life, new hope and a spring to our step. The views are extensive and brilliant. Life just could not be better. The path reaches another peak, the track starts to descend, the route becomes difficult - its a rock-strewn place, the sun goes in and now it is raining. I slip, I twist my ankle.

We long to restart the walk. The second voice tells me to be sensible, take it easy - even to retrace our steps. I question the path that we have taken. There is always another path to take, another fork, the more difficult way. I have found from experience that the more difficult path is never impossible.

We decide to keep to the easier path just to see how we get along. Perhaps we will try the harder path again in the future. I have found before the easier path never delivers what it promises. The path seems to lead in a wrong and sometimes different direction, the uphill way is not part of it. The path starts to rise again, it forks once more. This time I listen to my first voice - the voice I have found I can trust. My partner also hears the first voice. We take the more difficult path. Are we going to have the stamina? We take frequent rests, we make time to review the journey. We are in it together for the long haul. Once again the sun is shining, the scenery is stunning, we feel we are back on the right path.

I remember the beginning. I reflect on what might have been and what is still to come. The first voice prompts to help others with their journey. It tells us we should be happy to give and sacrifice more. The second voice tells us it is all too much - we need to look after ourselves and take it easy.

Occasionally the awe and majesty of the mountain top can be glimpsed, it is majestic and beautiful. The journey continues...

Paths and Mountains by Barry Scarlett

OFFICIAL OPENING OF A NEW PISTE



The Northey Petanque Club were invited to teach the game of boules/skills to a ready to learn congregation at St Barnabas, Beanacre.

The club gave their time, and what they had left in energy, after enjoying a full Sunday roast!

Upon arrival just a few of the parishioners had gathered around this new Venture. Then suddenly people began to arrive in large numbers dressed for fun!

They knew little about the game of boules, apart from the fact the game was French! Wearing those ubiquitous strings of onions and colourful berets gave the game away.

Certainly the many smiles indicated that the beginning of a fun Petanque Club was about to be formed.

Amen

Terry Basson

Photograph: Spectators gather to watch the opening match

This Boules Court has been provided by St Barnabas Church for anyone to freely use and enjoy at any time

The boules court three years in the making is finally open. A great team effort. It was always a project with the community in mind. Final touches are soon to be applied. A low boundary fence has since been added, and donations are now being

sought for picnic seats and a brick built barbecue. Terry Basson below shows how its done.



Stanford Cole above discusses the finer points.



In the bottom photograph, family members gather at the stone placed in memory of former members of St Barnabas, Elizabeth and Daniel Awdry.

Wild flower seed has already germinated and is growing around the stone. All this helps to make a good setting for the boules court and picnic area. Picnic seats are coming soon together with a barbecue.



Family members include Cilla and William Massey, their niece Emma Jelf, daughter of Cilla's sister Letitia Scott on the right.

What next? Will sheep be allowed to safely graze?

As mentioned in previous issues of the Messenger a low fence has now replaced the previous damaged wildflower boundary fence. The new fence perfectly sets off the court and cricket field. All that remains is the purchase of picnic tables and construction of a brick-built barbecue.



It is some years now since the church applied for change of use for the field from agricultural to recreational use. This was agreed subject to the area being kept under the direction of the local church.

Much has happened since that time - cricket, football coaching, fetes, picnics and the boules court. During lockdown the cricket field did not lie fallow but was used to grow hay.

The juices are stirring again. Last year it was agreed to adopt Richard Staniforth's plan to re-establish the cricket field with the opportunity for other sporting and social activities to take place. There will be areas of managed wilderness around the pitch with a perimeter track. Other paths intersecting the wilderness areas will allow them to be accessible and managed. Mown areas for spectators, picnics and family use will be maintained allowing views across the field.

St Barnabas people hope that in the future there will be a place where both the Melksham team and the local community can together enjoy the facilities.

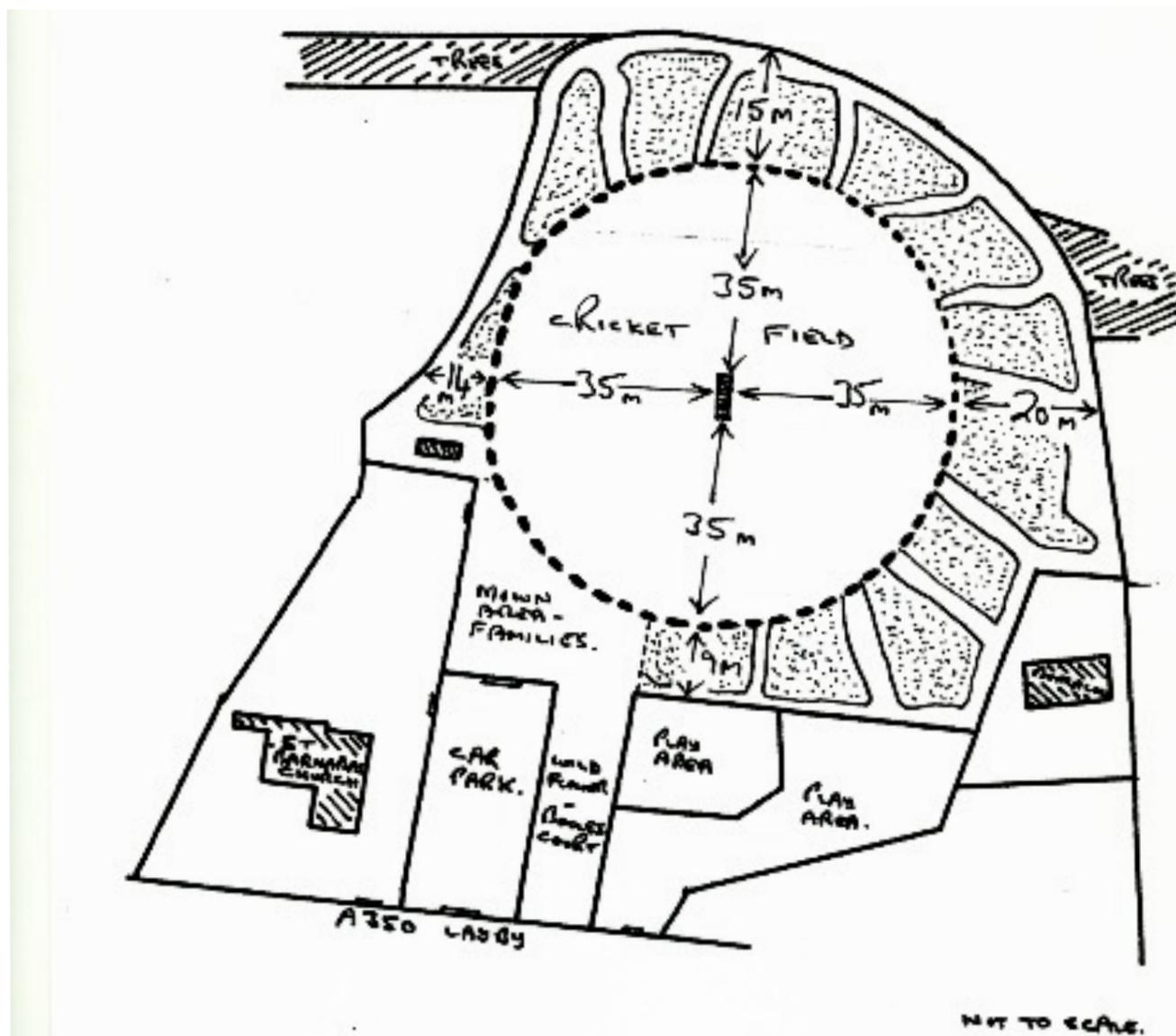
Money - a good question

The vicar when asked about the church deficit replied, "no, we are not short of money, its all in the congregations pockets". After the pandemic, many churches have found their finances have been severely reduced.

Continues on the next page

Over the years the church at St Barnabas has kept reserves towards projects and other contingencies. Money these days tends to get used and not saved. The boules court caught the imagination and most of the money was donated.

Obviously any project costs money, churchwarden Stanford Cole tells me that money has been promised to use for the field re-establishment. and development. He feels optimistic about the future.



Donations towards the picnic tables, barbecue and field development can be made to: PCC Melksham Team Ministry - St Barnabas.

Sort Code 30-98-75 - Account number 020775102. Alternatively, send cheques or cash to the Treasurer: Dale Harger, 29A Westlands Lane, Beanacre SN12 7QE

Contributors: Tim Basson, Stanford Cole, Richard Staniforth and the Editor

SERVICES IN THE TEAM - S



St Michael's

Every Sunday in September at 10.15am Family Communion

Sunday 19th service in September includes a Baptism

Wednesday 15th September Holy Communion

Tuesday 28th September 7pm

Licensing Service Rev Charlie Thomson

Every Sunday in October at 10.15am Family Communion

Sunday 17th service in October includes a Baptism

Wednesday 20th October Holy Communion

Team Licensing of the Rev Charlie Thomson

St Michael's Church

7pm Tuesday 28th September

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER



St Barnabas

Sunday 5th September

10am Breakfast

Sunday 19th September

10am Family Worship

Sunday 26th September

10am Family Communion

Sunday 3rd October

10am Breakfast

Sunday 17th October

10am Family Worship

Sunday 24th October

10am Family Communion



St Andrew's

Wednesday 1st September

11am Holy Communion

Sunday 5th/12th /19th September

10am Family Communion

Sunday 26th September

9.30am Breakfast Church

Sunday 3rd October

10am Harvest & Baptism

Wednesday 6th October

11am Holy Communion

Sunday 10th /17th October

10am Family Communion

Sunday 24th October

9.30am Breakfast Church

On Sunday 3rd October following Harvest Services in Church we plan to gather at St Michael's for a simple lunch. This will be a further opportunity to meet Charlie Thomson and his family, Hannah and their son Freddie. Further details to follow.

BAPTISM

What is baptism (christening)? Baptism, as taught in the Bible, is a ceremony in which a person is symbolically cleansed of sin through water and given the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. It is a Christian rite of admission and adoption. It is a 'sacrament', a visible sign of God's love. In baptism, we are thanking God for his gift of life, acknowledging that we all need to turn away from evil and to accept his offer of a new start and help in our lives.



When we baptise we are bringing that person - whether a baby or adult - into the Christian Family, and as such we baptise within a sacramental service - a communion service.

For those who don't know, my history is of Anglo-Catholicism. I came to the church when I was in my teens, with a few lapses along the way. I have now reached an age when, looking back, I can see how much change has occurred in my lifetime. Many centuries ago you were not able to go into a church unless you had been baptised. There would have been a baptistry local to your home where you were taken for instruction, and then baptised by water and the Holy Spirit. These baptistries were built in the round and were at the West end of church buildings, hence that is where the font is placed today. It would have been mainly adults who were baptised. Today we baptise babies, toddlers and in fact anyone who asks for baptism.

Baptism promises are made for babies and infants on the understanding that at some point in the future they will take on these promises themselves by being confirmed. Now we all know that the majority of baptised people do not come forward for confirmation, but some do. It is our job as the Christian Family to help anyone who asks, to understand what they are taking on by becoming a Christian.

We have hindsight. When John the Baptist was baptising in the River Jordan what he was doing was washing away sin but not giving the Holy Spirit, because at that time Jesus had not come forward to be baptised.

When Jesus asked John, who was his cousin, to baptise him, John didn't want to do this as he felt that Jesus did not have any sin.

Jesus insisted, and it was at this point the spirit of God descended like a dove and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased".

continues on the next page

From then on we have baptised with water and the laying on of hands - washing away sin and bestowing the Holy Spirit on the person to be baptised.

Today, as in many churches, quite a few of the Christian Family fail to attend on the day of a baptism. This is one of the saddest things I experience. We as a Church wonder why congregations are dwindling, and the young do not want to come and witness Jesus in a church service. My question is Why would they? When families come to a baptism along with their extended family and friends, what do they see and experience? So many of their prospective Christian Family are not there to greet them or support them. Is this right? People's opinions that "they come for the baptism and then the party" are all very well and good and may be right, but the fact is the children have been brought by their parents who have requested baptism – not forced into having a baptism. Yes, I know the arguments: "we never see them again"; "they only want a party" but how do we know who God has been with during that service? How do we know that one of the baptism party has not received the gift of the Holy Spirit? Seeds are planted and should be nurtured. None of this can be done unless we are **all** willing to help. I believe we are God's messengers. What do you think?

We have been unable to carry out baptisms for the last 18 months and just started again this June. There are at least sixteen families on the waiting list who have asked for baptism for their children. These go back to the end of 2019. At the last two baptisms the number of people permitted to attend was limited, to enable safe distancing and accommodate the usual congregation. We could actually have allowed more members of the extended families and their friends to come to these baptisms, because members of the Christian Family did not attend them for whatever reasons. How sad is that?

We must understand that although children are being baptised and don't appear to be coming back for services in church, a lot of these families actually attend Messy Church. Messy Church is an ecumenical church and is growing fast. When they were able to meet before the pandemic their number could be 100 or more. Mums, dads, grans and grandads came along with their offspring and joined in the Messiness of Worship that is Messy Church. We should be seeing this, or using this, as a stepping stone into whatever church they will feel welcome.

Pam Wornham
Baptism Co-ordinator
Melksham Team Ministry

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SAFEGUARDING

During the COVID-19 crisis, it is particularly important to safeguard adults and children with care and support needs. They may be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect as others may seek to exploit disadvantages due to age, disability, mental or physical impairment or illness.

The church safeguarding officer is Gwen McLean 01225 705440

CALL 111 IF YOU NEED URGENT MEDICAL HELP OR ADVICE

For information or enquiries

Please contact Netty Hucknall re Newsletter - mtmparishoffice@gmail.com

Barry Scarlett re: Magazine - messenger2016@talktalk.net

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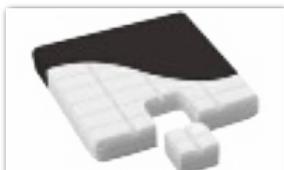
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