

THE MINISTER WRITES ...



God's grace truly is sufficient for us

Dear All,

In 2 Corinthians 12:2-10, we read about Paul's visions and revelations. It would seem that *'the person in Christ'* we read of is Paul himself, but he is reluctant to attribute the same importance to revelations as his opponents attach to them. He may be following the convention of 'apocalypses' that describe such visions with pseudonyms (Daniel, Enoch, Ezra). Or perhaps his Pharisaism makes him suspicious of 'mysticism'. Certainly, the rabbis warn of the dangers of exploring *'what is above and below, what has been and what will be'* (Mishnah Hagigah 2.1). There are various depictions of heaven in Jewish literature, including a threefold *'lower heaven, middle heaven, and supreme heaven'* (Targum of 2 Chronicles 6.18), and Paul is implying here that he entered the highest heaven. But his approach is a little negative, or at least complex towards 'apocalyptic' visions because he does not reveal what he has seen. He writes about this event as being 'fourteen years ago' which suggests this experience is additional to the revelation on the road to Damascus (Gal 1.13-17), and Paul acknowledges it was exceptional and potentially elating.

This brings him to his fundamental point about his thorn in the flesh. Again, he does not disclose many details but, like Job's sufferings (Job 1-2), Satan has used it to tempt him to doubt God. And this takes us into a central theme of 2 Corinthians with Paul's affirmation that his many sufferings are a sign, not of God's contempt for him, but of the presence of 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1.3) whose power is made perfect in weakness. This comment of Paul's, *'power is made perfect in weakness'*, is definitely one of those paradoxes that emerge when we try to put the deep realities of life into words. I'm pretty sure we don't tend to think that Paul is saying that God routinely knocks us into shape through suffering, but rather that there are ways that we see ourselves as strong and successful that can also make us self-reliant and shallow. Perhaps here we simply recognise that the deepest insights and the most thoughtful, inspiring faith is often possessed by people who have suffered. These are people who have reached the end of their own mortal resources and know what it is to rely on God's utter kindness and generosity.

Those of us who've experienced appraisals of some kind will be used to the language of strengths and weaknesses. The aim, usually, is to build up the strengths and transform (or eradicate) the weaknesses. Paul's experiences suggest an alternative way to look at this. For all the reasons he lists, here and in the preceding verses, he was clearly perceived by some as a man with many weaknesses but few strengths. He admits as much. Yet, as we know well, he was and continues to be a great source of inspiration, strength and blessing to followers of Jesus. We may wish to reflect, considering where we are able to see what the world perceives to be weaknesses actually being a source of strength and blessing? How might we encourage more of this?

Another thought: Paul can't, or won't, give details of his 'out of this world' experience. He may have good reasons not to do so; perhaps he is distancing himself from opponents who attached great importance to such revelations. And it certainly looks like he wants us to focus more on his weaknesses. It is through them that the power of Christ is revealed. It is because of them that he hears God say: *'My grace is sufficient for you'*. We consider, do we know our own weaknesses?

Can we sense God working or speaking to us through them? How might we express or live out an understanding that God's grace truly is sufficient for us?

With much love, *Neil*

LEPROSY MISSION BOXES

This is just a reminder to those of you who have a TLM collection box, that it is time to count up the savings. The cut off time is the end of November.

If anyone would like a box to start a loose change collection for the coming year, please let me know and I'll be happy to give you one. Even though we perhaps don't possess as much excess small change these days, it is still surprising how much can be collected over the year and it is all for a very good cause.

Many thanks.

HARVEST LUNCH

Everyone is warmly invited to Harvest Lunch following our Harvest Festival service on 6th October. As is our custom, there is no need to book and there is no charge, although donations are welcome. On this occasion, coffee will be served at the back of the church after the service, giving everyone a chance to look at the decorations, some of which have been prepared by our church organisations. Lunch will be served in the school room at about 12.30pm. We plan to serve quiche baby potatoes and salad followed by fruit crumble. Please let us know of any dietary requirements. Please encourage any visitors with us to come and join us. We hope to have guests from neighbouring churches. *Church Life Committee*

ELECTIONS

We will hold an election at the AGM and Church Meeting on 24th November to choose who will serve on the Diaconate next year. At present we have 13 Deacons.

Deacons remaining in office:

Kate Helleur
Jenny Jones
Bryan Naunton
Nellie Powlett
Netty Waters

Deacons eligible for re-election:

Nicky Bridgland
Joy Byford
John Durnford
Ann Fox
Mike Smith

Deacons retiring at the end of 6 years' service:

Rob King (could be co-opted by the trustees as Church Secretary)
David Stainer
June Thornton

TFI = TOGETHER FOR IPSWICH

This is the body that aims to coordinate all the Ipswich churches' efforts in community actions, and to be the churches' mouthpiece for the Borough and County Council. We at Christ Church have an interest in this, of course, but at the moment we are not actively engaged.

Their latest venture is to address needs of the homeless. They are asking for a list of which churches already provide meals for the homeless, and whether any church provides other help – warm, dry spaces, or counselling / social help. Then they will be able to plug the gaps, and provide a more coherent service. This may be run entirely by one church, or several churches; or it may be a council-run initiative. In any case it is good not to duplicate efforts, but to cover as many possibilities as possible.

PRAYER CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER

6th October – As we hold our Harvest Festival and Harvest lunch today, giving thanks for having sufficient food to eat, and celebrating God’s goodness with a shared meal, we also remember those both in our own local community and around the world who struggle to feed themselves and their families. We pray for the work of FIND and other food banks and charities that work to alleviate hunger.

13th October - We pray for Thursday Forum which started its 2024-25 season this month. We pray for all involved, the organisers, speakers, caterers, that this group will continue to enrich lives and raise awareness of the work of different charities and other organisations represented by the speakers. For some attendees this may be the only connection they have with our church, or any church; we pray that they may take home a positive impression of a friendly thoughtful caring community, with whom they might want to become better acquainted.

20th October – We pray for new people who may visit our church for Sunday worship. May we offer a genuine warm welcome to all, helping people to feel accepted and valued whatever their background or history or disability or sexuality or previous experience of church or any other factor. We pray that some of those whom we have seen recently may want to join us in the ongoing work of serving God at Christ Church.

27th October - We move the clocks back today reminding us that winter is coming, with dark evenings and colder days. We pray for those who will struggle to keep warm this winter, especially those pensioners who may be affected by the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel payments.

Thursday
Forum
 at Christ Church
 Tacket Street (next to Cox Lane car park)

Thursday Lunchtimes
 Refreshments at low cost 12 noon - 1.00 pm
 A short talk 1.10 - 1.50 pm

You are welcome to either or both



There is, as ever, an exciting and varied selection of talks, presentations and entertainments planned for this year at Forum.

It all starts on 3rd October with the Strategy and Policy Manager of Freeport East, Simon Papworth, who introduces his topic:

'We have a range of unique advantages which make our location one of the most exciting and dynamic investment opportunities in the UK.

Our Freeport covers over a thousand square kilometres in total, positioned on the east coast of England and encompassing parts of Suffolk and Essex. We aim to create lots of sustainable job opportunities; enhance workforce skills, and fund innovation and clean growth.'

David and Mari Thompson follow that with their experiences in Kosovo. David writes:

'Kosovo is in the news again because of Serbian/Albanian ethnic conflict, which had led to the war between the two sides in 1998 onwards. We helped with the post-war recovery in visits in 2000 and 2005, meeting survivors and places affected by the conflict and working in restoring war damage and supporting relief work'.

Chris Turland has entertained us before as a local historian. He combines this with his love of, and skill in, painting and tells us about Canal Boats and their Art Works.

Next, another friend of Christ Church, Nicholas Jardine, comes to Forum, not in the guise of organist, but rather as an ambassador for Mary's Meals, a very simple concept with huge effects.

To end the month, Jason Alexander gives a talk with the intriguing title: 'Rubbish Walks'. The talk comes highly recommended, and the man himself is a vibrant character, creator of an enchanted walk on Rushmere Common, a Museum of Rubbish in Woodbridge, and many more learning opportunities to become more green, more caring of our environment.

So come along and bring all your friends and relatives (the last talk is in Half Term, so children and young people could come too). The meals starting at 12.00 promise to be as good as ever. You could even come just for the food, or just the company, or just the talk.

Answers to last month's quiz about Bury St Edmunds' Cathedral



1. St George was credited for helping the English defeat the French at the Battle of Crecy in 1348. Edward 3rd made him Patron Saint replacing St Edmund who lived in the 9th Century.
2. East Anglia had cathedrals in Ely and Norwich. Ipswich was under Norwich.
- 3a. St James's church in Bury became a cathedral in 1914.
- 3b. St James Church had more grounds and greater scope for enlargement than St Mary's.
4. Bury was originally called Beodericsworth – and in 902 AD St Edmund was buried here.
5. The cathedral has increased in size by about 50% in the last 60 years
6. St Edmund was killed by arrows and beheaded, but his head was found by his followers with the help of a wolf.
7. He was 28 when he died (841 – 869 AD)
8. Both pulpit and font were restored by George Gilbert Scott in 1870

ECO-CHURCH, CREATION CARE

“The central geopolitical challenge of our age”?

On 17th September an important speech about the impact of human induced climate change was made by a Cabinet minister. The interesting thing is that this was not a minister with a special responsibility for climate change, but David Lammy, the Foreign Secretary.

Mr Lammy described the climate and nature emergency as “the most profound and universal source of global disorder” and “the central geopolitical challenge of our age.” There has been a tendency for climate and nature policy to be seen as separate from other issues, but, he argued, the threats to global stability and prosperity are so great that climate policy has to be integral to foreign policy.

“Let’s take migration.” he said. “We are already seeing that climate change is uprooting communities across the world. And by 2050, the World Bank’s worst-case estimate is that climate change could drive 200 million people to leave their homes.” It will take global cooperation to deal with the implications of this. “Or we could take health. The World Health Organisation says climate change is now the biggest threat to human health.”

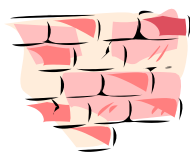
We are well aware of the inequalities between those countries who have contributed most to global warming and those who have contributed least but suffer some of the worst effects. “Time and time and again,” Mr Lammy said, “it is the most vulnerable who bear the brunt of this crisis.” The BBC’s Climate Editor, Justin Rowlatt, in the same week, demonstrated this starkly in a report from Somalia, which has recently suffered from both drought and flooding, exacerbating the problems of conflict and poverty already faced by the country. While no single weather event can be attributed precisely to climate change, their increasing frequency and severity is exactly what climate scientists have been predicting. Somalia, he pointed out, has produced the same amount of greenhouse gas emissions since the 1950s as the USA produces in just 3 days. An astonishing statistic.

Organisations such as Christian Aid have campaigned for some time on the issue of climate justice. This means richer nations accepting the part they have played in causing the climate emergency and their responsibility to support poorer nations, not only in dealing with its effects but also with their own developments towards sustainable energy. This is in our interests as well as theirs. Mr Lammy argued “There will be no global stability without climate stability. And there will be no climate stability without a more equal partnership between the Global North and the Global South.”

With the potential of climate change to affect migration, conflict and economies world-wide, it is encouraging to see it being considered, not as a side issue, but in the mainstream of our foreign policy.

OVER THE GARDEN WALL

... from our neighbours at St Pancras



Dear Friends,

Many of you will remember Bernie Wood, either because you knew her personally or because you read her *Over the Garden Wall* reflections several years ago. She fought a long and brave fight against cancer. Just days before she died, she sent me a text message saying that she had been brought Holy Communion and was so happy. When my mum was nearing her last days, she told me she wouldn't be leaving hospital, but she was going to heaven and looking forward to it! I'm sure many of you can tell similar stories. As people of faith, we look forward to our heavenly home.

When mum could no longer talk to me, I took a hymn book to the hospital and sang to her the old hymns that I knew she loved, and I know that she recognised them. Hymns mean a great deal to me, and it is a real sadness that some of those I loved most dearly are no longer sung at St Mary's; it's especially infuriating to know they're sung frequently in my sister's little village Anglican church in Dorset! In the years that I travelled regularly to Uganda, services were always so wonderful; people had often walked miles to the church but still sang with great enthusiasm. During the fantastic Offertory processions youngsters danced in, wearing local dress and singing to the sound of drums. Last week we had an African Mass (Nigerian, in fact). The church was overflowing and it was a really joyful occasion.

Another joyful occasion was our annual pilgrimage walk. Undeterred by a Met Office yellow weather warning, crowds arrived for the start, not far from the Waterfront. Probably the presence of our bishop encouraged many more than usual to attend! By the time we got to Wolsey's statue near Silent Street, umbrellas or raincoats were necessary. Fr Joseph did stalwart service with a big umbrella keeping the bishop dry! The rain eased as we got to Lady Lane and crowded into the small space near the site of the medieval shrine. Here, as always, we promised to pray for the unity of Christians. It is so important, especially nowadays when Christian commitment seems far less common. I must say I value so much the friendship and fellowship I have with friends from Christchurch.

Talking of ecumenism I am sure many of you will have met Archdeacon Rhiannon. I first met her in your church after the Good Friday walk of witness; she has done great things, from help for asylum seekers and Ukrainians, many food banks with Alpha courses, and very much more. We shall miss her but are delighted she is to be made a bishop. It is well deserved but she will be sorely missed.

Your Catholic friend,

Jean

BMS WORLD MISSION (PART 2)

September's *Comment* explained the three main aspects of the work of BMS World Mission, Heart for the Gospel, Hope for the World and Help for the Journey. Woven through all the society's work are twin callings of creation stewardship and gender justice. BMS World Mission explains why these are important in these words from its 2024 "Impact Report":

Creation Stewardship

In all our work in every location we must love God through honouring His handiwork. And to love God we must love our neighbour. We all depend on the same planet, so our choices have consequences for others and our choices also have a dimension of justice.

BMS is committed to creation stewardship in every aspect of our mission: As part of that commitment, we have a target to reduce our carbon emissions by 45% by the end of 2025.

The challenge is that while creation stewardship is evidently a critical issue it is frequently perceived as a western preoccupation. To many partners, environmental concerns can appear as a long-range nebulous risk when compared to the daily challenges they face. Our 2024 plan is to balance local perception with global understanding.

Gender Justice

Every piece of work reflects our commitment to gender justice. The pinnacle of God's creation was human beings - 'in our image...male and female he created them' and their shared existence wasn't just good, it was very good. Everywhere we work we see the blight of gender injustice on lives of countless women. It is impossible to be about the mission of God in the world and not be compelled to act.

BMS is committed to gender justice in every aspect of our mission: Over the course of 2023, we had a target to enlist 10 Gender Justice champions from across the BMS World Mission network with a plan for them all to be fully trained in 2024. By the end of the year, 10 BMS mission workers plus four UK-based staff joined with 14 others from our partners to form a 28-strong global team.

Our Impact in 2023

Every year, God works through BMS World Mission supporters, partners and workers to bring incredible change in his world. In 2023:

9. 38,500 people were impacted by projects in fragile countries
10. 23,200 people were trained to make disciples in India, Bangladesh and Thailand
11. 18,100 people benefitted from disaster relief work (usually long-term projects using local resources, rather than simply shipping Western goods and people to the affected areas)

BMS World Mission's 232nd Birthday Bash

This will be an online event on 30th October, from 7 to 8:15 in the evening, with the encouragement to join together for the occasion. If you'd be interested in being part of a group for this event, please let me know ASAP and I'll see if we can sort something out.

We're promised news from around the world and all sorts for quizzes and Q&A sessions, including two speakers.

Claire Bedford is a BMS mission worker at Guinebor II Hospital (G2) in Chad and will be sharing about her work as a Pharmacist and member of the hospital's management team. In 2013, she became a BMS volunteer, developing the pharmacy at Guinebor II Hospital in Chad. Claire returned to Chad in 2016 for long-term mission work and now co-leads the pharmacy service at Guinebor II hospital, facilitates training on pharmaceutical issues for the Chadian staff, and supports other hospital initiatives.

Kethoser Aniu Kevichusa is BMS' Director of Intercultural Learning and Collaboration based in Nagaland, India. Aniu has served as a consultant for the doctoral programme at North East Christian University in Nagaland and as a supervisor of PhD candidates of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. *David Thompson*

DIARY DATES

Wednesday 2 nd October	Funeral Service for Bernie Wood, one of our St Pancras friends. The Service is at 1pm at St Mary's Woodbridge Road. All welcome
Sunday 6 th October	Harvest Lunch
Tuesday 8 th October	SSAP meeting
Thursday 10 th October	Deacons' meeting
Tuesday 22 nd October	Prayer Lunch (midday)
Friday 1 st November	Church Life meeting

Emmaus Groups

Mondays at 10.30am in the Lounge

2nd & 4th Wednesdays at 7.30pm

1st & 3rd Thursdays at 10.30am in the Lounge

SERVICES FOR OCTOBER

All Services will be led by our Minister, Revd Neil Coulson unless otherwise stated.

Sunday 6th October

10.45am Harvest Thanksgiving and Parade Service

Sunday 13th October

10.45 am Family Worship with Holy Communion

Sunday 20th October

10.45 am Family Worship led by Revd Lythan Nevard
Lythan is the Moderator of the URC Eastern Synod

Sunday 27th October

10.45 am Family Worship led by Mr Keith Scarff
Keith is a URC Lay Preacher and elder at Stowmarket URC

Sunday 3rd November

10.45 am Family Worship with Holy Communion