

Christians Aware



Magazine

Summer 2021

CONTENTS

Page

- 1 Editorial
- 2 Reflections on Capitol storming in the USA – *Juliette Adams*
- 4 A pivotal moment in Israel/Palestine has been reached – *Linda Ramsden*
- 5 'Decolonizing Israel, liberating Palestine' by Jeff Halper – a review by *Linda Ramsden*
- 7 Why I am a member of Christians Aware – *John Flack*
- 9 It is extraordinary, what can begin with a funeral – *David Kitley*
- 10 Some personal memories of the Duke of Edinburgh – *Brian McDonald-Milne*
- 11 Glimpsing glory – *Geoff Weaver*
- 12 Anger in our contemporary world – *Elizabeth Harris*
- 13 Child labourers
- 14 Towards the co-evolution of life on earth – *Peter Challen*
- 16 The diocese of Mahajanga – *Hall Spears*
- 17 Gyanjyoti School, Pokharathok, Nepal – *Michael & Maureen Hawksworth*
- 18 Introducing Maria Clara
- 19 Alternative livelihood in Kajiado County – *Paul Mpishi*
- 20 Anniversary letter – *Bishop Charles Muturi*
- 20 A tour of Northern Kenya – *Stephen K. Wainaina*
- 22 Northern Kenya photographs
- 24 Two pioneers of interfaith friendship: Chiara Lubich & Brother Daniel Favre – *Jon Dal Din*
- 26 Wilderness, Woundedness... Wisdom? – *Jonathan Doering*
- 29 House of One in Berlin
- 29 The Ridvan Festival in the Baha'i faith – *Mina Beint*
- 30 Tamilnadu Theological Seminary serving the wider community – *Margaret Kalaiselvi*
- 31 Book reviews
- 34 Food and farming for a sustainable future
- 36 Help our hedgehogs – *Kate Hayward*
- 37 Using farms as educational platforms – *Patrick Holden*
- 38 Chimpanzee greeting at Vatican webinar on biological diversity – *Ellen Teague*
- 39 Stop biodiversity from decreasing
- 40 Promote biodiversity and make a contribution to the future of the planet
- 41 No trade justice without climate justice: Fairtrade Foundation
- 43 Pop up shops give hope – *Barbara Mayhew*
- 44 Christians and climate change – *Susan Sayers*

FOR OUR THOUGHTS, PRAYERS AND ACTIONS

For all those who have died from Covid 19, in the UK and around the world.

For the wealthy countries of the world to donate vaccines to poorer nations.

For a return by the UK to a 0.7% development aid budget. Andrew Mitchell has said of the 0.7% of GNI budget: "...it will get 11 million children into school, vaccinate 55 million children against preventable diseases and stop 250,000 new born babies dying needlessly. Going back on this promise would cost lives."

For all refugees and displaced people.

For all those who are hungry. For those facing famine in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. The UN has described the situation as '*The worst food crisis in a decade*'.

For the people of Burma including those who have died, those who are bereaved and those who are suffering and in danger following the military coup.

For a solution to the Northern Ireland border problems

For peace and a just solution to the current situation in Israel and Palestine. For wise contributions towards understanding and trust from Jews, Muslims and Christians.

We give thanks for the life and work of **Kenneth Kaunda** who has died aged 97 years. He was the founding president of Zambia, an advocate for African Humanism and, in his later years, a tireless worker for the health and development of the people of Zambia and beyond.

We give thanks for the life and work of **Bishop John Osmer**, hero in the struggle against apartheid and more recently a bishop in Eastern Zambia, based at Msoro, and a worker for refugees in Zambia. Bishop John died from Covid 19.

Front and back cover paintings by Anne Gregson.

The back cover painting is also available as an A6 card.
Please order from the office.





EDITORIAL

Summer 2021

Our most recent webinar was given by Jyoti Sahi from his art ashram in India. There is much to share from Jyoti's talk and from the power point presentation of his new paintings. The paintings were all of Jyoti's garden or the area just around it because they were created during the lockdown. We will include a report of the event in our next magazine and it is already in the Christians Aware section on You Tube.

I would like to share two of Jyoti's paintings now. The first is of the nativity of the Christ Child amongst migrant families working in brick kilns. The kilns are just outside Jyoti's garden and they are where very poor people work. The bricks are made from local clay and from the water in the reservoir. They are sent to Bangalore for buildings there.

Poverty is terrible in the brick kilns and wherever it is found in the world, where the number of hungry people is growing. In India and in fact everywhere poverty is made much worse now that people face the danger of illness and death from Covid 19. Poor people do not have good houses and gardens to lock down in. They are the most vulnerable and many have died. India is one of the worst hit countries in the world.

We produced a prayer leaflet for

India, which is available from Eliam. It includes the experiences of some of our members in India during the Covid 19 crisis. All of them are struggling. Samuel Issmer has written, ***'Personally I lost many of my immediate family and many dear friends...When I look around our city, Bangalore, it is appalling, disturbing and extremely painful...Our suffering people need great attention and care.'***



A wood block print showing 'unendurable burdens' by Solomon Raj.

The second painting I would like to share from Jyoti's lockdown collection is of lotus flowers, rising up out of the mud and water of one of his garden ponds. The lotus flower is a symbol of hope and the promise that new life will grow out of the mud. We have to hope, pray and work so that

the promise of the lotus flower will become real in our world.

We have encouragement also from Mother Julian of Norwich that **'All Will Be Well.'** She herself did not have an easy life at the time of the black death, but she was able to live in hope and to write the words that have become famous down the centuries. Anne Gregson's painting, on the outside cover of this magazine includes Mother Julian's words. It is a painting for us to meditate on and be uplifted by. There are also cards which may encourage and give hope to those we send them to. Please ask Eliam if you would like to order them.

Let us continue to hope, pray and work so that 'all will be well.'

Barbara Butler

We would like our members to know that we have had to move out of the office temporarily because the structure of the front of the building has been deemed unsafe. Repairs will begin soon. Meanwhile we are in the best place possible. Please continue to communicate through Saxby Street as post and messages will be forwarded to us.

REFLECTIONS ON CAPITOL STORMING IN THE USA - 6 JANUARY, 2021

Juliette Adams

Introduction

As a person who lived for many years in the part of the US known as the Deep South I have taken an active interest in US politics since relocating to England. My father was a Presbyterian minister who had churches in North Carolina and South Carolina, so I am familiar with attitudes that were prevalent in the 1950's and 1960's. I do not pretend to be a student of politics – my degrees are in music. However, I do try to keep abreast of US politics. To understand American politics in 2021 it is necessary to remember that Democrat voters overwhelmingly live in diverse, densely populated metropolitan areas. Republican voters by and large reside in small towns and rural areas. Their jobs do not rely on national R and D investment or the export of manufactured goods and services. Thus, there are diverging economic interests between the two political parties. It should be mentioned what Donald Trump's achievements were when he was President: there was a pre-covid economic boom; there was a cut in unemployment; and there was criminal reform which had bipartisan support. In the following paragraphs I want to share thoughts about the storming of the Capitol, motivation of the Far Right, and guns in American society.

Storming the Capitol

The unbelievable storming of the Capitol in Washington was watched by millions of us. Although a rally had taken place near the Capitol earlier in the day we had not expected to see the iconic Capitol building viciously attacked. The reason why the Trump



protesters chose this particular day to be in Washington was that they wanted to interfere with the Senate's confirmation of Joe Biden as the next President of the US. It was truly shocking to see a man mounting the podium in the Senate chamber to say, "Jesus Christ, we invoke your name". The rally earlier in the day had been attended by Rudy Giuliani and Donald Trump. Giuliani urged the protesters to undertake "trial by combat" while Trump's words were: "fight like hell". The protesters certainly carried out these instructions outside the Capitol and inside the Capitol!

It seemed incredible that the protesters were able to storm the Capitol with such ease. It was obvious that there should have been a stronger police presence guarding the Capitol. In the days leading up to the demonstration it was reported on BBC that the Mayor of Washington (a woman of colour) had asked several times for extra police support for the rally but her request was refused. Jeh Johnson, Former Homeland Security Secretary, said in an interview on CNN that decisions about the level of security had been made by officials who were 'Acting Heads of Departments': they were out of their

depth in being able to anticipate and coordinate what would be required to protect the Capitol.

So why did Trump protesters from all over the country descend upon Washington on 6th January? They still were convinced that Joe Biden's win was illegitimate even though the election results had been rigorously scrutinized. Giuliani, Trump's main lawyer, had attempted to bring 60 lawsuits to contest the outcome of the election but these did not materialize. Trump's refusal to concede the election is consistent with how he handled himself in the 3500 lawsuits fought by him during his 30 years as a property mogul in New York City: never admit defeat, sue with a series of bombastic claims, seek to benefit from resulting chaos.

As a result of the tumultuous outburst in the Senate chamber a number of Republicans began to feel that they should challenge Trump's behaviour re: his stubborn refusal to accept the election result. I have wondered for several years now why Republican leaders were so reluctant to stand up to Trump. Basically they were prepared to put up with his excesses because he delivered tax cuts and judicial appointments!

Motivation of the Far Right

Many people have wondered how the Far Right in the US has gained such solid support in recent years. It is important to remember that Trumpism did not start with Donald Trump. It can be traced back to the McCarthyite 1950's. The Republican Party has long indulged paranoid elements in its right flank. For years now Trump has been fanning flames of rage among his supporters and flooded American society with disinformation through social media. When the social contract in America collapsed in the sub-prime crisis of 2008 working class communities were ruined while the bankers who repossessed their homes were bailed out by a Democrat administration. (Obama was in the White House). Many less well off voters saw Joe Biden as a "polite emissary" of that government; he was of course Vice President. Trump has been able to plug into the fears and frustrations of white working class people who have largely felt ignored by the Democrats.

In an interview which I heard on CNN soon after the Capitol storming Prof. Cynthia Miller-Idriss of American University explained that Far Right supporters have a fear that their world is collapsing – important things in their lives are being taken away – and they need to voice their concerns as loudly as possible. Prof. Miller-Idriss has recently written a book entitled, "*Hate in the Homeland*". Tim Snyder, an academic from Yale University, feels that with the collapse of newspapers – and I think he was referring to local newspapers – people are searching for other ways to get their news. Social media platforms have become popular, easy to access. Snyder feels that the current post-truth period is really pre-Fascism. The route to regaining people's confidence in US politics is for responsible people at the top to be telling the truth. His book, "*On Tyranny*", is worth looking at.

On a personal note: when I was visiting relatives in North Carolina a few years ago I had a conversation

with a teenager who mentioned his concern about how things were shaping up in Washington. We did not have a lengthy conversation. However he did say that he thought it might be necessary for militias to be used in the US to deal with problems. My ears pricked up. Militias? As it happens, he is a member of the 'Sons of the Confederacy'. Having seen so many Confederate flags waving around on 6th January it made me wonder whether a number of protesters are members of the 'Sons of the Confederacy.'

Guns in American society

I have sometimes been questioned about the attitudes of Americans to guns. As readers probably know, the right to own guns is set out in the second amendment of the US Constitution. There are several reasons why this was included. Firstly, there was no army. Citizens had to protect themselves. Colonial farmers with their muskets (guns) had played a key role in winning the Revolutionary War. Another reason was that on the frontier a gun was usually the family's only protection against wild animals – and there were many wild animals prowling around!

Reliable statistics indicate that in 2021, 9 out of 10 Americans own guns (this includes pistols). That statistic worries and frightens me. Speaking personally I can tell you that as a clergyman's family when we were invited into church members' homes for meals we saw no evidence of guns nor was there any discussion about guns. In eastern North Carolina where my father had churches in a rural area – it was true that men sometimes went deer hunting. For well over 100 years the National Rifle Association has been actively campaigning in the US. If you look it up on your computer you will see that the NRA is described as a civil rights organisation. In the 2016 US Presidential election I recall seeing that the NRA made a generous donation to Trump's campaign. I think the figure was \$300,000.

In the recent election campaign some

Trump supporters wore shirts with the message:

'Pro-God, Pro-Gun, Pro-Life and Pro-Trump.' Much of Trump's support came from white evangelical Christians. These are the same Christians who delight in talking about "trusting in the Lord" and "being keen to see that all churches are faithfully preaching the gospel". It is interesting to note that many white evangelical Christians are horrified by the rate of abortion but less horrified by the fact that 4 times as many Americans are killed by guns each year than in any other advanced nation!

Concluding thoughts

Please pray that organisations such as the National Association of Evangelicals will attend meetings at the White House as they have done in the past. I think these organisations could be a key to bringing about reconciliation in the US. This is desperately needed. President Biden is an empathetic person with a strong commitment to justice. He is a devout Roman Catholic. My view is that Americans will follow his lead. He is off to a good start.

Juliette Adams is a musician who is a long-standing member of Christians Aware

A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE HAS BEEN REACHED

Linda Ramsden

Within several weeks, something fundamental has changed in Israel/Palestine. It began on 23rd March with Israel's fourth national election held within two years in which Benjamin Netanyahu did not get enough votes to put together a government, a situation most disconcerting for him because he is on trial for three corruption charges and seeks to remain in control.

On 29th April, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas announced that the first Palestinian national elections in 15 years would be indefinitely delayed, citing that Israel would not allow Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem to vote. However, it is argued that the true reason was due to infighting within Fatah and the possibility that Hamas would win the election.

By then Ramadan had begun when from 12th April, tens of thousands of Palestinians began converging in Jerusalem's Old City to enter the Al Aqsa Mosque. Amid that, outrage was growing about at the imminent forced eviction of four Palestinian families from the Jerusalem community of Sheikh Jarrah, located just north of Damascus Gate, and other Palestinian families also face eviction, all to be replaced with religious Jewish settlers thus for weeks, this was a site of increased demonstrations and violent confrontations.

Israeli control over everything to do with Palestinian life in Jerusalem was tightened. Provocative actions happened: young Palestinian men were not allowed to sit on the wide stairs of the Damascus Gate, where they would normally relax for a few minutes after a day of fasting and prayers. That predictably triggered a response from Palestinian youths which soon escalated into full-blown street battles, which in turn, spilled into the Al Aqsa compound and even into the mosque itself to the horror of

all religious Muslims including Hamas.

Tensions mounted even further on 10th May, when Israel celebrated "Jerusalem Day" which brought tens of thousands of religious Zionists pouring into Jerusalem from the West Bank settlements to triumphantly proclaim Jerusalem's "Jewishness," parading with flags, drums and shouting nationalist slogans at Palestinians. Later that day, Hamas fired rockets towards Jerusalem and Israel launched its airstrikes on Gaza. Sustained fighting continued for eleven days before a ceasefire was brokered but it left at least 242 Palestinians, including 66 children, killed in Gaza and with 12 Israelis killed, including two children. In addition, within Gaza 1,042 housing and commercial units were destroyed and 769 housing units were severely damaged, rendered uninhabitable, leaving thousands of Palestinians homeless.

A fundamental change

These recent events saw the unprecedented rise of a popular Palestinian movement that has united Palestinians both within the Occupied Palestinian Territory (the OPT – West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza) and Israel where Palestinians comprise 20% of the population. A new young generation of Palestinian citizens of Israel are crying out for equality. They along with Palestinians in the OPT will no longer tolerate the decades of displacement, humiliation, struggles for the barest necessities of life,

the demolition of their homes and their collective imprisonment in a cruel, ever-more constricting form of "warehousing".

This uprising has provoked Israel to swiftly launch a mass arrest operation for Palestinian protestors involved in "disturbances", with more than 1000 already arrested, injured and with hundreds more targeted.

Young Palestinians want to take on the mantle for change. They are not satisfied with the "old ways" nor the current Palestinian leadership. Through social media, more of the world has come to understand that Israel's state violence extends over all of historic Palestine. Israel's aim to erase the Palestinian people has not been successful and within the international community, rhetoric is changing with growing reference to the terms apartheid and settler colonialism.

In this fluid political situation, momentum has also been stimulated globally as millions have taken to the streets to demonstrate their solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. The media is being called to account with insistence that Palestinian voices are heard, and the root causes addressed. There can be no let-up in engagement with religious leaders and our political representatives. Western complicity in the tragedy of Palestine must be put right. There are "cracks in the wall". Let us help to hasten the "fall" and usher in a just peace for all people groups, Palestinians and Israelis. It is the only sustainable way forward.

Linda Ramsden is Director, Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, UK – www.icahd.org

'DECOLONIZING ISRAEL, LIBERATING PALESTINE - ZIONISM, SETTLER COLONIALISM, AND THE CASE FOR ONE DEMOCRATIC STATE'

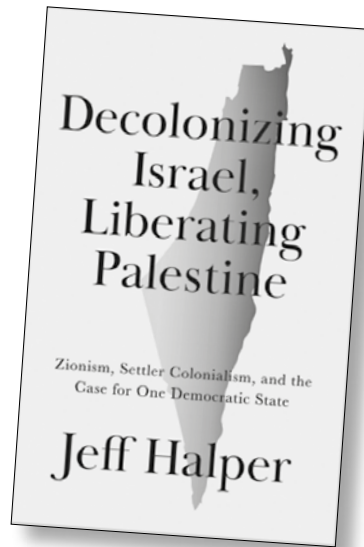
by Jeff Halper, published by Pluto Press

A review by Linda Ramsden

Jeff Halper is an American Jew who moved to Israel in 1973 to work on his doctorate in anthropology and explore his Jewish roots. He had been involved in the civil rights movement in the States so when he arrived in Israel it was only natural for him to join the peace movement and then when he married an Israeli, he stayed. It wasn't until he witnessed a Palestinian home being demolished that he went through a "membrane" that caused him to understand what Israel was doing – wrongly taking Palestinian land from the innocent indigenous population in the name of security.

In 1997, Halper was one of the founders of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) which campaigns for the end of Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes. Through researching the now more than 55,000 demolitions within the Occupied Palestinian Territory of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, that have happened since 1967 and over 62,000 demolitions within the state of Israel since 1948, Halper gained understanding of Israeli's matrix of control that it has implemented over the Palestinian people. His story is one of moving from the position of a Zionist who endorsed a two-state solution to now classifying himself as an anti-Zionist who calls for one democratic state in historic Palestine.

Other books written by Halper and published by Pluto, *An Israeli in Palestine: Resisting Dispossession, Redeeming Israel* (2010) and *War Against the People: Israel, the*



Palestinians and Global Pacification (2015) are in Halper's words "more academic". This time he wanted to write something that is easily accessible for a general audience of those who are interested in seeing peace with justice come to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The result is a compelling book with a bold vision, strong arguments, and an inspirational conclusion.

As a Jew, he explains, he cannot speak for Palestinians nor for 98 percent of Israeli Jews. However, because Halper has lived in Israel for most of his adult life, he is able to express his understanding of Israeli society, its history and ideologies, its internal differences and its aspirations and fears. Halper is clear about his position as he describes himself as a "colonist who refuses," and thus a comrade of the Palestinians.

Decolonizing Israel, Liberating Palestine is divided into three parts: a theoretical and comparative analysis

of Zionism as a settler-colonial movement; a historical account of how Zionism and Israel have imposed themselves as a settler-colonial reality on the Palestinian people; and a political program for decolonization.

Over the last fifty years, the adopted rhetoric for discussions about Israel/Palestine described it as a "conflict" as if this were an issue between two equals and that by each making compromises, there would be resolution. Halper challenges this argument and explains how destructive it has been. He proposes using "settler colonialism" to provide clarity about the Zionist movement's project to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, displacing the indigenous Palestinian population and replacing them with Jews who moved in from other countries to permanently live there.

Settler colonialism is a concept that has been used by academics for years but not adopted by the international activist community, though Palestinians have long referred to Israeli colonization. Originally, Palestinians were involved in a liberation movement and called for one state. This became the official position of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at its founding in 1964 but when the Oslo Peace Process emerged, the PLO came under international pressure to change its position and so in 1988 it agreed to recognize the state of Israel and a two-state solution with Israel on 78% of the land leaving 22% for the Palestine state consisting of East Jerusalem, the

West Bank and Gaza. The original timeframe for sorting out the final status details about the refugees, East Jerusalem and borders for the new Palestinian state is long-gone as the “peace-process” was drawn out. During the last thirty years, Israel has pressed on with confiscating more land to construct settlements for its Jewish population locating them in significant areas such as over water aquifers, on rich agricultural land, and around Jerusalem. To this day, Israel continues to displace more Palestinians from the 22% of the land which was to be their state and it has become increasingly evident that no Israeli government was ever honest about creating a genuinely coherent, sovereign, and viable Palestinian state. The reality is that Israel itself has created one state: it controls the borders, the air space, the water, the electricity, the highways, the currency, the army. However, it is an apartheid state with all Palestinians, whether residing within the state of Israel or in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, lacking equality.

To solve the current reality, a system of de-colonization is needed which Halper spells out, so the Zionist structures of domination and control are dismantled. Economic justice must be a key plank of any lasting settlement. Deracialising the economy and enshrining equal access to resources is vital, and this will not be compatible with existing neoliberal models.

Halper lays out how this complete transformation can be made in the ten-point programme identified by the One Democratic State Campaign (ODSC). This campaign was founded in 2018 and is led by Palestinians but it includes anti-Zionist Israelis such as Halper who was a founding member.

1. Decolonization. The only way to resolve a settler-colonial situation is through a thorough process of dismantling the colonial structures of domination and control. An inclusive and democratic polity, ruling over a shared civil society, replaces the colonial

regime.

- 2. A Single Constitutional Democracy.** One democratic state shall be established between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River as one country belonging to all its citizens, including Palestinian refugees who will be able to return to their homeland. All citizens will enjoy equal rights, freedom and security. The State shall be a constitutional democracy, the authority to govern and make laws emanating from the consent of the governed.
- 3. Right of Return, of Restoration and of Reintegration into Society.** The single democratic state will fully implement the Right of Return of all Palestinian refugees who were expelled in 1948 and thereafter, whether living in exile abroad or currently living in Israel or the Occupied Territory. The State will aid them in returning to their country and to the places from which they were expelled. It will help them rebuild their personal lives and to be fully reintegrated into the country’s society, economy and polity. The State will do everything in its power to restore to the refugees their private and communal property and/or compensate them.
- 4. Individual Rights.** No State law, institution or practices may discriminate among citizens on the basis of national or social origin, color, gender, language, religion or political opinion or sexual orientation. A single citizenship confers on all the State’s residents the right to freedom of movement, the right to reside anywhere in the country, and equal rights in every domain.
- 5. Collective Rights.** Within the framework of a single democratic state, the Constitution will also protect collective rights and the freedom of association, whether national, ethnic, religious, class or gender. Constitutional guarantees will ensure that all languages, arts and culture can flourish and develop freely. No group or collectivity will have any privileges, nor will any group, party or collectivity have the ability to leverage any control or domination over others. Parliament will not have the authority to enact any laws that discriminate against any community under the Constitution.
- 6. Economy and Economic Justice.** Our vision seeks to achieve justice, and this includes social and economic justice. Economic policy must address the decades of exploitation and discrimination which have sown deep socioeconomic gaps among the people living in the land. A State seeking justice must develop a creative and long-term redistributive economic policy to ensure that all citizens have equal opportunity to attain education, productive employment, economic security and a dignified standard of living.
- 7. Constructing a Shared Civil Society.** The State shall nurture a vital civil society comprised of common civil institutions, in particular educational, cultural and economic. Alongside religious marriage the State will provide civil marriage.
- 8. Commitment to Human Rights, Justice and Peace.** The State shall uphold international law and seek the peaceful resolution of conflicts through negotiation and collective security in accordance with the United Nations Charter.
- 9. Our Role in the Region.** The ODS Campaign will join with all progressive forces in the Arab world struggling for

democracy, social justice and egalitarian societies free from tyranny and foreign domination.

10. International responsibility.

On a global level, the ODS Campaign views itself as part of the progressive forces striving for an alternative global order that is just, equitable and free of any oppression, racism, imperialism and colonialism.

New institutions must be created that ensure collective as well as individual equality. "Each citizen must enjoy equal access to the country's land and resources. Membership in society, civil rights and access to economic resources must be deracialized. A new civil identity must be forged."

There are those who contend that one state is utopia however this book explains how the current reality can be transformed into the creation of one democratic state which respects collective rights and equality for all.

Halper is critical of taking a "rights-based" approach as expressed by those who state they "don't care what the solution is, as long as they get their human rights". He feels that its main demands reflect a two-state approach that would never bring Palestinians their longed-for justice. Armed with the right "endgame", however, "international civil society is eminently mobilizable."

Inspiration is taken from what happened in South Africa with its anti-Apartheid struggle and Halper asserts that only by working towards the creation of one democratic state can the historic injustices of 1948 be addressed. But the impetus for change must come from the Palestinians mobilizing international public opinion who in turn will campaign for governments to change their policies towards Israel.

Jeff Halper reminds us that Palestinians have become emblematic of oppressed peoples everywhere. Through getting alongside the

Palestinians with our systematic organising and strategic planning, decolonizing Israel and liberating Palestine is doable in the not-too-distant future. Much work must still be done but the One Democratic State Campaign is endeavouring to provide the leadership and the political programme to achieve it. In the meantime, this book provides a persuasive argument that the only conceivable future for a just and sustainable solution is for decolonization and the creation of one democratic state for all who live between the river and the sea.

***Decolonizing Israel, Liberating Palestine: Zionism, Settler Colonialism, and the Case for One Democratic State* is available from the ICAHD website for a discounted price £12 including post and packing (RRP is £14.99). <https://icahd.org/product/decolonizing-israel-liberating-palestine/>**

WHY I AM A MEMBER OF CHRISTIANS AWARE

John Flack

It all started when I was about 5 years old. My mother was a very devout Anglican and so I was first taken to church when I was less than a week old. By the time I was 5, I had become a choirboy and an altar boy and made up mind what I was going to be when I grew up – and I never changed my mind after that.

My mother (who never left British shores) was very enthusiastic about the Anglican Communion. There were missionary boxes all over the house. Everyone who came into our house was expected to contribute. And my mother ran a children's club in the parish which drew 30 children every Wednesday night. It was sponsored by USPG and called "Kings Messengers". We learned about other children in all parts of the Communion and made contact with them through the post. Once

a month we gave a presentation of our work at our Parish Eucharist so that the adults got the message too. I grew up knowing that the Church was more than just English and was truly universal.

When I was 10 years old my mother became Verger at our church. At the same time we got a new parish priest (Fr Basil Rigby) who wanted to have a daily Eucharist. My mother promised him he would never be without a congregation and so she

started going to Communion every day – and she took me with her. I quickly became familiar with the dioceses of the Anglican Communion as we prayed for them every day on a rota basis. After finishing at school I started on the 5-year Mirfield ordination course, with three years at the Hostel of the Resurrection at Leeds University followed by two years at Mirfield. In both places there were students from our sister college at Codrington, Barbados, and so I quickly made friends with people who were from a different background and culture.

Among the people at Leeds University was a student who was one of the first people to show me that it was

possible to be a Christian without necessarily being an Anglican!

Barbara later went to work abroad in Zambia with her husband Tom and so we lost touch for a while.

Around this time SPG became USPG when SPG and UMCA amalgamated. "Kings Messengers" was revived under a new title – "Adventurers". As a young curate I became one of the first English clergy to run an Adventurers' group. I did this in three parishes consecutively and this confirmed my passion for the church overseas.

Unlike Barbara I did not go to minister overseas, though I did become the chairman of the Wakefield / Mara Link Committee when that twinning link was formed in 1985. This involved me visiting the Diocese of Mara (in Tanzania) for three weeks to meet them and learn about them. I remember having to learn Swahili in the first week I was there so that I could go outdoors preside at their Eucharist. Some of the preconceptions I had about the church overseas were shattered during those 3 weeks and I had to re-shape my ideas on many issues.

I was reconnected with Barbara in 1989. She was back in UK and working for USPG. Around that time she decided that she needed to work in a more ecumenical atmosphere than was possible in USPG. So with the support of USPG and others she set up an organisation called "Christians Aware". From the start Christians Aware was to be truly ecumenical. It was also educational rather than missionary. Barbara made contact with me and suggested I might consider supporting the work of Christians Aware. I was attracted by what I read. Knowing Barbara

personally was an incentive and so I signed up.

Two things in particular drew me to Christians Aware. The first was its ecumenical nature. For a number of years I had been a very committed ecumenist. Later on this was to lead to my appointment as Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome, which deals with ecumenical issues on a daily basis. The second thing which drew me was that wonderful statement on CA publicity –

"Do not try to teach anyone anything until you have learned something from them".

It was the wisdom of a priest named Ronald Wynne who worked for 40 years in Botswana. That one saying caused me to re-orientate my entire ministry. Up till then I had seen myself as the 'Purveyor of Truth' whose job was to put everyone else on the right track. From then on I knew that others had far more to teach me than I had to teach them. When I became a bishop in 1996 I knew that I was "starting at the bottom" in a hundred different ways.

So belonging to Christians Aware has had a profound effect on me. One of its strap-lines is "Sharing Ways and Wisdoms". It does this through its overseas visits, its cultural exchanges, its publicity and published works, its quarterly magazine and its conferences. It tries to have a working group in every region in the UK, though this is not always possible. It has members from all the main-line church denominations across the globe. I have learned so much from all these activities.

When I was Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome I was able to host visits from Christians Aware members, and to introduce the principles of CA to the many visitors who came into the centre from every part of the world. My post in Rome coincided with my time as Chairman of the Trustees of Christians Aware when I saw so much of its work at first hand.

There is one more insight from all this which is so important. It's in that area where politics and theology meet. When I hear people talking about "Britain First" or "America first" I am deeply depressed. It is a kind of nationalism which may be understandable but in reality is profoundly flawed. No nation is "first" or "last". We are all equal and we are all citizens of Heaven, and so my sisters and brothers are all over the world. I do not come before them or after them. I am one with them in faith, and God is the parent of us all. Christians Aware has stood for this fundamental truth since its first beginnings.

I have worshipped in a large number of churches across the world, of every type and style. In so many of them I have heard the words of the Victorian hymn-writer Edward Plumptre, sung in English, Swahili and a hundred other languages:

'And this is all their teaching, in every deed and word to all alike proclaiming One Church, One Faith, One Lord'

May it be so, Amen.

Bishop John Flack is a trustee of Christians Aware.



Christians Aware

IT IS EXTRAORDINARY, WHAT CAN BEGIN WITH A FUNERAL

David Kitley

A married couple in their nineties had died soon after each other, beloved ancient friends of my parents, long deceased. At the reception after the funeral my brother and I met a Burundian lady, Georgette, along with her Rwandan husband. Seeing as we had been born of missionary parents in Burundi, where the ancient couple had also served, this was of interest.

We discovered that Georgette had grown up in a village in Burundi where we once lived – a most unlikely coincidence! We began to correspond. I had left the place, Buhiga, for the last time at the age of nearly 16 in 1969. What with being at boarding school in Kenya, we were often away. But we loved it, it was home.

Georgette began to tell me her story and that of her family, of her pastor father. Unbeknown to me, he and my father (a teacher) had been close friends, often travelling together in my father's car to large refugee camps on the border with Tanzania with a briefcase of banknotes to share out, enabling people to buy food. Refugees? Yes, because Burundi struggles with the same tribal conflict as its northerly neighbour Rwanda.

Their friendship was such that one of Marc's sons was named Kitley, our family surname. I was unaware of any of this. We were just one white family in the village; a few other single English ladies were there, working in the hospital and the school. Georgette knew of us, seeing us from a distance.

In about 1980 Georgette came to England to study, met and married her Rwandan husband and remained here. As we spoke she said she would gladly help arrange a visit to our childhood home. The seed of an idea! Not long after, in 2017, I was invited to a conference in the Burundian capital. Buhiga had recently become a Diocese, with its newly consecrated Bishop. Georgette got in touch, with the result that when I arrived at the

airport, this Bishop was there with several of his staff as a welcome committee! The following day we travelled up and out of the great Rift Valley, away from Lake Tanganyika, to the nation's plateau 6,000 feet about sea-level, past deliciously familiar scenery for the first time in 48 years.

We paused at a memorial near a school where my father once taught, by a former petrol station where 30 Tutsi students had been burned alive in 1993. (In 1972, in a Pol Pot-style massacre that was scarcely reported in world news, 100,000 people (mainly Hutus) were packed into trucks and never seen again – and foreigners like my parents were expelled.)

We were late, arriving in Buhiga. The sun had set, darkness had fallen, there was a long heavy rain. But awaiting me and another visitor was a welcome we could not have imagined. Twelve men in national dress singing, dancing and beating enormous cow-hide drums! In order to see them, the vehicle's headlights were turned on. We were stunned. Will the welcome at heaven's gates improve on that?? They kindly returned the following afternoon so that we could record them on video.

The next day was largely made up of a tour of the village. At one point we were surrounded by at least 600 children, excited by my colleague's iPad, calling 'Selfie! Selfie!' Our former home stood there still, empty and in need of repair – but the same. It was an extraordinary feeling to walk inside, to see where as a family we had sat, eaten, and slept. Another missionary's house

had disappeared; demolished after soldiers had ransacked it in the civil war of the 1990s. Most of the purple-flowering jacaranda trees that I fondly remembered had gone; cut down by the 2000 refugees who had sheltered there during the troubles.

In childhood days we used to walk as a family down to the valley below where muddy water fell down rocks from a swamp, from which occasionally we would hear hippo at night. Now there is a beautiful hydro-electric system, a donation from Switzerland and installed by an engineer missionary from Australia.

Georgette's father was no longer there. Somehow, I did not find out till later what had happened. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda has been widely publicised. Much less is known about a 12-year civil war in Burundi which began in 1993 and in which 300,000 people died. Some 20 years after the atrocities of the early 1970s, the victims' children set out to take revenge. In Buhiga gangs of men went about with machetes, hunting members of the Tutsi tribe. Marc was threatened, then recognised as a 'good man'. In the bungalow where he lived with his family, a home that Georgette had helped to fund from earnings in England, many people gathered in the hope of safety. Alas, it was not to be.

The attackers burst in and slaughtered 32 of them, amongst them my namesake Kitley. Marc saw his wife being cut into pieces and collapsed with a heart attack. Fortunately for him, this meant he was left for dead. When he recovered consciousness he tried to find shelter. Everything was on fire. He found a small bush where soldiers found him four days later and took him to a temporary refugee camp in a school in Buhiga.

No news of this reached England

for a while, but Georgette had a feeling that something was wrong and was anxious. Eventually she heard and was able to fly to Uganda. Marc and two of Georgette's nieces whose fathers had been killed flew with him to Entebbe. British Airways kindly provided discounted air tickets, enabling Georgette to bring them to England, where Marc received medical treatment and rested.

But after a while he began to feel he should return. ***'I cannot carry anger in my heart towards these murderers till my dying day,'*** he said. ***'I want to go back and tell people to forgive. It is the only way that peace will come.'*** So he did. As the pastor that he was, this was his unfailing message till his death in his 90s in 2010.

Needless to say, my life has been powerfully impacted by Marc. I have drawn close to his family, Georgette has become a precious sister, her husband a brother. And they are not the only ones.

Before my visit to Burundi in 2017 I was asked to take with me an extra enormous suitcase of second-hand clothing and shoes to a charity called 'New Generation'. Kenya Airways kindly let me do so for no extra cost. In Bujumbura I met the founder of the charity, Dieudonné, whose story has challenged me ever since...

When the war began in 1993 he was 17. In his village people who had drawn water from the same well, who had worshipped together in church, began to kill one another. Dieudonné was forced to watch his father being buried alive... He fled to the capital, a street kid for two years. What could he do? At an evangelistic campaign he made a deep commitment to Christ – and began to reach out to the numerous street kids around him, eventually founding this charity that has saved hundreds of them off the streets and helped them into homes and schooling. But as time passed, he knew there was something else he needed to do; he needed to forgive his father's murderer. With some of the street kids he headed back to his home village, and there was the man, frightened when Dieudonné introduced himself. But

Dieudonné said 'I have come to forgive you.' And before the church gathering he held the man's hand, pronouncing forgiveness... Not long after, that man died. Dieudonné is now paying for his orphaned children to be educated. 'Forgiveness is not just words,' he says. 'It is actions also'.

These people are lights shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome them. Will we let them inspire us? Will we let their example change us? Will we learn from our African sisters and brothers? Often they do not have material wealth as we do, but a spiritual wealth that should drive us deeper commitment, that should fire our zeal in seeking to follow Christ – wherever we are.

Canon David Kitley is Bishop's Adviser for Diocesan overseas partnerships, Diocese of Rochester

You can view Dieudonné telling something of his story on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTTAaVYDQMM&feature=emb_title

Other stories from Burundi can be found on <https://www.greatlakesoutreach.org/news-stories/our-stories/>

'The night the angels came' is a truly inspiring account of one ordinary but valiant English woman who found herself rescuing orphans in Burundi's civil war. Chrissie Chapman, the author, went there as a midwife, and responded to the needs that she found. The book is subtitled 'Miracles of provision and protection in Burundi'. As she took in abandoned babies, her home became an orphanage, then a school, then... A book you will want to keep, or share, and read again.

SOME PERSONAL MEMORIES OF THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Brian McDonald-Milne

The Duke of Edinburgh was certainly a remarkable man from an extraordinary family, and I would like to pay my own tribute to him.

He first visited the Solomon Islands on his own on the 'Britannia', and I attended a special service for him in St Barnabas' Cathedral, at which he read the lesson. He later

came again with the Queen and his uncle Lord Louis Mountbatten and some members of the Royal Family on another visit, which must have been one of the most informal of their many visits around the Commonwealth. There was no official car – but the authorities had a Landrover painted white, and the Royal party stood up on the back

of that, waving a bit, as some of us followed freely behind it. We thus formed an impromptu procession down the main street of the capital, Honiara. Very joyful!

Later I put on my Scout Commissioner's uniform to 'guard' them, as I thought they might need more security at their next public event ! No soldiers (of which

there were none in the country) or police (of which there were few) were noticeably visible. The 'Royals' certainly enjoyed themselves, and Prince Philip was quite undeterred when one event he attended was held in pouring tropical rain. He just walked round talking jovially to people, and ignored it, as the locals did. It was warm rain!

On his solo visit the Duke had spent time painting in watercolours some views of the outer islands while

Britannia was moored there, and these paintings are in the museum room at Sandringham where I was able to see them on a visit there. He was enjoying the peace of the islands, and probably also pottering around in a canoe, being the Naval man he was. That was the ideal place to have privacy, and pursue a hobby or two !

The Duke was a well-respected Chancellor of Cambridge University, and I was able to attend some of the Honorary Degree ceremonies

at which he impressively presided. I always remember how he scrutinized us as he left the Senate House in procession. He had a beady and observant eye for people and places. As Chancellor, he was also Visitor of Corpus Christi College, and he stayed a night in the Master's Lodge there.

May he rest in peace, and may HM the Queen and her family be comforted in their bereavement.

GLIMPSTING GLORY

Geoff Weaver

It is said that, when Handel heard his Hallelujah Chorus for the first time, deeply moved he declared *"I did see all Heaven open before my eyes"*.

Many years ago, when I first became Director of Music at Bradford Cathedral, the Bishop of Bradford, the saintly Geoffrey Paul, called me in to talk about my role. *"Your task,"* he said, *"is to give people splashes of glory"* – and in the years since, as I have led worship in cathedrals and small country churches, in this country and in many others, I have never forgotten his injunction.

I have had the privilege of conducting Bach's masterpiece, the B Minor Mass, many times and I find the Sanctus in that work overwhelming. Somehow Bach captures in the soaring harmonies what must have been Isaiah's experience as he went into the temple and was caught up in a vision of the majesty and splendour of the Almighty. There must have been a similar experience for those who were present at the dedication of Solomon's Temple (2 Chronicles) where the splendid ceremony, with 120 trumpets, was interrupted by the descent of a "cloud" – such a palpable sense of God's presence and glory

that the priests were unable to carry on with their duties.

There seems to be a common thread there; the preparation for worship had been made well. No doubt the music, the readings, the processions and all the other details had been



rehearsed thoroughly, but in the end God's Spirit is sovereign and unpredictable. I have experienced this sense of God's glory in cathedrals on great occasions, but equally in small, remote churches. I recall an ancient, Greek Orthodox church in the Troodos mountains in Cyprus where I took my youth choir some years ago. We were sightseeing, but someone suggested that we should sing – and so we sang a very simple unaccompanied Orthodox Kyrie eleison. As we made harmony in that

austere place many of us, adults and children alike, were deeply moved by the palpable sense of the holy.

I believe that we musicians, poets and artists have particular responsibilities as we use our gifts in worship. Our songs, poems and images can touch the heart in a way that mere words often cannot. More than that, those who profess to have little or no faith are often moved to tears by the music they sing, whether it be the ecstatic outburst *"Praise to the holiest in the height"* from Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* – or a simple, unaccompanied African chant.

Years ago I taught the African song *"Thuma mina"* in a remote Lakeland church, and an old lady said afterwards that this had been the most moving worship experience of her life. The more we musicians, artists and poets are willing to open ourselves to the mystery and unpredictability of the Holy Spirit, allowing our imagination to range far and wide, the more effective we shall be as prophets enabling others to glimpse the glory of God.

Geoff Weaver is a songwriter and musician.

ANGER IN OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD

(AN EXPANDED VERSION OF 'A THOUGHT FOR THE DAY',
GIVEN ON 18 MAY 2021, BBC RADIO 4)

Elizabeth Harris

In the 1970s I was walking down a road in Jamaica to the school at which I was teaching in Highgate, St Mary Parish, in the north-east of the island. It was always a beautiful walk with banks upon banks of green on my right, sloping down to blue sea in the distance. That morning, though, an open lorry passed carrying a bunch of young men, who shouted, 'Burn in fire', followed by a racial slur, relating to the fact that I was white. It was over in a moment and I continued walking.

That experience came to my mind when I heard that a group of people had been arrested on 17 May this year on suspicion of hurling anti-semitic abuse from a convoy of cars in the St John's Wood area of London, at the holy time of Shavuot when Jews commemorate the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. At least one of the cars was draped with the Palestinian flag, suggesting that the abuse was politically motivated, carried out against British Jews because of the renewal of violent conflict between Israel and Gaza.

This was not the first time that international events have rebounded on the streets of Britain. Southall, for instance, in the 1990s, experienced conflict between young Sikhs and Muslims, because of events in India. A Buddhist *vihara* (monastery) in Kingsbury, north-west London, was threatened by Tamils during Sri Lanka's bitter and violent ethnic war. In all of these instances, whether in St John's Wood, Southall or Kingsbury, anger was present – the anger that comes when a group or an individual feels powerless in the face of what appears to be blatantly unjust or impossible to change. The anger can be compounded if the perceived injustice is on the other side of the world.

Religions speak of anger in different ways. I have spent much of my life teaching Buddhism and it has become

part of me, alongside my Christian identity. So I will concentrate on these two religious traditions. For Buddhists, anger is seen as a negative quality, because it is so closely linked to hatred to the extent that the two words are sometimes seen as synonymous. Hatred, in Buddhism, forms a triad with greed and delusion. Together they are seen as the three 'poisons' that cause our suffering, our dis-ease, and all that is wrong in human societies. The centre of the well-known Tibetan Wheel of Life consists of three animals catching each other's tails, each representing one of the three. Anger is implicitly present within this as a quality that causes suffering to self and others. One simile in the Pali texts is that holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intention of throwing it at someone else. Even if it is thrown, the thrower is also burnt.

Another aspect of this is what qualities such as anger and hatred do to our perception of reality. In Buddhism, anger is not only something that harms oneself and others. It also distorts how we see the world. The ideal in Buddhism is that we should interact with the world not through our attachments and aversions but with compassion and equanimity. Qualities linked to attachment and aversion such as anger so cloud the mind and distort our perceptions that truth or reality cannot be seen clearly resulting in

unwise action. Only in some advanced forms of tantric Buddhism, present in Tibetan Buddhism, can the energy of anger be channelled for good and this only under the guidance of an enlightened teacher, because of the potential of such energy to do harm rather than lead to enlightenment.

When Buddhists explain this, they are not saying that we should repress our anger and pretend it does not exist. For, if this is done, anger does not disappear. On the contrary, it lies dormant only to re-emerge in unexpected and perhaps violent ways. Rather, we should aim to reach a point when we can recognize that we are angry and let anger go so that wisdom and compassion have a better chance of arising. Some forms of Buddhist meditation linked to mindfulness practice focus on this kind of recognition through what one of my own meditation teachers called 'bare attention', which involves watching what comes into the mind in a non-judgemental way and letting it go before it is owned as 'mine'.

Buddhists would also differentiate this attitude to anger from indifference to suffering. Buddhists would never say that we should ignore injustice, but only that we should not react to it hastily, with anger. The better path is to respond with insight and compassion, giving wise action a better chance to arise. The International Network of Engaged Buddhists, for instance, works in many different countries, collaborating with other organisations, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, to address human need and the political factors behind it.

Christians, on the other hand, speak

of righteous anger. The story of Jesus chasing from the temple in Jerusalem those who sought personal profit through unjust commercial dealings with those who came to worship is often used to illustrate this (Matthew 21: 12-13). And it has invited the response: 'if Jesus himself could show anger by overturning the tables of those who oppressed the weak, surely we, his followers, can and should show anger when we see the rich trampling on the poor or causing irreversible damage to the climate'. Anger is thereby justified as positive and necessary – a natural response to injustice. Prophets such as Amos and Jeremiah are also cited by Christians as leaders who did not hesitate to uncover injustice and point an angry finger at the perpetrators.

This is not the only narrative on anger, however, within Christianity. Psalm 37 advises, 'Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Do not fret – it leads only to evil' (verse 8). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encouraged his listeners, before they made any offerings to God, to be reconciled with those who might accuse them of making judgements in anger (Matthew 5: 21-24). And Paul in his letter to the Ephesians writes, 'Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil' (4.

26-27). The implication here is that, when anger is left to fester in our thoughts and emotions, the devil has an open door into our minds. There is a strand, therefore, in Christian scripture that recognizes that anger has a deleterious impact on our psyches and opens us to harm. It is a strand that touches in a most interesting way the Buddhist teaching that anger distorts the way we perceive the world, and, therefore, should be recognized and called out from its hiding places. It is worth remembering that the early fathers of the Christian church saw emotions such as lust and wrath as demons to be fought with. I would suggest that Buddhist and Christian attitudes have the potential to inform and influence each other in this area. My view of righteous anger has certainly been influenced by Buddhism such that I now see its dangers as well as its energy.

I was certainly hurt when 'Burn in fire' was shouted at me in Jamaica. But I knew enough about the history of slavery and white supremacy to see why these young men taunted me, a white woman in her twenties. I understood that awareness of slavery and European colonialism, built as they were on theories of white supremacy, could very well lead to anger in the young against me, a

symbol of both. Experiencing their anger became part of my learning. I was not crushed by it, though, probably because of the incredible friendship and hospitality I also met in the country.

I can also understand why Muslims in the West were filled with anger at the deaths they saw in Gaza through Israeli bombing in May 2021 and why Jews were similarly angry at those they saw in Israel, through the actions of HAMAS. To understand, however, is not to condone. Neither the anti-semitic abuse suffered by Jews in St John's Wood or the disproportionate response of the Israeli government to aggression from HAMAS should be condoned. The anger that leads to hatred, retaliation or revenge is not the answer. It cannot nurture reconciliation, truth-telling or change. Change can only come if we seek to stand in the shoes of others, to see things from the other side, through empathetic listening and courteous dialogue, even when we think that we disagree profoundly with our dialogue partners – and this is happening in different ways globally. For, as one Buddhist text says: 'Never here do hatreds cease by hatred. Only by freedom from hatred do they cease. This is a perennial or eternal truth' (Dhammapada verse 5 – translation by Valerie Roebuck).

CHILD LABOURERS

It is estimated that there are 280 million child labourers in the world and that 35 million of them are in India.¹ The statistics do not of course take hidden child labourers into account.

Many children in India work because they and their parents have no choice. If they did not work their families would not survive. The real challenge is to tackle poverty and then benefits to children would naturally follow.

The most dreadful situation in India occurs when parents sell their children into bonded labour. The children are

then likely to live where they work and to live for a very short time. Dangerous bonded labour was made illegal in India in 1986 but it does still happen. In the silk industry it is not unusual for children aged 4 and 5 years to work for 12 hours a day for 6 or 7 days. The young children have to put their hands into very hot water to check the cocoons. It is estimated that 350,000 bonded children work in the Indian silk industry.²

Trinita in Kolkata was founded to help labouring children in the slum areas by offering education and safety.

Many of the children are rag pickers, street sellers, servants and rickshaw pullers. The literacy rate is low and many of the children are in very poor health. Trinita offers safe shelter, health care, including mosquito nets and immunisation, and education. An important part of the work is to negotiate with parents and employers to allow children enough free time not only for schooling, but also for play.

¹ From UNICEF.

² From Human Rights Watch

TOWARDS THE CO-EVOLUTION OF LIFE ON EARTH

Peter Challen¹

In the shared quest to find cures through 'system change' rather than only dealing with palliatives, for the world's problems, I have drawn on experiences arising from my 62 years of wearing a 'dog-collar.' By participating in this aspect of Christian ministry, I grew to be alert to a vast number of different personal ways in a range of different traditions and global zones of searching for inclusive justice. I acquired some **basic insights** which I believe are of fundamental importance in charting a new course for life on planet earth. These insights are available to all believers in the life-affirming, universally applicable ethos to which the Christian faith points or leads. **They are simple to state. But I acknowledge that, in the face of a 'culture of socially acceptable cheating' in today's 'traumatised global society', they are extremely demanding of heart, mind and action.**²

I developed a conviction about **Chaplaincy** as a non-institutionalised outreach wider and more specific than the parochial and largely residential pattern of ministry. It can be exercised in true dialogue by any **amateur or jobbing polymathic 'geologist'**³ with whatever **professional skills each has acquired.**

From work in SLIM, CCMJ and the London Global Open Table I learnt of the richly creative tensions that I outline below lying behind **THE THREEFOLD STRUCTURAL FAULT** in western societal governance in the grip of **USURY, THEFT of the COMMONS** and the corporate institutional drag that makes task differentiation a belittling **POWER OVER OTHERS instead of a CO-OPERATIVE SHARING OF APPROPRIATE SKILLS AND TASKS.**

Such insights require a persistent

willingness **to keep in creative tension and the harmony of opposites** certain ideas that often seem opposite, but which are of quintessential apposition. They are manifestations of a primal relationship in the co-evolution of life on earth. They are equal in value while also contrasting in perspective. We must learn to dance in these polarities throughout our lives.

1. The most comprehensive, simple to state, and difficult apposite pair to keep in mind and express in action is the ever present, often loosely recited, wisdom of the inseparable commitments to **'love God and love Neighbour'**. God is an anthropomorphic metaphor for the mysterious essence of life – a verb rather than a noun. This essence is spelled out in a vast number of different personal ways in a range of different traditions and global zones. Neighbour represents the getting right of all the relationships throughout this symbiotic planetary life. All the major faith traditions make this emphasis in their own terms.
 2. **'Yin and Yang'**, springing originally from the sunny and shady sides of the day, are **equal and apposite in significance** to each other. (See *studies of the nine aspects of the 'Enneagram'*.)
 3. **Prophetic and Pastoral.** There is immense danger in attempting prophetic critique without pastoral sensitivity. Critiques, alone, degenerate into insensitive judgement. They are as dangerous and counter-productive as pastoral care offered without a prophetic implication. That division of inseparable attributes explains the decline in the relevance and influence of so much institutionalised religion. 'Pastoral' entails sensitivity to genuine
- need. 'Prophetic' is the constant reminder of the inclusive context of planetary life in every local happenstance. A reminder that things intimate, socially complex, and having time-lapsed global impact, are all oscillating in a synchronised manner in the thrust of co-evolution, which is now a 13+ billion year process.
4. **The Drive and Drag of Institutions.** The orderly and 'efficient' process of institutionalising human tasks has an initial evocative drive; but in time they develop a rigidity – in the form of dogmas and rituals – that emerge as a deadening institutional drag on authentic evolution. See also 12 below.
 5. **Wisdom is not an authority but a free offering** of its own authenticity. Whistle-blowing challenges embedded hubristic authority. In the collaborative search for the nature of systemic change, it is vital that we adhere to the idea that **'nothing is impossible if you don't mind who gets the credit.'** If thoughts or actions are examined for their actual content, there is an increased chance that we might all open our minds to new paradigms that tackle ingrained mortal, cultural, political and economic bias. Attribution may then be in order when the wisdom or its opposite of any quotation has sunk in.
 6. Positive creative tension can be represented as **PRINCIPLED-PRAGMATISM or GOD-NEIGHBOUR or as 'Both many Palliatives and but one integrated Principle of a Systemic Curative.'** In terms of human health, we know the difference between care of the dying body and the research,

discovery and application of a cure for either the present patient or as future hope for others. This distinction must be constantly kept in mind when interrogating problems, and then developing appropriate forms of action, in the cultural, political and economic arenas; that is, in the conscious house-keeping or stewardship of the planet. Reflection on Principle/ God helps us discern what is truly important in the largest, most spacious frame of reality and to know what is ours to do in the face of “evil” and injustice, moving beyond cultural self-pre-occupation.

7. **Cosmos and Chemistry.**

Quantum physics is leading to a renewal of indigenous wisdom in philosophy and mature globally oriented theology. This reminds us of the symbiosis that defines the chemical reactions across the vast eras of the planet's existence and evolution, as Brian Cox has communicated so vividly in BBC broadcasts.

8. **Birthright and Covenant.** The service we render to others is the rent we have a responsibility to pay for our passing tenancy in the earth community. The biblical concept of Covenant with ‘everything under the rainbow’ is about the dignity of all creatures when a creative tension is maintained within the evolving realities of change that is founded in constant and intrinsic values. Covenant concerns gift, gratitude, tenancy, responsibilities and the inter-generational flow of all these values. Rent is a return of resources to the system itself as their common-wealth that all life inherits with responsibility to pass on. Otherwise, it becomes a form of theft from the commons and the common good.

9. **Rights and Responsibilities.** The United Nations Charter of Human Rights does not express the essential need to keep a creative tension between individual rights and the communal and

co-operative responsibilities that we need to recognise in our temporary tenancy within the gifted life of this earth.

10. **Praying and Prayerfulness.**

Praying consists of many derived or invented disciplines around the creative tensions of which this reflection speaks. Prayerfulness is the all-day, in every way, outcome as a state of mind arising from and fortified by the disciplines with which we go about our responsibilities.

11. **The Human Jesus and the Title Christ.**

The man Jesus made manifest in his short mortal spell on earth the godliness or eternal validity of the ever-flowing life nurtured in the cosmos over 13+ billion years ...and on Earth only latterly. Those who recognised that, gave him the title of ‘the Christ’ – a traditional description and expectation of one making manifest the nature of the kin[g]dom of God. The title is one that could be bestowed on anyone witnessing in their life to the validity of the need to maintain the creative tensions outlined in this list.⁴ ‘Christ’ is a title of universal application acknowledging participation in sustaining the Common Good, the ‘Kin[g]dom of God’.

12. **Professional and Amateur.**

It is vital to societal and personal sanity that professional training and practice should not erode a continuing amateur curiosity, where amateur means a lover of intrinsic values. This is the way that the personal aspiration deep in almost all of us – the quest for communal harmony – is not eroded by fear or positional arrogance; by hubristic human conceits about one's self-importance.⁵

WHEN we engage creatively and co-operatively, we depart from the fixed world of our own highly conditioned experience, of daily routine and opinions formed of apparent hard facts. We enter into a kind of ‘genesis foyer’ where something that is not yet

in sight might begin to edge its way forward from silence into word, from the invisible into a form designed for effective action.

Recently I publicised some wise words attributed to Pope Francis. One response was not far short of a tirade about the Pope's ‘hypocrisy’. There was no sympathy or pastoral sensitivity towards age-long entrapment of basically good people. There was no acknowledgment of the Pope's prophetic courage in permeating quite a few dogmatic boundaries.

The Christian Church should display exemplary standards as an agent of the creative and inseparable tension between God as Cosmic and Planetary impulse and all right relationships needed for the emergence of peace and the kin[g]dom of inclusive justice. *The [g] in the kin-dom represents the ‘ground of all being.’*

If we recognise and act together on the creative tensions of life, we may yet find harmony in a critical mass able to generate a cure; that is, a new personal-societal-political-economic paradigm, while also still sensitively attending to some of so many urgent palliatives.

¹ Canon Emeritus **Peter Challen** – an Anglican chaplain who never retired, but just ‘retreaded’. He feeds and is fed by a network of serious searchers for inclusive justice, nurtured by the Christian ethos as a universal approach to the integrity of truth as revealed in the evolution of human experience.

² **‘The Traumatized Society’** by Fred Harrison.

³ **‘The Dream of the Earth’** by Thomas Berry, a theologian becoming a ‘Geologist’!

⁴ Elaborated in **‘The Universal Christ’** in 2019 by Richard Rohr – fed by his erudite network.

⁵ **‘Personal Aspiration and Positional Arrogance’** report by a jobbing theologian on a senior business course at the London Business School.

THE DIOCESE OF MAHAJANGA

Hall Spears

Madagascar, thanks to David Attenborough and several travel writers, has become known for the extraordinary number of species unique to the country, most famous being the lemurs.

The simple reason for the unique flora and fauna is that it is the world's oldest island (as well as the fourth largest island) and so everything has developed separately. On the accompanying map are the old provinces which are the current Anglican dioceses. The area in purple on the north west is the diocese of Mahajanga. It alone is one and three quarter times the size of Ireland.

Other significant statistics are that the country is one of the poorest in the world and seventh most at risk from global warming. In the south this has brought years of drought and many deaths through famine in 2020. In the east there are increasing numbers of devastating cyclones and in the Mahajanga area increasing floods in the wet season.

The natural resources are considerable but successive governments have failed to curb illegal exports and widespread corruption so that neither the nation as a whole nor individual workers have benefited from the exploitation of gold, sapphires, mica, rare hard woods, vanilla and many other products.

Over 50% of the children suffer from malnutrition and many areas are without basic health facilities of any sort.

In April 2021 the President, under pressure from the medical authorities, has given permission for covid19 vaccines to be imported. At the time of writing there is a severe wave of the South African variant of coronavirus, but exact figures of deaths are unknown. Until recently, fatalities due to starvation, malaria and bubonic plague were greater



Madagascar showing the 6 Anglican dioceses.

than those from covid 19. In the last year there have been lockdowns (confinement). Currently the capital (Antananarivo), Mahajanga and some other districts are in lockdown which means entering or leaving these areas by road, air or sea is forbidden and there is a nightly curfew. Also facemasks are to be worn at all times outside the home. Rules such as these are fairly strictly adhered to in the cities but ignored elsewhere.

On 31st March 2019 I was consecrated bishop of Mahajanga. At that time the diocese was in great difficulties: none of the clergy had received their full stipends and many had left the diocese, over half of the churches had closed, etc. There were clear expectations that the election of a foreign bishop would magically relieve financial problems – a belief that is not easy to dispel since all Europeans and Americans are indeed wealthy by Malagasy standards. So where does one begin, mindful that everyone brings their own assumptions and 'baggage'? The immediate temptation is to become a

pious relief and development worker, and let mission come afterwards. With much heart searching on my part I have refused to simply pay the clergy from overseas funds with the great exception of doing so when the churches are closed due to lockdown and thus had no income.

In nearly all Anglican consecration services it is stated that the bishop, as chief pastor, "should know and be known by his people". A rather daunting obligation to one long past the energies of youth, with a flimsy command of the language and no previous knowledge of the area and the customs of the people (and no vehicle!) in such a vast area. The Malagasy language is related to Indonesian and Malay with various dialects but the language is a unifying factor in an otherwise very diverse nation.

On visiting the clergy I was horrified by their living conditions and astonished to find that most parishes did not have a house for the priest to live in. The tiny income of some churches was being spent on renting a room which usually had neither water nor electricity and frequently no sanitation. After setting up a diocesan Department of Development I made it a priority to provide housing for the clergy. Although only two houses have been completed and a third commenced this project is a great boost to clergy morale. However, the pandemic has taught us all that plans sometimes have to be radically changed.

A lot of the energies of the Development Committee have had to go into the provision of facemasks, jerrycans and soap, etc. This has not been as straight forward as I imagined. I visited a church for a Confirmation and arranged for a rehearsal on the Saturday afternoon and the priest took the opportunity of filling out the day with meetings with other groups about health

provision and sporting equipment. On arrival at the church I asked where our jerrycans and soap was for those arriving. I was met with astonishment, "Bishop, I thought those were for Sunday!" Suddenly one is confronted by the urgency of limiting the pandemic in a situation where basic hygiene is regarded as a luxury.

In Madagascar the level of achievement in education has been falling principally due to the absenteeism of teachers, thought to be about 30%. The reason cited is the lack of pay in the government schools. Of course this means that some teachers are working most of the time and quite a number rarely appear. This is heart breaking in secondary schools as it ruins the

careers of many children. Imagine wanting a career in any science and your teacher doesn't turn up in your examination year! We hope to start a new school each year.

Everywhere one turns there are obvious needs so I spend a lot of my time working with people trying to decide on priorities and keep to them. When a grant comes for a building project and someone is ill and there is no money to pay for medicine can one really deny them the use of the money for the medicine? So far I have been able to raise the money among friends to pay for the medicine and rectify the budget. But this sort of intervention is short term and seems far from the current watchword *resilience* without which no grants are

forthcoming.

People are willing and excited by initiatives be it in worship, health provision, education or church governance but all these come at a price both in time and money. My personal challenge is to lead without imposing foreign models (perhaps subconsciously) and without creating dependency links. Currently I am, like you, deeply frustrated by all the plans that have had to be abandoned in the last 12 months due to the pandemic but still excited at the prospects of what may be achieved in the next 12 months.

Hall Spears is the bishop of Mahajanga

GYANJYOTI SCHOOL, POKHARATHOK, NEPAL

Michael and Maureen Hawksworth

2020 has been a difficult year for most people worldwide because of Covid-19. So, how has Shree Gyanjyoti School in a small village in Nepal coped with all this?

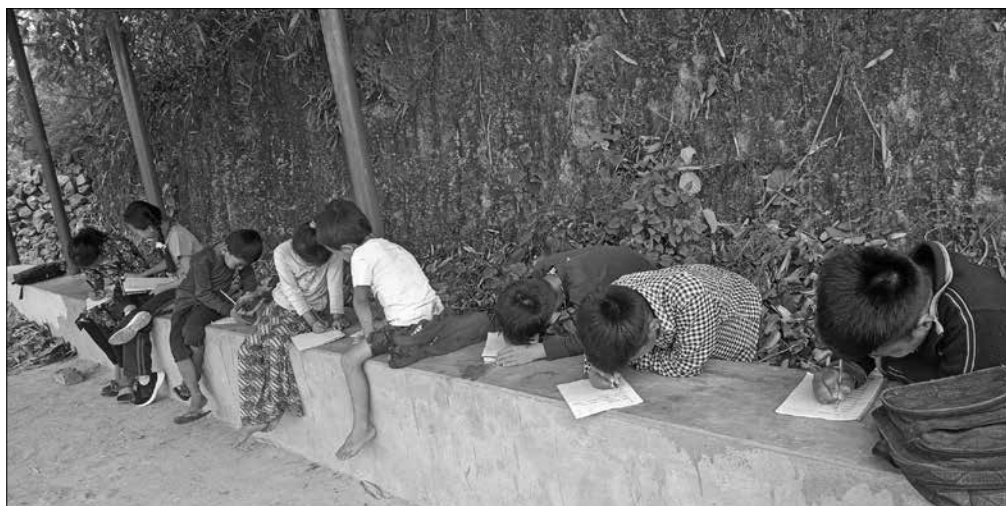
The early part of the year continued as normal for the school as the virus was fairly late arriving in the country. However, by mid-April, when the new school year begins, the virus had got into Nepal and the schools were forced to close for several months. It is also around this time that the Principal (Balkrishna Gaire) and his staff would normally be visiting the families in the village to recruit students for the school. Nepal was put under a tight lockdown so these visits were impossible. However, the wonderfully dedicated and committed staff at the school continued to deliver a fantastic education to

the children. The internet and devices to connect to it are very limited in the village so teachers delivered lessons directly to students and taught some classes by socially distancing outside.

In mid-November, the government allowed schools to re-open but only on the condition that all students had their temperature taken every day before entering the school and that all students and staff maintained a

distance of 2m at all times. So, our school bought a thermometer and some extra benches and desks in order to meet these regulations and were, therefore, able to re-open. Masks have been provided for staff and students by the sewing instructor in our sewing room which is available for all the village ladies to use.

Upon re-opening, there were 193 students of which 136 were from





low caste families, most requiring full or partial scholarships. We are so very proud that no caste system operates in the school and that no child is turned away, whatever their background. Some classes are still having to take place outside in order to maintain the 2m distance but all the children are continuing to receive a top quality education evidenced by the fact that the school, once again, was the top school in their municipality in the Grade 8 examinations.

So far, the virus has still not reached the village but it has reached neighbouring towns and villages. We just pray that they continue to stay safe and well. Many families have lost their income as a result of lockdown so providing food for themselves has had to take priority over paying their school fees. Obviously, this is absolutely right but it has put a higher burden on LEARN as the students will

not be turned away for not being able to pay.

Whilst we (the trustees of LEARN), the staff, students and families of the school, continue to be hugely grateful for the financial support given, fundraising has (for obvious reasons) been very difficult this year. If you feel able, there are a number of ways that you can help and details are given on our website: www.learnnepal.org.uk We take this opportunity to thank all our supporters for everything they do for LEARN and, therefore, the children at the school. As we often quote "education is a right, not a privilege" and, thanks to our supporters, this is the case for a small village in a remote part of Nepal. On a global scale, this seems almost insignificant but the reality is **lifechanging** for nearly 200 children and their families – THANK YOU!

*The Trustees of LEARN
December 2020*

Postscript to December 2020 School report

The coronavirus, which has been so devastating in India, reached neighbouring Nepal in April and Aljazeera News recently described the situation there as being apocalyptic! Consequently, there has been a virtually total lockdown. The school is closed and is unlikely to be open again for some time but, when the situation eases, the teachers will continue their earlier work by travelling around the area and taking classes outside.

During the earlier lockdown, many of the men in the village lost their source of income as they are day labourers and we were able to provide funds to buy food for about 40 families who were really struggling. The money came from personal donations as LEARN funds are specifically for the benefit of the school. A similar situation has arisen again but now Devi Prasad advises us that nearly 100 families are needing help. The request is for 3,000 rupees (about £18) to be provided for each family to buy essential food for one month. If anyone feels able to help, donations can be sent directly to Maureen's charity account:

Maureen Hawksworth; Sort code: 60-60-06; Account number: 46256539 using the reference COV19 or by post to: Maureen Hawksworth, 9 Brockenhurst Drive, Bolton BL2 4HP.

INTRODUCING MARIA CLARA WHO LIVES IN HYDERABAD IN INDIA

Maria has very kindly given Christians Aware an Easter card and a Christmas card this year.

She has written, 'It fascinated me to work with nature and get a shape into it. As I was looking for more mediums, I saw some Batik paintings, and was blown away. I was able to attend a workshop on it and picked up the basics. I later did a course on dyeing and

printing from the Weavers Service Centre. My journey in Batik started there and continues. I liked the effect of batik and the result of the process. I relate to the way Batik looks. There is so much of beauty in the brokenness and cracks.'

We will learn more from Maria, and see more of her work in our next magazine.

ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD IN KAJIADO COUNTY

Paul Mpishi

On a bright Monday morning, I received news from our diocesan office that Bishop Timothy Ranji, who is currently retired, had nominated me to attend the Christian Aware Conference with Canon Mungai, provost of St James cathedral. The arrangement was a bit intimidating for me, for this is the first time I have ever been asked to go on a trip with such a senior colleague.

Of course, as expected for those of us from third world countries, obtaining a visa was a very tedious process. Normally, a lot of paperwork is involved, and there is never a guarantee that you are going to be given a visa, however, we did our very best to provide the required documentation. Both Canon Mungai and I have had exemplary travel histories, and upon submitting the visa applications along with the supporting documents, our applications were approved and we were both extended visas to visit the UK.

Our itineraries were well arranged by Barbara and Christian Aware officials. Silvia, one of the Christian Aware partners, picked us up at the airport, and she hosted us at her home for a few days. Our conversations revolved mostly around ministry, food security, and culture. It was shocking to see the number of vegetables and fruits grown in the garden at her home. In Kenya, despite the fertile land and rich soil, we still buy a lot of food from the local markets. The environment of the home was healthy, because indigenous trees, fruits and flowers were planted on her compound. Sylvia had even placed feeding troughs on the trees to feed birds. It is no wonder that Westerners are blessed, because back in our rural home, we chase away birds, we cut trees, and we do not engage in gardening, because it is felt that the land should be reserved exclusively for cows and sheep to graze.

Lately, we have been forced by circumstances to rethink our lives due to challenges brought on by

climate changes. Kajiado county is semi arid, and most parts of the county experience long seasons of droughts. The Maasai community where I come from, ironically received a lot of income from the livestock proceeds. However, within a few months, famine struck the region, and the families were left with completely empty sheds and dead animal carcasses all over the community. The residents in this area had to depend on relief programs for food and government assistance. Christian Aware Conference speakers and group discussions address issues that touched my life in different angles. Through a Christians Aware Conference, a caregiver program was birthed! This is a church sponsored program for distributing food once a month. Additionally, a livelihood program, which basically teaches the Maasai community the skills of gardening, was started. The latter program teaches the best practices for tilling the land and for planting seeds that will thrive in a semi-arid land. Women in my community are much more passionate about land cultivation than men. They embraced the idea of gardening the very moment it was introduced; now every family is getting enough food to eat and to sell to its neighbors.

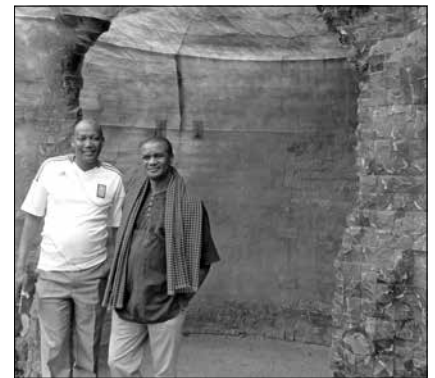
We have done a lot of lobbying, specifically targeting the men in the community, in order that they set aside land that was initially meant for grazing, to plant food. We have also emphasized that farmers put up fencing, so that their crops will be protected from livestock and wild

animals. We have also emphasized the proper storage of food, so that the community can have plenty of food during the drought season.

My wife, who is a professional Nutritionist, is working with the government, and has conducted a series of health talks, on malnutrition and proper baby feeding practices. She has also advised residents in the community on myths surrounding the consumption of fruits. Initially, many residents thought eating fruits was a luxury of wealthy and urban people. After a series of health talks, they came to realize that eating fruits and proper feeding can prevent malnutrition among infants and toddlers, as well as help those infected by HIV/AIDS to live healthy lives.

I am Happy to report that my community is no longer dependent on livestock only as a food source, but has now integrated agricultural products in their diet as well. The residents in the community are getting enough fresh foods from their gardens enough to feed families, and are able to sell the surplus to other members of the community. .

**Revd Paul Tino Mpishi is Vicar,
St John's Mwimuto, diocese of
Kenya South, Kiambu.**



Paul Mpishi at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park with Geoffrey Mungai during their visit to Christians Aware in 2019. (Paul is on the left as you look at the picture.)

GREETINGS AND ANNIVERSARY WISHES TO CHRISTIANS AWARE

A letter from Bishop Charles Muturi

Greetings from Kenya and the diocese Barbara. I trust you are well and kept of the Lord.

Thank you for your e-mail of May 12, 2021 checking on us and the diocese while we are going through the 'New Normal'. We cannot say that all is well, but with God on our side, we are not ravaged. Pressing on despite the Covid-19 pandemic is our focus and we can attest to the fact that this far God has protected us although we have lost quite a number of our Christians and politicians.

We started on a high note in January 2020 after my enthronement on 20th December, 2019 then came March 2020 and everything went spiraling down after the closure of schools, churches and businesses in the Country and around the World as you can recall.

Regardless of all these, the Diocese of Mt. Kenya South and myself reminisce with good memories of our partnership and cordial relationship with Christians Aware for many years – The education tours, the exchange programmes and visits to UK have been a pillar to the Diocese.



Bishop Charles during his visit to Wakefield Cathedral.

We cannot forget your visits to our country Kenya which strengthened our ties.

The Mothers' Mercy Home is growing and going strong thanks to your support and we hope once the pandemic is contained we shall be in a position to revive the visits and exchange programs. There is also growth in the number of Parishes, clergy and church workers albeit minimal due to the current situation.

Finally, we commit Christians Aware in prayers even for remembering the Diocese of Mt. Kenya South and the nation of Kenya at this crucial moment of worldwide uncertainties. We also wish you God's blessings and all the best as you celebrate 40 years Link with us.

Yours sincerely,

*Rt. Revd. Canon Charles M. Muturi,
The 6th Mt. Kenya South*

To celebrate 40 years of the Christians Aware link with the Kenyan Church we are publishing an anniversary book/album. We request members to send their memories of the exchanges over the years to barbarabutler@christiansaware/f9.co.uk Donations to cover the cost of the publication will also be very welcome.

A TOUR OF NORTHERN KENYA

Stephen K. Wainaina

The northern part of Kenya is very hot, dry humid and windy and its size is over half of the land mass of the country. It has very little rainfall and rivers are seasonal. The inhabitants are mostly nomads who rear camels, sheep and goats.

The common wildlife in the area is Antelopes, Giraffes, Elephants and Camels.

There are also many varieties of birds such as Buffalo Weaver, African Gray, Horn Bill, Qualea, Weaver, Flamingo, Ostrich, Giffon, Augur, Buzzard, Eagle, Guinea Fowl and Denhau Bustard.

This is the area where we have Lake Turkana which is the biggest permanent alkaline desert lake in the world and whose northern end crosses into Ethiopia and

extends along the Rift Valley for 249 kilometers. The lake has many crocodiles and Nile Perch fish.

This is the area that Bishop Timothy Ranji (Bishop Emeritus – Diocese of Mt. Kenya South) invited me and Mr. Kangethe Kimani (an old KAYO member who visited England under the CA/KAYO Exchange Programme in the early 80's) to join him on a

tour of four days, i.e. 25th to 28th March 2021. The tour was to be conducted by a tour firm known as Kenfam International Ltd. The Bishop sponsored the two of us. In the tour group were five other people, i.e. Florence, Peter, Lucy of Kenfam International, the tour guide Simon Kagiri and the driver Paul Mbugua.

It is important to note here that Lake Turkana is where the famous Turkana Boy skeleton was discovered in 1984. The skeleton is said to be over 1.6 million years old.

Also along the shores of this lake lives the smallest tribe/community in Kenya known as the El-Molo whose population is less than a thousand people.

Day 1: 25th March 2021

The tour started very early in the morning of Thursday at 6.00am from St. James Cathedral Kiambu. We drove to Nairobi to pick up Florence, Peter and our tour guide Simon.

We drove north towards Nyeri then Nanyuki through the beautiful farmlands of Timau along the slopes of Mt. Kenya. We stopped at Archers Post in Samburu County for lunch, after which we continued our northern drive enjoying the beautiful sceneries of the vast savannah lands dotted by volcanic mountains until we reached Marsabit town at 5.30pm. This was our destination of the 1st day.

Marsabit Town is an outpost of urban civilization in the vast desert of northern Kenya.

This town is on a hill and surrounded by Marsabit National Park. The weather here is cool as the town is perched at an elevation of about 1400 metres. Although we arrived late, the programme required that we visit the National Park. So we had a quick drive into the park and visited the beautiful Lake Paradise inside the park.

We spent the night in the town, relatively tired after the long drive – having travelled about 530 kilometres from Nairobi.

Day 2: 26th March 2021

After breakfast we headed North West from Marsabit then North along Chalbi desert to Kalacha where we took our lunch under a tree due to the extreme heat in the area. Our destination for the day was to reach Loiyangalani Town at the shores of Lake Turkana, which is a drive of 260 Kilometres. After lunch we drove to North Horr and had an opportunity to visit the only sand dune in Kenya which rises to about 20metres. It was very exciting to climb and walk on the dune. After a short drive we encountered a seasonal river and our driver had to scout for a safe spot to cross over. We then headed South West through South Horr to Loiyangalani on the shores of Lake Turkana.

We reached the lake around 6.00pm, just in good time to enjoy the clear sunset. It was really very fascinating to watch the sun to go down on the horizon upon the lake. This ended our second day of the tour.

Day 3: 27th March 2021

After breakfast we visited the El-Moro community who live at the lakeside as mentioned above. We had a very fulfilling time with the community and one of their elders explained to us in great detail about their culture, customs and challenges. Their main diet is fish which they catch at the lake. Whatever extra fish they catch they sell to places like Kisumu Town. He informed us that they do intermarry with other tribes.

A Non-Governmental Organization has provided them with free water and a water tank. They also built them a Primary school. Their living condition is quite challenging due to lack of normal amenities and economic activities.

Following our time with the community we returned to the town for early lunch after which we embarked on a drive of about 100km to a place called NGURUNIT in the vast Samburu County. On the way we visited Turkana Wind Power Project which comprises of 365 wind turbines

each with a capacity of 850KW which is connected to the national grid through a 435km transmission line to Suswa in Naivasha. This is a Government of Kenya power project.

The drive to Ngurunit was through many volcanic mountains, winding roads with very beautiful sceneries. After about 3hrs drive we reached our destination – the Ngurunit Camp where we enjoyed camp life, open night sky and the beautiful Ndoto Mountains. We took our supper in the open under a tree. Some of us slept in manyatta like shelters where we experienced village life in the North in its true form.

Day 4: 28th March 2021

After breakfast we bid farewell to this beautiful village –Ngurunit- ready for our return journey of about 508Km to Nairobi. We drove through very beautiful mountain ranges through Losai National Reserve and Namunyak Wildlife Conservation Trust where as we drove, Bishop Timothy spotted a very beautiful Desert Rose tree/flower (also called the Japanese Frangipani). +Timothy explained to us that there is a book titled 'Desert Flower' telling about a female of Somali origin who had a very difficult life due to the traditions of her tribe. We had to stop and took several pictures of the tree. Along the way we had the opportunity of watching many beautiful birds and wild animals as mentioned at the beginning. It took us up to evening to reach to Nairobi.

This tour was very enjoyable and very educative to us. It will remain embedded in our memories for many years.

Of importance is that **in all the areas we visited, which covered Marsabit, Turkana and Samburu Counties, the inhabitants who are Christians, Muslims and Traditionalist co-exists very peacefully.** This encouraged us very much and we do hope that the County Governments of this area will invest a lot of resources to improve lives of the citizens.



**SURPRISE AND HOPE.
A JOURNEY TO NORTHERN KENYA.**





TWO PIONEERS OF INTERFAITH FRIENDSHIP: CHIARA LUBICH AND BROTHER DANIEL FAIVRE

Jon Dal Din

Yes, indeed, two pioneers of interfaith friendship, both quite different yet committed to universal fraternity. Both were born in a Catholic environment between the First and Second World Wars: Chiara Lubich in Trent, Northern Italy on 22nd January 1920; Daniel Faivre on 8th April 1929 in the Vendée area of Western France. Both experienced the love of God from an early age. Both chose God as the ideal of their life when they were 23 years old and started an adventure, which led them to see the presence of God in all people and in the world around them. Both engaged with people of all races, cultures, faiths, and traditions. Daniel at a local level with ordinary people of faith. Chiara at an international level with faith leaders and their communities. As far as I know, they only met once, in London, in 1996.

Brother Daniel Faivre

In 1943, when France was under Nazi occupation, Daniel realised that the hand of Providence, la main de la Providence, was guiding him. He had just finished school and was expected to find work, but his mother decided to send Daniel to a boarding school with the Brothers of St Gabriel. Here, his vocation to religious life was nurtured. After gaining a degree in England, he was sent to Thailand, where he consecrated his life to God by taking solemn vows. For the next 14 years, Daniel



*Br Daniel Faivre
SG – Pioneer of
Interfaith Dialogue
and Friendship.*

gained valuable interfaith experience teaching Buddhist students in Catholic secondary schools. In 1967, he returned to England to teach and do further studies in Theology and Eastern Religions. In 1979, he moved to Southall to work as a Catechist at St Anselm's RC church. Southall was a complex and politically sensitive multi-faith and multi-ethnic area, known locally as 'Little India' where there were seven Gurdwaras, three Hindu Temples, two Mosques, five Anglican Churches and many other churches and religious groups. For Brother Daniel, it was a Holy City. The presence of such a variety of people gave rise to a certain level of xenophobia, which led to riots and attacks by skinheads and right-wing groups and the death of Blair Peach. Daniel had got to know the area and the diverse communities by knocking on doors, talking to people of all races and faiths in the streets and introducing them to each other. Slowly and quietly, he brought these people together for talks, seminars, multi-faith prayers and other events. An embryonic forum of faiths developed, which helped reduce racial tensions and develop a sense of fellowship and community cohesion. Daniel recognized the presence of the divine in each person. For him, everyone was a 'Unique Manifestation of the Godhead, Redeemed by Christ.' The local bishop was impressed with his achievements and, in 1981, Cardinal Hume invited Daniel to do what he was doing in Southall for the whole of Westminster diocese. Daniel set up Westminster Interfaith – the first Catholic interfaith agency in GB.

In 1986, under the banner of 'London People of Faith for Peace,' he brought faith communities together to take

part in a multi-faith pilgrimage for Peace, which was probably the first of its kind in GB. It became a regular annual event as well as an inspiration and model for the many interfaith walks and pilgrimages, which are now a common feature throughout the country and beyond. Over the years, they have attracted hundreds of people of all ages, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, who walk together, as pilgrims for peace, visiting places of worship, sharing stories as brothers and sisters of the one human family.

In 1991, during the Kuwait War, he organized the first Multi-Faith Prayers for Peace at Westminster Cathedral and a much larger "Prayerful Reunion", in 1996, to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the multi-faith prayer meeting held in Assisi. All nine officially recognized faiths in the UK took part. Chiara Lubich read St Francis' prayer for peace.

Daniel retired after this event and devoted his time mainly to interfaith research and writing. He published many valuable resources, including '*Transcendence – Prayer of People of Faith*' – a compendium of spiritual writings from different faith traditions on a variety of themes. It is being reprinted to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Westminster Interfaith.

On 10th September 2007, Br Daniel died. Hundreds of people of different faiths attended his funeral, to mourn his departure, and celebrate his life and achievements. His contribution to interfaith friendship was enormous, especially in London. He is buried at Wandsworth cemetery in the Brothers of St Gabriel grave. Ten years later, a plaque was placed in St Anselm's church, with an inscription: "The lamps are many, but the Light is

One". This quote from Rumi sums up Daniel's view of the world.

Chiara Lubich

Chiara Lubich consecrated her life to God on 7th December 1943, while Italy was under Nazi occupation. The Allies started bombing Trent in May 1944. Everything was crumbling. She wondered if there was an ideal that would never collapse, that no bomb could destroy. She chose God as the ideal of her life and made a commitment to love God with her whole heart and put the word of God into practice.

Several times each day the sirens would sound, and Chiara and her companions would flee to the air-raid shelters. There they would read the gospels by candle-light, and the words of the gospels seemed illuminated as though there was a light under the page. They read, "love your neighbour as yourself" and immediately put that phrase into practice by loving and serving the people in the air-raid shelters and the poor people around where they lived. This included helping members of the resistance and Jewish people who were trying to escape the Nazis and find refuge in Switzerland as well as maintaining good relations with the occupying Nazi forces. Every time they read the Gospel, another word or phrase would strike them, which they put into practice immediately. One day, they read Jesus' last prayer, where he asks the Father "That All may be One". They realised that God wanted them to help bring about this prayer. It became the motto of the movement. The unity of all people became their objective.

By living the Gospel message radically in this way, these young women attracted many others, so that by the end of the war, there was already a small community of followers, which became known as the Focolare Movement. Chiara Lubich realised



Chiara Lubich – Prophet of Unity.

that God had a special plan for her and her companions. It was confirmed by the local bishop who recognized 'the finger of God' at work in this fledgling movement.

Initially, Chiara thought that she was called to bring unity just within the Catholic Church. She soon realised that the gift of unity was for everyone. By the 1960s, Chiara was already in dialogue with Christians of different denominations, and, by the 1970s with the followers of great religious traditions as well as people with no specific religious belief or affiliation. For her, all

men and women were candidates for building a relationship of fraternity and unity. This became clear, in 1977, when she was awarded the Templeton Prize at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey. Many faith leaders were impressed by her acceptance speech. They invited

her to speak to their followers: to Buddhists in Japan and Thailand, Black Muslims in Harlem; Jews in Argentina; Hindus in India and so on. The Focolare Movement now comprises millions of followers and sympathizers of all faiths and none. Chiara Lubich has been gifted with a spirituality, which can be adapted and lived by most people, who wish to travel together as brothers and sisters of the human family. Chiara has proposed a technique, based on the Golden Rule, which she called the Art of Loving. It has become the basis of dialogue at all levels and in a variety of situations.

Chiara Lubich died on 14th March 2008. Thousands of people of all faiths and none attended her funeral in Rome or online. She is

buried at the Focolare Centre, near Rome, which has become a place of pilgrimage. She has left a legacy of spiritual writings, conference centres, a University institute, little towns, one dedicated to interreligious dialogue and much more, including a dynamic global movement, which can take the spirituality of unity ahead spreading the ideals of dialogue and universal fraternity beyond frontiers.

Daniel's legacy of interfaith publications, multi-faith pilgrimages and prayer gatherings may seem insignificant in comparison, yet, in his own small way, he furthered the



Prince Philip hands the Templeton Prize to Chiara Lubich .

cause of interfaith engagement and friendship in England, at a crucial time, in a manner few others were able to do.

Both Chiara and Daniel were loved by God and sought to do God's will according to their gifts in a specific historical, geographical, and cultural context. We pray that their legacy of interfaith friendship may continue to be an inspiration to many in the future.

Jon Dal Din is Director of Westminster Interfaith.

WILDERNESS, WOUNDEDNESS... WISDOM? - JCM ONLINE CONFERENCE FOR EASTER, PESACH AND RAMADAN, 2021

Jonathan Doering

Desert Flower

There is a particular cactus which is a cluster of rounded, pointed leaves, rising like a frozen, clutching hand. It appears static, inert, although you understand that it is a growing, changing organism. After all, it came firstly in a pot as a tiny version of the large plant you now have, only a few cubic centimetres large to start. Now this sealed, impervious hand, full of rough patches and sharp points, could be larger than your own. It is incrementally changing and developing.

You check it daily, watch it for dryness or distemper in the point of each leaf. As it imperceptibly, inexorably grows, you rehome it in a more generous pot. You water around its base, watching the soil darken and moisten. Moments later the dark moistness is starting to settle back into a lighter brown. After an hour it's as if you haven't watered it at all, yet you know that you have. You can picture the water soaking through the brown earth. Perhaps you turn the pot a little in the sunlight, allowing different spines to catch the rays.

One day, from the centre of the palm of this unprepossessing hand, you notice a small blossom rising. As the days pass, it grows higher and higher, eventually bursting into an orange flower.

The image of this cactus strikes me as an apposite one for faith, and the change that can come as a result of it, in the light of three

enriching talks delivered during an online gathering of the Jewish-Christian-Muslim (JCM) Conference by Rev. Monika Doering, Rabbi Lea Mühlstein, and Karima Paustian. This annual conference ordinarily convenes in Vallendar, Germany, each February, with members of each of the three faiths coming together from around the world to share worship, theology, culture, in an experiment in living together. Covid, of course, interfered with the normal running of the conference this year, which was instead an online event with attendees joining via Zoom. Some technical glitches notwithstanding, this online event was a great success, with one major positive being that more people were able to attend virtually than could have been accommodated in Vallendar. However, needless to say, alumni of the 'live' conferences missed the immediacy of meeting and socialising with each other. Nevertheless, every cloud has its silver lining, and the virtual possibilities opened up by Covid have led the co-ordinating team to pilot smaller, more focused events, of which this April series of talks offering personal perspectives on Easter, Pesach and Ramadan was the first.

An encouraging range of people attended, including both people familiar with JCM and some who were joining it for the first time.

Ramadan

Karima took her listeners into the faithful's experience of observing

Ramadan, starting with what it is: 'Soon, the month of Ramadan, the 9th month of the Islamic moon calendar will knock at our doors again... Each year, the month advances by 10 or 11 days and so in the course of time falls on all seasons...'

However, she immediately reflected upon the fact that apparently monolithic beliefs such as Islam are anything but, with even the details of a global event such as Ramadan being open to debate: 'As every year, there will be discussions again about the beginning, as some Muslims are orientating themselves at the local sight of the crescent, others at the global sight and others again are following their home countries' or Mecca's dates. Yet, running through the observances is the hope that the worshipper 'will become *mindful of Allah*'. (From the *Qur'an*, surah 2, verse 183.)

In amongst her pithy overview of the practice of *Ramadan* and its theological underpinning, Karima also brought in the Arabic etymology of the word. *Ramadan* originates from *ramida*, Arabic for 'burning heat or dryness': 'this refers among others to the sensation of heat in the stomach caused by thirst.' The embracing of physical discomfort as a path to confront inner discomfort, and through this to move towards greater purity of living, is instructive. It also set me musing on the possibility that the outward dryness or thirst might also be symptomatic of a desire

for positive change, of oneself, and perhaps also the World.

Even when the believer breaks their fast at sundown, moderation is called for: 'be aware much more of your eating habits. You should eat light meals, filling one third of your stomach with food, one third with liquids and the last third should remain empty... [in so doing] the believer might be able to renew her or his physical or spiritual dispositions.'

One benefit of this stringent discipline is that 'the body is regenerated...'. Nevertheless, it is a challenge with respect to patience, as 'fasting stresses many people emotionally and also physically'. And so the fast is broken, with the imprecation: "'O Allah! I fasted for you and I believe in you and I put my trust in You and I break my fast with your sustenance".'

Perhaps the most moving moment in Karima's reflection was when she recalled two past Ramadans:

'I still remember the Ramadan which I spent in Medina and Mecca at the turn of the year 1999/2001. The crescent could be clearly seen in the sky above the mosque, everybody was... happy to be able to fast and break the fast in the mosque together with people from all over the world. Or my first Rama-dan in the south of Morocco in the village of my mother-in-law. The temperatures were about 50 degree, but the community made fasting easy and breaking the fast on the roofs of the clay houses made up for it.'

Pesach

Rabbi Lea Mühlstein's talk began with the call to everyone attending the Passover meal: "'let all who are hungry come and eat; let all who are in need come and share our Passover... this year oppressed, next year free.'"

She then traced the roots of Pesach, one of three Jewish festivals informed by pilgrimage, this particular one associated with barley harvest: 'Since the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the agricultural aspect of

the festival has become secondary to the central message focused on the narrative of the Exodus – the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.'

The message of liberation is now universalised to all, including (in Lea's analysis) a God often imprisoned within gendered language: 'all present are invited to see themselves as part of the story of redemption and liberation: God is our redeemer, just as she was the redeemer of our ancestors.'

She then moved on to the domestic impact of the festival: 'Pesach and the preparation for the festival resemble a spring clean... the annual Pesach clean was always important to me; symbolising an opportunity to dust off forgotten things at the back of the closet but also a chance to let go of things and start afresh.'

Yet Covid has laid a cold hand: 'a year of pandemic life as well as my mother-in-law's terminal illness had robbed me of the time and energy to clean as obsessively as I would normally have done.'

Nevertheless, the Pesach spirit burns bravely, and a message of courage and generosity is offered: "'let all who are hungry come and eat; let all who are in need come and share our Passover.'" Likewise, the commandment to tell the story as if it had happened to us personally reminds us that as a people and as human beings, we know what it means to suffer and be oppressed and that we must be sensitive to seeing the suffering of others.'

Our capacity to appreciate others' suffering and to be moved to action is a vital component of the religious process here: 'Isabel Wilkerson, the American author of *Caste: The Lies That Divide Us*, observes: "The missing link in our age is empathy and the recognition of the shared humanity of another... Radical empathy, on the other hand, means putting in the work to learn and to listen with a heart wide open..."'

Ancient truth and practice connect with current experience and reality.

'Modern research into empathy suggests that all human beings sit on an empathy spectrum, which shapes the course of their lives... our place on the empathy spectrum does not pre-determine how we live our lives. We need regular reminders to pay attention, to see the suffering that often is present right in front of our very eyes.'

Lea presented Jewish scripture and ritual as having been designed to facilitate this link: 'the rituals associated with Pesach and the narrative of the Exodus are just examples of the Torah's, the Hebrew Bible's, project to turn memory into empathy and moral responsibility. Empathy alone is an insufficient response if it is not paired with moral responsibility... [which is summarised in the Hebrew phrase] *Tikkun Olam* – repairing the world.'

The message is for everyone, Jew and Gentile alike: 'as the political theorist Michael Walzer put it, "first, that wherever you live, it is probably Egypt; second, that there is a better place, a world more attractive, a promised land; and third, that the way to the land is through the wilderness. There is no way to get from here to there except by joining together and marching".'

This all boils down to a constant challenge from the Divine to Humanity. 'In Mishnah Avot 1:14, the Ethics of our Ancestors, Rabbi Hillel asks "*Im ein ani li, mi li?* If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?'"

Lea finally drew her reflections into a shining circle: 'the responsibility rests on my shoulders, JCM is always a powerful reminder that I am not alone – that there are so many others, of my faith, of other faiths and none, who are marching alongside me and that together we are indeed able to repair the world.'

Ken yehi ratzon – for such is most certainly God's will.'

Easter

Revd. Monika Doering began her

reflection with the mainstream notion of Easter: 'Most people will probably think of colourful eggs, cute bunnies and cuddly lambs, and rarely associate Easter with Christ's betrayal, crucifixion and resurrection', before considering the various stages of Lent and Easter, from Ash Wednesday through to Easter (or Resurrection) Sunday. Laying the pastel colours of a child's Easter to one side, Monika considered the etymology of 'Passion' as coming from the Latin *pati*: 'to suffer, bear, endure'.

She continued, 'this is a personal reflection, I would now like to ask: 'What is the relevance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection for my personal and our communal life of faith? Why does this story matter? What is its hopeful message?'

The mainstream church message has historically offered a superficially positive gloss on pain and suffering: 'Christian dogma teaches that Jesus's death and resurrection symbolizes God's redemptive action, saving humanity from sin... [is suggesting that] God is GREATER' as a panacea for the World's ills.

Monika pointed out that the problem 'with this linear, tidy and neat narrative is that life in my experience is not like that. Life is non-linear, messy and unpredictable... I struggle with the triumphalism that so often accompanies the narrative of cross and resurrection.'

Instead considered 'the Christian story of Easter through the lens of trauma theory and therapy which acknowledges a more mixed experience of death and life.' However, this requires us to plunge into the dark pool. The only way to move beyond is to wade through it.

'Thus, trauma marks a problem of living in the present (= life), given that the past (= death) is still a 'living' and intrusive reality. Death and life are not in opposition to each other, but life is marked by the excess, or remainder of death.' This acceptance of the interpenetration came from hard-won personal experience: 'I am talking from the perspective of a survivor.'

Monika then drew on insights from trauma theologian Shelley Rambo: 'This oscillation between death and life opens up a distinctive middle in which neither can be read apart from each other... survival is a death-life experience... the voice from the wound makes a demand: witness death, and witness the possibility of life arising from it.'

The living, beating need to wrestle with and through painful experience is reflected in the architecture of Holy Week, although again historically this architecture has largely been ignored. 'This distinctive middle in the Christian tradition is known as Holy Saturday... Sadly, Holy Saturday has barely been theologized, possibly because it resists the smooth progression from death to life. The lens of trauma theory witnesses this neglect whilst offering fruitful articulation.'

Rambo again: 'We must guard against that theological business and religious impatience which insist on anticipating the moment of fruiting of the eternal redemption... skipping Holy Saturday and getting too quickly to Easter.'

The ultimate reality of Life may clash against the ultimate reality of Death, and the suffering individual can feel like a speck caught between Scylla and Charybdis. Or even worse, feel nothing at all. In the pregnant silence, we might hear Hans Urs von Balthasar's words: 'There is a total end and there is a total beginning, but what comes in between them?' In exploring experience honestly and bravely, we might recognise with Monika that 'The wound becomes the site of growth'.

Monika ended her talk as all good talks in this vein ought to be left, with some interesting thoughts and some unanswered questions for listeners to turn over and develop their own answers to. 'Chaos and nothingness mark this middle space, but this middle space is equally marked by the unidentifiable 'fruit' coming out of this wound.'

Conclusion

Perhaps you are living through a period of challenge and difficulty. Your life might be hard to live right now. Perhaps you're hungering for a better, more equal society. Every positive action you take seems like a dead pebble, dropped into thick, oily water, raising no ripples.

It is late evening. You are at a window, looking into the street, into a light grey sky. Then you lean on the window sill and look more closely. At the horizon there is a rich band of tangerine, rising into pale gold, then mild apple, fresh ice, indigo, and finally night-time ink. Washed over this is a pearlescent grey, fit for any watercolour scene. Close to the horizon, you catch sight of a glowing point of white light. It may be slowly moving. A star? A planet? An aeroplane?

As the sky deepens and darkens, the point of light begins its stately, inexorable transit across those bands of colour, towards you.

It will enter you.

It will lead you to new people and places.

* * *

JCM is planning two further online events between now and February 2022 – around the themes of 'the Light' and redemption. The full conference will hopefully go ahead in Vallendar next February, on the theme of 'Being stewards of the earth'. The organisers hope to blend physical and virtual attendees at this event. For further details of the day events and the full conference, and to register, visit <https://www.jcmconference.org/>

* * *

Suggested Reading List:

Shelley Rambo – *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining and Resurrecting Wounds*

Hans Urs von Balthasar – *Heart of the World*

Isabel Wilkerson – *Caste: The Lies That Divide Us*

HOUSE OF ONE IN BERLIN - A NEW MULTI-FAITH CENTRE

Jews, Christians and Muslims laid the foundation stone for the House of One on May 27, 2021, in the heart of the German capital Berlin. *"This is an important step toward the structural completion of our interfaith peace project,"* Rabbi Andreas Nachama, chairman of the House of One Foundation Board, said. *"We have already been active in interfaith dialogue for many years, and contribute in our daily work to more understanding, tolerance and*



once again to a special path of understanding among the religions. This openness, will not only affect the three religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – whose representatives established the House of One Foundation. It goes far beyond that and invites all those of other faiths and non-beliefs to engage in dialogue'.

togetherness in our society."

Imam Kadir Sanci of the House of One said, *"Today, Berlin is opening up*

News of the House of One was sent to us by Beate Dehnen.

THE RIDVAN FESTIVAL IN THE BAHA'I FAITH

Mina Beint

Ridvan is the festival designated by Baha'u'llah, Himself, as the King of Festivals. It marks the time that Baha'u'llah declared His Mission on 21st April 1863. Ten years earlier while in a terrible dungeon in Tehran He had the first intimations of His station as a Manifestation of God. At that time He was exiled to Baghdad with His family and it was ten years later, in Baghdad, on the eve of further exile to Constantinople that He announced publicly His station. His exile was not by choice and He was to be further exiled to Adrianople and finally to the Holy Land

The circumstances were that prior to His departure He took up residence on an island in the Tigris designated by Him the Ridvan Garden, Ridvan meaning paradise. The festival of

Ridvan spans twelve days, being the time that Baha'u'llah stayed in the garden. The celebrated days are the first, ninth and twelfth days. Now in the Baha'i world the first day is when Local Spiritual Assemblies are elected in each locality and during the twelve days National Spiritual Assemblies are elected at national conventions and once every five years the Universal House of Justice is elected at the Baha'i world centre on Mount Carmel in Haifa. These elections are at the heart Baha'u'llah's mission and hence it is the King of Festivals.



Baha'i international convention.



Garden in Akka used by Bahaullah and called Ridvan.

TAMILNADU THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY SERVING THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Margaret Kalaiselvi, Principal

Tamilnadu Theological Seminary

is a fifty-year-old and reputed seminary in the southern part of India. The community life and students' involvement with the wider community are the uniqueness of this college. But since Covid-19 and major lockdown, the reaching out to the larger community has slowed down. Yet we cherish the memories and experiences which we have had for fifty years which are moving us forward to plan creatively for the future with a careful and healthy atmosphere.

The most unique programme of TTS is the **'Prison Ministry'** in which the students and staff reach out to the 'friends' in prison (we don't call them prisoners, those who are imprisoned in the cells/jails), pray for them, offering some welfare for their families, and taking care of their children without any hidden agenda of converting them to Christianity. But when they ask, 'Why do you do this?' Our answer would be, 'It is because of the love of Christ that we are doing this'. I myself have been involved in this prison ministry for about twenty-five years and have learnt many things, especially listening skills and prayer skills on how to offer a prayer with children and women who are in distress.

Interfaith dialogue is another programme in which many of us learn to live in a multi-faith context. We learn how to develop religious tolerance and how to be open to other religious people. 'Love thy neighbour' is the central Christian message that unites all of us. This is our main approach that is integrated in our curriculum. We live in closely knitted circles where all religious people are living together. Life is very

much practically oriented in India. Therefore, the theological response to interfaith is a challenging ministry.

Worker and peasant unionization

is a wider network in TTS's journey. It was in the sixties that a charitable measure was considered as an approach for social change. This is due to the practical theological approach to give meaning to the teachings of Jesus in the Nazareth Manifesto. Later, it was realized that it is not only feeding, but also unionizing the workers to get their rights. The Marxist philosophy of social change and the purpose of the reign of God were blended in our approach when we started working amongst the urban and rural poor. This has helped us to sharpen our perspective to consciously opt for ministerial approaches in India.

The Dalit Resource Centre is an important feature of TTS. It is a known fact that 'casteism' is an evil. We take as our approach the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar on eradicating caste in India. Therefore, educating young and other groups of people in society are necessary steps that are taken care of through various programmes such as Ambedkar Study Programmes, organizing village artists who perform folk art from the marginalized and discriminated communities, and the documentation of atrocities done to these downtrodden people. The basic understanding of this work among the so-called Dalits and tribals is done with the understanding of justice for the poor. The Gospel perspectives and values like peace, justice, mercy, love and forgiveness are taken as fundamental factors to serve the people.

Homes for the elderly people.

The concept of the family system is changing in Indian cities. Parents with income are opting to go for homes which provide them care and support. Poor parents left on the streets have no place to go. We have found that it was meaningful to begin an elderly people's home which is open for all with free accommodation and food. We developed a model by involving the church, society and the seminary to be part of this home. Therefore it is a special home where everyone can take responsibility for the aged people. I am happy to say that at this time we have 0% Covid positivity, and have had 0% deaths in our old age home. The name of the institution is 'Inballam' which means happy home

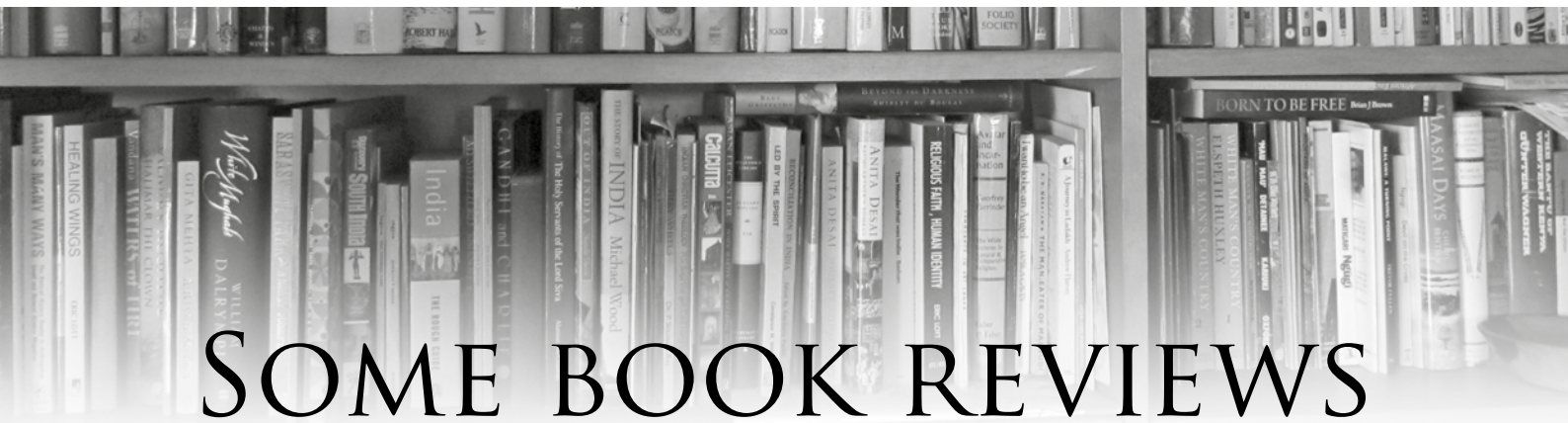
The Rural Theological Institute

is situated twenty kilometers away from the city of Madurai. This is an established place in the rural area with the purpose of 'Gurukula' model of education in which one teacher and a group of students come together, learn and explore knowledge about God. But we have found that going beyond individualist spirituality will be more contextual and practical. Therefore, we started working amongst the villagers who live in today's Galilee. This experience has given us a new direction in our theological thinking. The students started living amongst the villagers with minimal facilities and comforts. India is a rural country, where seventy-five percent of our population live in rural areas. It follows that the ministers who serve in the rural areas need to be exposed to such challenges and experiences with a rural practical lifestyle which is inclusive, eco-friendly and holistic.

Mission studies centre. Karl Ochs and Newbigin's centre for mission studies is a resource centre which reaches out to individual Pentecostal pastors and Roman Catholic ministers to come together to discuss mission priorities. This is creating a space for all who are involved in various

types of mission work to come together and to meet each other. Activities like seminars, meetings on various themes related to mission approaches, multi faith contexts and distributing common version bibles in Tamil language, documentations on the life and work of missionaries in

south India, especially women who came from mission boards namely Leipzig, Baptist, London Mission, American Mission. This has helped all of us to widen our perspective on the context of mission and deepened our commitment to what we are called for.



SOME BOOK REVIEWS

“How to Avoid a Climate Disaster”

by Bill Gates. Published by Allen Lane, 2021.

A review by Stephen Skinner.

Bill Gates needs no introduction, as one of the most successful entrepreneurs ever, and a leading philanthropist. He can now rightly claim to also be a good author of non-fiction books! He writes in a very engaging style, in such a way that I read this 250 page book more or less from cover to cover. This is quite a rare thing for me to do – but I was gripped, not only by the hugely important subject matter, but also by his thoroughly relevant examples of both the looming problems of Climate Change, and also the many practical examples of what can be done to deal with the crisis successfully. Ultimately Gates is an optimist; he believes that if we can learn to work better together internationally then even the most intractable problems will be solved.

He begins arrestingly by announcing that there are just two numbers we need to know about Climate Change: the first is 51 billion, and the other is zero! Fifty one billion is how many tons of greenhouse gasses the world

typically adds to the atmosphere each year. Zero is what we need to aim for, otherwise sooner or later the effects will be very bad.

Through the book he reviews all the areas in which we are adding greenhouse gasses to the atmosphere, for instance in what we grow, what we eat, what we construct, and how we get around. He reviews in fair detail current attempts to solve the problems in each of these areas and highlights where he feels that R & A and investment would best be made to produce good results. Gates concludes that we need to take urgent action at both the international and commercial end, but also as individuals where we all have a part to play.

In his “Afterword” he states that the lessons that we have learned in regard to defeating Covid19 can be applied to how we solve the Climate Crisis. It will not be easy to do so, but he believes it is possible by: the fullest international cooperation, letting all the sciences guide our efforts, and ensuring the needs of the people who are hardest hit are addressed. Surely an objective that “Christians Aware” readers would strongly support! I recommend this book very strongly as

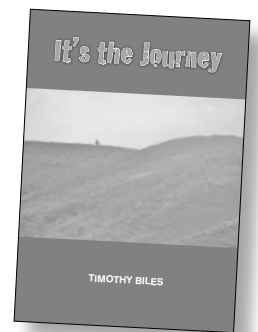
a thoroughly contemporary ‘Primer’ on the subject.

‘It’s The Journey’

by Timothy Biles. Published by Christians Aware, 2021. £14 + p&p.

A review by Peter Jones.

Tim has always been a colourful character, not backward in coming forward and an inveterate traveller, especially to the Middle East. He tasted excitement on his first major trip abroad when he was an assistant to Sir Donald Bradman, the famous cricketer, in Adelaide as a student, and has since followed up in some of the most challenging parts of the world. He has used his foreign experiences as the basis for previous books but he has now pulled everything together in a fascinating series of penetrating, first hand observations from around the world that demonstrate his deep understanding of the human character.



The book is made up of a series of short descriptions of individual journeys undertaken by Tim. The beauty of the book is the quality and depth of Tim's travels. He and Joan meet and chat with Yasser Arafat and we discover that Arafat was married to a Christian, find that he supported all churches but was surprised at lack of concern around the world at the plight of Christian churches in the Holy Land. This piece is complemented with a photo of Joan and Yasser, one of many interesting illustrations in the book.

In various pieces Tim finds heroes and victims from all the faiths, Moslems of Pakistan, the Hindus of India, the Buddhists of Sri Lanka and the Jews of Israel-Palestine, as wars and turbulence drive people to support each other in the search for safety and a life worth living.

Throughout the book, I was struck by Tim's real humanity, whether commenting on the role of women at an all-male feast in Sudan or on the poverty he saw in Calcutta and other parts of India. He shows himself to be a true Christian in the wider sense of the word.

Aside from the deprivations on the Indian sub-continent, Tim had the opportunity to visit the Taj Mahal and wonder at its sheer beauty. He made sorties to less well known treasures like Maharajah of Mysore's palace in Mysore and Quito in Ecuador at the centre of the world.

Tim often meets famous people on his journeys, from a young Sachin Tendulkar who found Tim a precious seat on a bus to Goa, to an encounter with one Archbishop of Canterbury in a war zone in South Sudan and another in a hospital in Pakistan. However, the book is essentially about ordinary people and the human character in testing circumstances.

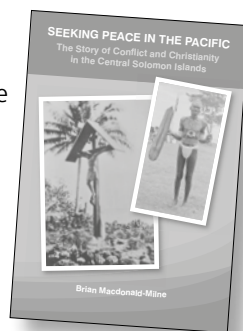
'It's the Journey' is a multi-faceted book, full of amazing stories. There is much compassion and wisdom in its pages and it is well worth the time spent reading it.

'Seeking Peace in the Pacific: The Story of Conflict and Christianity in the Central Solomon Islands' by Brian Macdonald-Milne.
Published by Christians Aware and The Melanesian Mission, 2020.
ISBN 978-0-9955428-9-1
Softback, 222p, illustrated.
Price: £10.

A review by Robin Sherman.

This excellent book describes the history of the Solomons and its inhabitants, from ancient times. Over the millennia, peoples migrated southwards from distant lands to the north and west, so that today, of the 992 islands & islets that make up the Solomon Islands, 347 are populated by people from many different ethnic backgrounds. There was little intermingling amongst these diverse groups, which resulted in nearly one hundred languages and dialects being spoken throughout the country and on the larger islands, there were even cases where the villagers in one place could not speak the language of another village, only a few miles away. These tribal separations led to a very warlike nation in which headhunting and cannibalism were rife, until the arrival of Christianity. Customs also differed greatly from island to island. For example, in the case of marriage, in Malaita, it was customary for the new bridegroom to go and live with his wife's family, whilst in certain other islands, it was forbidden for the bridegroom to have any communication at all with his mother-in-law. Differences such as these led to a lot of misunderstandings, whilst more serious transgressions could even result in the death of the unaware offender.

In an early chapter, the author



introduces the reader to the explorers who discovered the islands. Following chapters deal with the very gradual development of the inhabitants. Prior to the arrival of the Missionary Groups and Christianity, all life was governed by a belief in spirits and the power of dead ancestors. Any unfortunate event was never an accident, but had a spiritual cause. The new religion, spread through the islands, so that, eventually, 94 percent were practising Christians. This resulted in the old beliefs being swept away which, in turn, created a more peaceable and less restrictive way of life. The authority of the petulant tribal chiefs was also weakened and this too was greatly welcomed. Indeed, some of the chiefs themselves (such as Monilaws Soga) gave up headhunting and became not only Christians but, later, church leaders.

For the Social/Postal Historian, this book is very relevant and deals with a number of the coastwatchers during World War II: indeed, their names will be familiar to many Solomon Island collectors. From some of those mentioned, I have covers (envelopes) and letters in my collection, which originated from Bishop W Baddeley, District Officers Martin Clemens and D C Horton, Resident Commissioner Lt. Col William Marchant, Norman Deck, Donald Kennedy and the Melanesian Mission Printer, Fred Isom, to mention just a few. The author's intimate knowledge enables him to share much relatively unknown information about some of the characters. For example, before his arrival in the islands, Bishop Baddeley had good ideas about how to improve the lives of the natives. However, he did not action these after he took up his post and thus, became rather unpopular. Conversely, another missionary, Richard Fallowes, was hugely liked when he set about furthering the local natives' interests and giving them more authority. Sir Harry Luke (the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific) visited from Fiji and lectured him on his "dangerous and irresponsible" meddling in politics. Poor Fallowes was deported on the next steamer out. Readers can

draw their own conclusions. During the war, with a few exceptions, the Solomon Islanders were fiercely loyal to the allies but they warmed much more to the US Forces who tended to treat them as equals: the islanders also felt that they had an affinity with the black soldiers.

This book will be of more interest to the Social Historian than the Postal Historian but, unfortunately, in the absence of an index, it will be rather difficult to locate the appropriate references. An additional bonus for the Solomon Islands collector is the Bibliography at the end. This lists much relevant material and, for example, of the 15 books listed under "War in the Pacific" ten are memoirs written by Coastwatchers.

***'Our House is on Fire'* by Greta Thunberg and her family.**

Reflections on the book
by David Peat.

This is the title of a book written by the Swedish girl Greta Thunberg with her sister and parents describing how Greta's diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder led her to becoming an unlikely face of climate activism and also a prophetic voice on the dangers of global warming. There is, not unreasonably, no direct mention of religion in the book. But in this whole extraordinary story there are some significant overlaps with some of the traditional insights of Christian beliefs.

First, very significantly, is the relationship between everyday life of an ordinary family and of wider international concerns. Greta and her family discover new understandings of their internal relationships through their mutual relationship with the wider world. Parental loving concern is integrated with the crisis in international concerns. This is also true of Christianity. In Baptism this same truth is expressed. The Baptised person, whether child or adult becomes, in the Christian tradition, a member not only of the local Christian parish, but also of the whole worldwide community. In the Gospel

of Luke the story of the shepherds engaging in pastoral concern for their flocks can be contrasted with the story in Matthew of the Magi from Eastern lands seeking truth looking at the outside world and following a star. But shepherds and Magi are both linked together by their respective journeys to the infant Jesus. Further, in the Acts of the Apostles written by Luke, the first action of the Holy Spirit after the Ascension of Jesus is to bring people of different races and cultures together in mutual understanding and communicating with each other despite their different languages. Internationalism and the local and personal are deeply thus intertwined in the Gospel and Acts.

Secondly, we may think of the Old Testament Prophetic tradition. Here, put very simply, bad behaviour, perhaps expressed in selfishness and corruption is perceived as bringing about its own destruction. This bad behaviour is a characteristic of all nations, and the prophets see it as also being true of God's own chosen people of Israel. No individual nation is free of guilt. This is also entirely true of the present situation with Global Warming. This situation is made worse by the fact that the rate of change of warming is increased by the amount of change that has already taken place – what in mathematics is called an exponential increase. In the present age, how an individual country behaves affects all other countries around the world – a situation quite different from perhaps, a few hundred years ago when what happened in one part of the world would have much less effect on more distant parts of the world.

Thirdly, this combination of internationalism and prophesy leads us to the notion of Truth. The new testament records Jesus as saying "The Holy Spirit will lead you into all Truth", and "You will see the truth and the truth will set you free." But this search for truth inevitably leads to conflict, because different peoples with different experiences, see truth in many different ways. Truth is discovered through national and personal interactions of many kinds,

and these interactions may not be easy. Truth and Freedom are closely related – one without the other is never possible. Again, the narrative of the Magi expresses this perfectly in that the three sacrifices are of the gold of money and talents, of the incense of prayer, and the myrrh of pain and suffering. Shepherds and Magi on their journeys are the pattern for our own personal, national, emotional, intellectual and spiritual journeys. This book not only describes the emotional and intellectual journeys of Greta and her family, but also invites the reader to share in these journeys.

Fourthly, the book reminds us also of the scientific community, which is international. "Listen to the scientists" says Greta. The scientific community is dedicated to discovering truth, but is always divided until a majority of its members agree on the nature of that truth. In recent years, that community has expanded in numbers across the world, but is also largely united with a strong sense of common purpose. Perhaps Christians may see in this scientific work an expression of the Holy Spirit leading into all truth.

Fifthly, Greta at first would seem an insignificant figure outside the great wide world of political intrigues and international rivalries. But Christianity has such a figure in Mary the mother of Jesus. If God became man through a simple girl in a not particularly significant part of the Roman empire, then He is surely not beyond expressing his truth in the present day through an insignificant girl called Greta, from a small country in north west Europe. We do well to read this remarkable story of her and her family, and to meditate upon it. A secondary title of the book is "Scenes of a Family and a Planet in Crisis". So perhaps we then can recall the words of Jesus "when people's hearts are failing them for fear, then your redemption is drawing near". Crisis may be the very means by which we discover on our own journeys that the sorrow of Crucifixion in the old world is just the prelude to the glory of Resurrection in a new world.

**'Seeing Differently:
Franciscans and Creation'**
by Br Samuel SSF,
Br Nicolas Alan SSF
& Simon Cocksedge TSSF.
Published by Canterbury
Press, 2020.
ISBN: 9781786223005
Paperback, 192 pages.
Price: £16.99.

A review by John Bennett.

About the ongoing environmental crisis, with the stories of St Francis and the Franciscan witness. It avoids sentimentality and shows that the Franciscan witness, as Bonaventure and St Francis understood it, concerns reading nature, as we would read and reflect upon holy scripture, in order to come closer to the divine nature. We are introduced to the work and experience of Hilfield Friary, near Dorchester, where unused land was turned towards the conservation of wildlife and made a pioneering contribution in the restoring some of the natural world. It was the first community to be given a "Roche Gold" Award in recognition of their

integrated ecology. Prayer, worship, the use of biomass and solar energy, using bicycles and an electric car, sourcing home grown food and caring for wildlife were all integrated into their community life. Throughout the British Isles, through 'Plant Britain' and similar schemes, people are now creating community gardens, planting trees and promoting recycling with a renewed determination, and it is good to reflect on the values which underlie our efforts.

The authors, are all Franciscans, from two different Anglican Orders. Simon Cocksedge is a Franciscan tertiary and a GP. He introduces us to the early background to ecology, found in the life and teaching of St Francis. Bro. Nicholas Alan, helps us discover the fascinating writing and witness of of inspiring Franciscans who have followed in the footsteps of St Francis, such as St Clare, St Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and Angela of Foligno He draws them into conversation with contemporary concerns for our planet. Bro. Samuel, describes his recent urban experience, after finishing his time as Guardian of Hilfield Friary and moving to Plaistow

Friary in East London. He challenges us, to adapt, in the most confined spaces, to continue to create space for the natural world to be at home there, and repair a damaged creation in our own urban or rural lives.

The book gathers 800 years of accumulated wisdom and practical examples of how Franciscans have found ways to live at home and at peace with creation. It explores that long tradition and experience and asks what lessons can be drawn for today. It challenges and enables readers to re-visit their own relationship with nature and the universe. The book is eminently readable and a good basis for group and individual reflection. I would recommend this publication to any readers of the Christians Aware magazine, who wish to generate fresh contributions to an integrated life style.

**Copies are available at £16.99 plus postage, by contacting Hilfield Friary, Dorchester, Dorset DT27BE
Email: hilfieldssf@franciscans.org.uk
Tel: 01300 341345**

FOOD AND FARMING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Our book, '*Just Food? Food and Farming for a Sustainable Future*' was published in 2017 when many of us were struggling to raise awareness of the need to work for the production of enough good food to feed the world and at the same time for a sustainable future for the earth.

Awareness has at last been raised and there are improvements, but there is a long way to go. It is still the case that there is a dramatic decline in mammals, birds and amphibians largely due to unsustainable farming

all over the world. There is a loss of forests, cropland and grazing land. In the UK wildflower meadows have almost disappeared. Many soils are depleted and produce poor crops. And there is climate change.

The UK government is waking up to the need to encourage sustainability in the countryside. We understand that following Brexit farmers will get grants for protecting 'heritage' farm buildings and stone walls, expanding hedges, capturing carbon in soils and cutting pesticides, natural flood management including restoring river bends, landscape recovery, restoring

peatland and planting new woods, reducing antibiotics and improving animal health and welfare.

It is very encouraging to read a new book written by a farmer who has come full circle, moving from his childhood spent with his grandfather, a traditional Lakeland farmer, to a young adulthood working with his father and trying to 'modernise' in order to grow more, and through to his present life of farming for the environment on his grandfather's old farm. The book, essential reading for all of us who love the countryside and who are committed to working for a

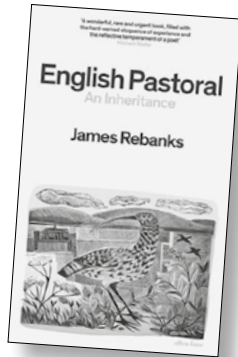
healthy and sustainable future, is:

**'English Pastoral.
An inheritance.'**
by James Rebanks.
Published by
Allen Lane, 2020.

One turning point for James was reading Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring'

published as long ago as 1962 and pointing to the damaging results for the

earth of the use of pesticides. A visit to America brought home to him the ugly truth that pesticides had ruined the land there. The crops he saw in the mid-West were poor and weed infested. Since then he has almost given up the use of pesticides, planted many trees, changed the course of the river to produce wetlands and positively encouraged biodiversity. He is building up a herd of hardy Belted Galloway cattle. He writes, *As farmers we now have to reconcile the need to produce more food than any other generation in history with the necessity to do that sustainably and in ways that allow nature to survive alongside us.*' (Page 185).



Belted Galloway cow and calf.

This book is both informative, visionary and elegantly written. We learn for example that half the living things on earth live in the soil. We learn how to keep soil healthy by growing grass for sheep and cattle to graze. We learn that ploughing, artificial fertiliser and pesticides are all disasters and that crops might be planted straight into the earth.

James Rebanks is a farmer who loves

his life of precarious hard work. He is aware of the beauty he is surrounded by, a beauty emerging from his brave commitment to work with nature and not against it. He writes,

'The riverbanks are now bustling little highways for wildlife. They are rich in purple and yellow and pink flowers, moths, butterflies and stoats and crossed with the sunken paths of hares, badgers and foxes. An otter now claims part of this promising territory with her two kits. All around is birdsong...' (Page 218.)

Another new book whose author has come to the same approach to the earth as James Rebanks is:

**'Working with Nature.
Saving and Using the
World's Wild Places'**
by Jeremy Purseglove.
Published by
Profile Books, 2019/20.

This book has a worldwide compass. The writer moves around the world, not simply as a critic and reformer, but as someone who seeks to enable work with nature rather than against it. He writes of 'decent alternatives' to the rape of the earth we see in so many places today, and he promotes good examples of living and working in partnership with nature. The first chapter focuses on Indonesia and its region where, between 2009 and 2011 1.24 million hectares of forest were lost. (Page 25.) Logging particularly depleted the forests of Borneo. However, the author points out that this destructive approach to the forests is shameful and not necessary, since a little thought and planning can lead to the availability of plentiful sustainable supplies of wood. In 1994 the Forest Stewardship Council was established, providing principles for operation and enabling the tracking of the wood so that it can be certified as sustainable. More than 200 million hectares of

sustainably managed forest have been certified and 89 countries are involved. Russia and Canada have the largest areas of certified forests.

A crop we all encounter in our day to day lives is palm oil, plantations of which can be, and often are, very destructive of tropical forests. However, the 'Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil' RSPO, was set up in 2004 and certified forests are growing.

There is a chapter on how we can produce a diverse and still productive landscape in the UK. There are examples of farmers who love nature and of rewilding projects. At Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire for example ponies and cattle roam over 1,000 acres of wetland. *'We now have clouds of duck and golden plover in winter, breeding waders and black-necked grebes in summer, and marsh harriers which patrol the fen on long, dark wings.'* (Page 66.)

This book is packed with inspirational advice and with many good examples of what is being done to work with nature. We read of the 'National Peat Campaign' which began in 1990 and of the reclamation of Thorne Moors, north east of Doncaster, as a nature reserve where the peat, which absorbs carbon, can develop.

There is reference to the green cotton movement, to the pros and cons of mining minerals in Africa. There is a section on the plunder of minerals from many African countries, including coltan for smart phones. (Page 172.) We may read about the battle against the ivory trade, particularly in Kenya, and of its partial success so that elephant numbers are rising. We may read about the campaigns of Ken Saro-Wiwa against badly planned oil extraction and for the environment and people in Ogoniland in Nigeria. (Page 186.) The section of the book on the agro-forestry made possible by the wild growth of shea nut trees in Ghana and the harvesting of the nuts for a world-wide market is inspiring. The trees offer a home for wildlife and for the cultivation of maize and other crops. Cattle graze



on the rich grass. 'The marriage of humanity and nature' is normal in Africa and 'Africa's traditional agriculture represents one of the finest examples of integrated land-use on the planet.' But there is the threat of land grabs and the development of monocultures.

The near destruction of the Marsh Arabs in Iraq is set alongside the reclamation of the Hawizeh nature reserve by the local people who carry on their traditional lives there. There are ducks, pelicans and ibis. There are threats from up-stream dams and big drainage works and also war, but the people cling to their traditional lives, for now.



This book ends with a chapter entitled 'Creative Resolutions.' These include necessary compromises between big mono-cultures and nature conservation, agro-forestry and the use of eco-labelling.

This is a fantastic book. It aims to provide a way forward for an earth which may tackle climate change and give a sustainable home and happiness for human beings and also for other creatures. The author is sensible and brings together the possibility of a sustainable future with the practical needs of humanity.

Our farming futures may be positive for the future of the earth and of us all. But it will take all of us in every nation to bring this about.

A moment of awareness with David Palmer

About fifteen feet or so from where I sit at my computer is a rhododendron, the flowers busy with bees, and just now I had to call Meg to, 'Come and see!' because a



humming bird hawk moth had come to join them, flying at great speed from flower to flower, and hovering in one place while it sucked, and having fed, it was gone. But, we know it was here, a tiny jewel of life come from we know not where? And we don't know where it went! A few seconds joy, a God given moment of awareness.

HELP OUR HEDGEHOGS

Kate Hayward

The European Hedgehog is an iconic British animal but is in serious decline. Almost 50% in the last 20 years in rural areas and 30% in rural areas and are now listed as vulnerable to extinction in the UK.

There are around 14 other species of hedgehogs across the world. They come out at night and hibernate in the winter though they will wake up in warm periods and change beds or find a snack before going back to hibernating. The main threats to their decline are loss of hedgerows, pesticide use, broken habitats and networks, and in urban areas, lack of access to gardens due to solid fences.

They roam over 1km at night looking for food: slugs, snails, insects, worms,

beetles... many garden pests!

You can help hedgehogs by giving them access to your garden, make a hole the size of a CD (15cm), lift up netting to stop them getting tangled, stop using toxic slug pellets (safe ones are available), check bonfires before lighting, leave out fresh water, make sure they can get out of ponds, check before mowing or strimming areas and leave a wild area for them to live in and forage.

Encourage your neighbours to get involved

with looking out for hedgehogs and providing wild areas and connected gardens.

If you want to feed them, PLEASE DO NOT feed them bread and milk, but leave out cat / dog food (not fishy) for them. Chicken flavour cat or kitten





garden are foxes and badgers.

You can also provide suitable hedgehog boxes for sleeping, nesting and hibernating. Provide some dry hay for them to start off their nest.

I have had hedgehogs in my garden in Essex

and enjoy providing food, water and shelter for them.

For more information – British Hedgehog Preservation Society:
<http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/>

And record your sightings in the

UK with your local wildlife trust or biological records centre.

There is also a national records website through Hedgehog Street which has lots of information too:
<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/>

Thank you.

Kate Hayward is a long standing member of Christians Aware. She works with the Wildlife Trusts.



biscuits are a perfect dry food option for them and much cheaper than special hedgehog food. (Check all dry foods are wheat free though.)

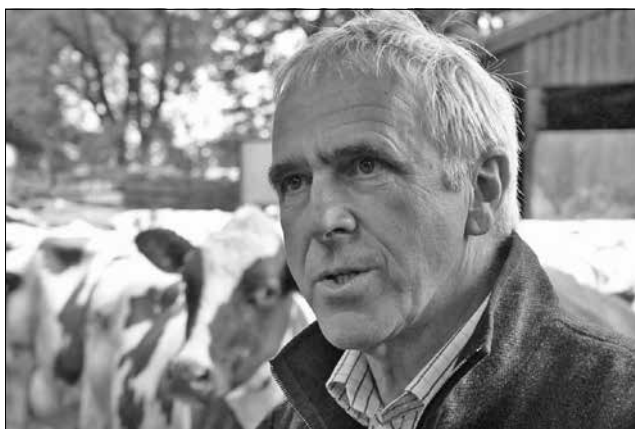
It is best to put the food in a box where a cat can't get to otherwise cats and other wildlife with often eat it. Other wildlife that may visit your

USING FARMS AS EDUCATIONAL PLATFORMS

Patrick Holden

I am more convinced than ever that farms need to become one of the central educational platforms in order to promote a better understanding of regenerative and sustainable farming practices to existing and future generations of food producers – and not just to existing and future farmers and growers, but to all those with an interest in the connection between food and health, which means everyone.

Mindful of this responsibility, at Holden Farm Dairy, we are making big efforts to play our part in this knowledge transition. We have an old threshing barn, a beautiful building in which we look forward to hosting future farm events, the first of which is the annual weekend gathering



and AGM of the UK Specialist Cheesemakers' Association in July. Hopefully the weather will be fine, but even if it isn't, we are ensuring that the building will be warm and cosy if the conditions are inclement and that we have adequate facilities for hosting significant numbers when the occasion arises, one of which will hopefully be an SFT hosted weekend gathering which will take place on the 6th and 7th August – save the

date if you are interested!

One of the reasons why I believe farm educational stages will form a central part of the knowledge transfer process is something I heard about children, which is that they remember 80% to 90% of what they do and see, and a far lower percentage of what they are told or read. This idea of seeing is believing I think holds the key, not just for

children but for young people seeking a career in agriculture and for many thousands of practicing farmers who are realising that it might now be possible to produce food working in harmony with nature if the financial and policy environment shifts in such a way that this becomes economically possible. The format and the programme for knowledge transfer events of the kind that we will be hosting is interesting and important.

My feeling is the best formula is a combination of farm walks, talks and discussion sessions. What I've realised over many years is that you can read a book about something with great interest and even remember quite a lot of it, but what I've noticed again and again is that if you come back to what you learned many years ago when you have verified it through practice and experience, you come to a much deeper understanding of what you might already know with your head but have not taken in at a deeper level.

On that theme, I think farmers often underestimate the amount of knowledge they hold, since they take it for granted that they can cast their eye over a field or an animal and immediately know what is wrong with the crop or the cow or know what needs to be done, which might be weather dependent or time dependent and therefore impart 'an ache of urgency' in relation to the task that is required.

If it is true that we only have 10 years or so to bring about the great

transition towards regenerative and sustainable farming systems, then our need to create an informally coordinated network of beacon farms, hopefully working collectively to become more than the sum of their parts in the educational process, becomes absolutely imperative.

Patrick Holden is the Chief Executive of the Sustainable Food Trust. He has been a speaker at a CA Summer School held at Parcevall Hall.

CHIMPANZEE GREETING AT VATICAN WEBINAR ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Ellen Teague

A global audience of more than 1,000 joined a webinar on biodiversity on 20 April organised by the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM). They engaged in a conversation about the biological variety and variability of life on Earth with Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery, and famous primatologist Dr Jane Goodall. In fact, before she started her presentation, Dr Goodall – ever creative, inspiring and hopeful at the age of 87 – gave a chimpanzee greeting!

The COVID health crisis, the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis are three interconnected emergencies calling us to change direction towards a transformed civilisation. This webinar explored how together we can take responsibility for creating a better future.

Cardinal Turkson announced that the webinar was preparing for



Jane Goodall and friend.

Conference of Parties (COP)15 on Biodiversity in China 11-24 October 2021. Speaking from Rome, he felt the safeguarding of biodiversity must go alongside action on climate change and tackling the widening gap between rich and poor. "The way humanity treats the environment is the way it treats itself" he said "and the health of humanity depends on the health of nature." He highlighted that there is a framework for protecting diversity in the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Nature's contribution to human well-being and development should be more valued, said the cardinal. And there are "clear actions for protecting biodiversity", specifically respecting and protecting other species, undergoing ecological conversion, and acknowledging that indigenous people are the great teachers of utilising and safeguarding biodiversity.

He called for planting trees, creating *Laudato Si'* gardens, "living chapels", and sustainable use of church land. Also, linking with like-minded people to prevent further biodiversity loss.

Dr Goodall spoke from England with background images on her bookcase of chimpanzees, elephants, a badger, alongside St Francis of Assisi and a wooden crucifix inclusive of a peace dove. "How could we destroy our only home?" she asked; "we brought the Covid-19 pandemic on ourselves by our disrespect of animals and the natural world." She criticised wild animals being forced closer to

human society by being captured alive, and body parts trafficked and eaten. "In these cruel conditions it is easy for a pathogen such as a virus to spill over and such a pandemic has been predicted for a long time." She reflected, "what does God think about the suffering we are inflicting on God's creatures?"

She deplored terrible conditions in factory farms and industrial development as root causes of climate change. However, she felt there is "a small window" to act. Dr Goodall called for the phase out of industrial agriculture and to live more sustainably with simpler lifestyles. When we buy food we should ask: Where did it come from? Was it produced with fairness? She suggested that, "organic food may cost more but it will be valued more

and less is wasted." She called for measures to eliminate poverty and help people not to be compelled to destroy their environment to survive. We must plant trees. **"Nature is so kind she will reclothe areas we have destroyed,"** said Dr Goodall; "let's create a better future where animals and nature can be respected, not just for what they offer us but for who they are."

There were plenty of questions in a session chaired by the Global Catholic Climate Movement, from Laudato Si animators, Justice and Peace activists across all continents. Also, many grassroots groups, such as the Council of Integral Ecology and Multifaith in South Australia, Saskatchewan's Treaty 4 land in Canada, and the Philippine bishops' Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

When asked about reasons for hope, Dr Goodall reflected that she has lived long enough to see the banning of fur and reptile skins in products, the power of consumer pressure and growing environmental awareness with the engagement of young people. Many also saw hope in September's ecumenical celebration of the Season of Creation.

Convention on Biological Diversity
<https://www.cbd.int/convention/>

Season of Creation
<https://seasonofcreation.org/>

Jane Goodall Institute & Roots and Shoots
<https://www.janegoodall.org/>
<https://rootsandshoots.global/>

ACTION CARD - JUNE 2021: STOP BIODIVERSITY FROM DECREASING

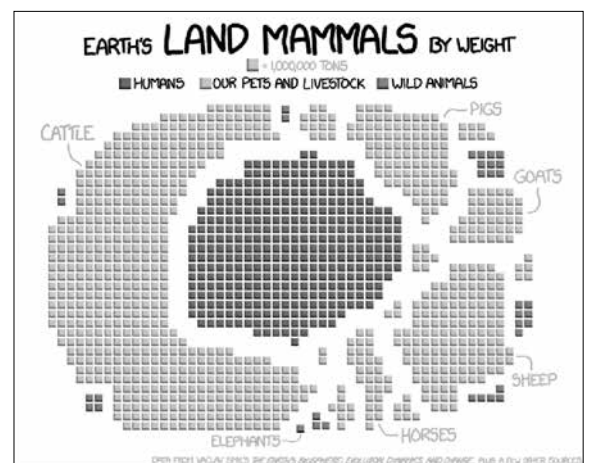
Humans are the dominant species on our planet. 66% of land mammals by weight are our pets and livestock; 30% is the weight of humans and about 3% is all the species of wild animals put together. Thinking about it like this is a bit of an eye-opener! Our economies, livelihoods and well-being all depend on our most precious asset: Nature. Yet our demands on the natural world are greater than its capacity to supply us with the goods and services we all rely on.

One quarter of the world's mammals and one fifth of the plants are under threat of extinction. Species extinction rates are now 1000 times as great as the natural rate due to habitat loss. **Insects too are diminishing in numbers.** Think back forty years to the insect splattered windscreens in summer. That just doesn't happen now. Insects matter. As the famous biologist E. O. Wilson once said, "If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the

rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos." We depend on each other.

What can we do to stop this loss?

Globally, pray that governments will make an effort to meet the targets that will be set at the Biodiversity COP15 in China later this year.



Nationally support the 100 plus MPs who are sponsoring the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill which will be presented again in the new Parliamentary Session. Encourage your local authorities to turn their road verges and city parks into a national network for wildlife.

Big, global, economic and political decisions need to be taken and acted upon if we are to slow down the rapid decline of wild species. But we can all take some actions to help increase our local biodiversity. We can start with any land we are personally responsible for – our gardens.

- Use peat free compost, plant bee-friendly plants with simple flowers like a dog rose, dig a pond, create a bee hotel.

- Support wildlife projects that save wildlife habitat in the UK, or high diversity habitats abroad that are under threat such as rainforests.
- Buy food produced without harmful pesticides. If your church has a churchyard get together with a group of friends and manage it for wildlife with advice from Caring for God's Acre.

- Show our love for God's creation by praying we will have the heart and will to restore what we have spoilt.

*Barbara Echlin,
Vice Chair, Green Christian*

PROMOTE BIODIVERSITY AND MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE FUTURE OF THE PLANET - A CHALLENGE TO EVERY PERSON

If we are not already working to improve biodiversity now is the time to start, and, if not now, when? Our action card for June, written by Barbara Echlin, who is the vice-chair of 'Green Christian', points to the terrible losses of wildlife and insects we have faced and may yet face. Barbara also suggests actions to stop the losses we face. We will all hopefully read and act.



'There is hope in a tree.'

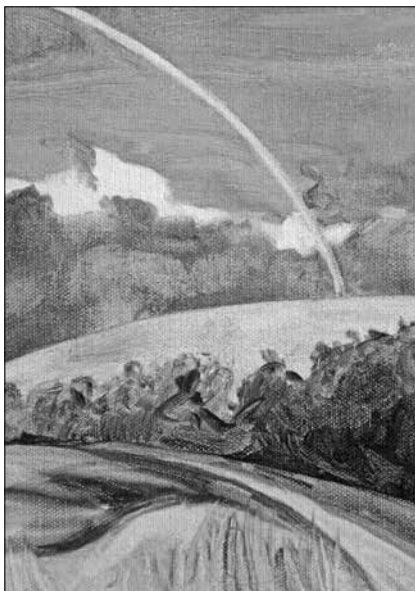
The Plant Britain campaign is being launched by Countryfile. This is a two year project and we can all join in. We are asked to begin with trees. If in doubt about what to do and how to start the Woodland Trust website is very helpful. The trust offers advice on how to choose trees, suggesting that, if possible, we choose native trees.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Trees make a huge contribution to our lives and futures. They help us to fight climate change by absorbing carbon through their leaves and keeping the carbon in the soil. They provide a home for wildlife, they offer shelter and shade particularly for domestic

animals, they help to reduce flooding.

We may move on from trees to fruit, vegetables and flowers. We can all plant and grow something and make a contribution to what is now a national campaign. If we have a garden it is easy, but we may also use window boxes. Joining community



Painting by Adam Boulter for the cover of 'Just Food?'

schemes is also now possible in many areas, or we might start a scheme where we live. If we are a member of a church with a churchyard we may encourage our congregation and other parishioners to create an environmentally friendly space.

We can promote allotments and even rent an allotment ourselves. There is a wonderful chapter about allotments in *'Just Food? Food and farming for a Sustainable Future'*, published by Christians Aware and available from the office. It is written by Mairead Moynihan who with her husband Patrick has run an allotment for many years.

We can all do something towards the future of our earth and the time for action is now.

NO TRADE JUSTICE WITHOUT CLIMATE JUSTICE: FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION

On June 5th, communities across the UK and beyond marked World Environment Day: the United Nations day for encouraging global awareness and action to protect our environment.

It was a timely reminder of the urgent need for countries worldwide to intensify efforts to safeguard people and planet in the face of the climate emergency.

The race to tackle the climate crisis has reached a critical point. Fairtrade producers have told us that climate change is the biggest threat to their livelihoods. Despite having contributed the least to cause it, they and their communities bear the brunt of its harmful effects. These include: more frequent and intense droughts; floods and storms; erratic weather patterns; the loss of fertile land; and the spread of crop diseases.



**FAIRTRADE
FOUNDATION**

The climate crisis strips away at their security, homes, land, access to food, health and wellbeing, as well as their ability to grow crops and earn an income.

Yet, a deeply unfair global trading system means far too many farmers in low-income, nations don't earn enough money to deal with the consequences climate change. All this turns the clock back on their efforts to escape poverty, at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic continues to squeeze incomes.

Radical action

This year, Fairtrade Foundation is campaigning for climate justice for farmers and workers at the forefront of the crisis. As part of the Climate Coalition, we are backing the joint Climate Declaration, signed by over 145,000 people: it calls for radical action to tackle the crisis and support for those feeling its worst effects.

Fairtrade believes there can be no climate justice without trade justice. Now more than ever, producers need fair pay, fair prices and fairer trading practices, so they can adapt to climate impacts, pursue greener farming methods and build their resilience to changing weather patterns.

There are many ways farmers can adapt to the climate crisis, and Fairtrade's Climate Academy in East Africa is one such example. But adaptation costs money, and it is unfair to place the financial burden



Climate Academy Kenya coffee. (Credit: Fairtrade Netherlands and FI.)



Fairtrade farmer Elizabeth Chepkwony, part of the Kabngetuny Cooperative, harvests coffee. (Credit: Fairtrade Int.)



Fairtrade bananas. (Credit: Kate Fishpool.)

on farmers who don't earn a living wage or living income because the price they receive for their crops is far too low.

The farmers and workers behind our foods and goods need to earn more if they and their communities are to have a sustainable future.

We want businesses and governments in wealthy countries – nations like the UK who are responsible for, and have benefited from, the global systems that have caused the climate emergency – to ensure farmers and workers overseas get the financial support they need. This includes by ensuring businesses pay higher prices for the produce they buy.

This year, the UK is hosting two critical global conferences: the G7 in June and the UN climate summit, COP 26, in November.

Our international Fairtrade community has spoken up ahead of the G7 to remind politicians nations like the UK must listen to the voices of producers, must play their part in radical and urgent global investment, and must deliver a deal that is fair.

Meanwhile, Fairtrade producers are fighting back against climate change – using sustainable farming practices in line with our environmentally friendly Fairtrade Standards, while also demanding trade that will create a more just and sustainable future for people and planet.

To join them, and to get involved, visit <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get-involved/current-campaigns/fairtrade-and-climate-justice/>

POP UP SHOPS GIVE HOPE

Barbara Mayhew

This week I read a shocking fact that there are more food banks in the UK than McDonalds

During the pandemic as more people became aware of the crisis and there were large numbers of volunteers delivering food parcels and supplying basic needs. But still it remains true that many of us have not experienced that kind of poverty and so to a large extent it has remained in the background. According to John Cox in his book 'Pandemic Reflections'.

The pandemic brought poverty to everyone's attention. Supermarkets



and small retailers, restaurants and food outlets pitched in to provide the food. It became part of the church's outreach and community care, and now most of the food banks are linked to churches

The Rev Carol Mansell and All Hallows Church in Ipswich has been the first in Ipswich to host the 'Basic Life Community' pop up shop. I volunteered for the first time last

week. It takes a different slant in that it is available to anybody without any kind of referral. It provides sanitary products, toiletries and children's products as well as fresh fruit, vegetables and the usual foodstuffs.

When a person arrives she/he will be offered a large jute bag at the cost of £2. Then the person can fill up the bag with anything they require and as much as they require on a weekly basis. The payment for the bag is seen as a means for the person to take control over what he/she chooses to buy. It is a genuine route back into shopping rather than coping in an emergency.

One pop up shop has become seven in the Ipswich churches.

It was a very humbling experience.

‘WHAT THEN CAN WE DO?’ - CHRISTIANS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Susan Sayers

Well, we all know what a desperate crisis we face at the present time. Many of the inhabitants on this planet are already experiencing dangerous and terrifying consequences of an imbalance which affects a whole range of situations. Never before have we been so aware of this encroaching disaster, largely the result of human activities.

I am not going to spell these out, as others are doing this already. For many of us the turning point came in July 1969, when as humans first set foot on our local moon, we all saw our beautiful, fragile planet Earth for the first time, and realised both its beauty and also its smallness. Perhaps we understood for the first time how there is no ‘away’ to throw our discarded stuff. We understood how the whole of Earth’s nature included ourselves, and that the wholesale squandering of its finite resources would have consequences.

Since then, many of us have campaigned and done our utmost to alert the Earth’s inhabitants to the dangerous consequences, and often we were drowned out by interested parties sowing the seeds of doubt so that continuing as ‘normal’ was seen to be far more sensible than these crazy doom predictions. Precious time was sadly wasted. The warming and imbalance did not stop, of course. Only now, when the science and our actual experience shows us beyond doubt that the imbalance caused by human activity is real, and happening now, do we collectively recognise the problem. All of us alive today are at the point of no return if we continue as we have been since the industrial

revolution. Some would say, since the beginning of farming, ten thousand years ago.

I want to look at what our response as Christians might be to the horror in which we find ourselves not only as passive bystanders but also as perpetrators. With the crowds coming to John the baptiser, we, realising the truth, can also ask: “What, then, can we do?”

It is easy to feel impotent in the face of such a huge problem, but that is not Jesus’s way. Too long we Christians have watered down what Jesus taught and did, so that it isn’t too taxing. But if we pick anything up from the life stories of Jesus contained in the gospels, we recognise rather the opposite. At the centre of the message is that command to love “as *I have loved you*.” And what does that mean? Clearly more and wider love is expected of us than simply loving those who are related to us, or attractive to us, or similar to us. Loving as Jesus loves entails a radical kind of loving, extending far beyond our comfort zones.

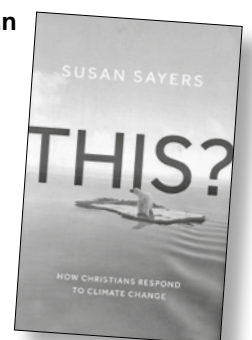
And here is the problem for us: we have developed a false understanding which equates goodness with what is comfortable for us, with anything threatening that comfort being seen as bad, or evil. Accordingly we earmark as bad and consequently unlovable, such things as earthquakes and volcanoes, diseases for which we are agreeable habitats, and even the natural ageing process. But are these bad?

Of course they are neither bad nor good. They are part of God’s creation and they occur within creation. The wrong and bad is different. Systems that leave some people poor and

living in places that experience life threatening flood or drought; human styles of living that have unbalanced the delicate balance of our whole ecosystem on the planet... these are certainly wrongs of which we as Creator lovers need urgently to repent. Extended loving, as Jesus has shown, is bound to make us suddenly realise our woefully narrow loving. Our love needs to be extended, and if that leads us to sadness at what we humans are causing, so be it. If it leads us to question how important our own assumed comforts are, so be it. If it galvanises us to jettison anything which messes up this planet or any of its inhabitants, whether they be animal, vegetable or mineral, so be it.

It is our understanding of how generously and affectionately we are loved by God, that will help us realise our commission right now. Christians of all ages, traditions and denominations are spread over the whole planet. If we can be salt and light, yeast in dough, as Jesus suggested, we can become a force for healing, for a refreshed and wider loving, and a renewed joy in being active followers of Jesus, the generous lover, the healer and rescuer. Are we up for this kind of witness? In the grace and power of God we can act. And we must.

Susan Sayers is an Anglican priest and a writer. Her book ‘This’ is published by Kevin Mayhew. There will be a review in our next magazine.



Webinars from Christians Aware – now available on YouTube

John Perumbalath – Bishop of Bradwell – ‘An intercultural body. The Church as a Community transcending racial divisions.’

Ian Ernest – Former Archbishop of the Indian Ocean, Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome – ‘Fratelli Tutti and its interfaith implications.’

Angaelos – Coptic Archbishop of London – ‘The Coptic Orthodox Church.’

Paul Dastoor – Professor at Newcastle University in Australia – ‘Australia and Climate Change.’

Ian Bradley – Emeritus Professor, writer, musician – ‘Columba. Politician, Penitent and Pilgrim.’

Jyoti Sahi – Indian artist, theologian, writer – ‘The Cross and the Garden.’

Christians Aware 2021 conference speakers – now on You Tube

Adam Boulter – ‘Living on the Edge in Madagascar.’

Malcolm Guite – ‘Renewing Love through Crisis.’

Susan Sayers – The Christian Response to Climate Change.’

Joanna Ward – ‘Transport for the Future.’

Jenny Brown – ‘Looking Towards a Hope-filled future.’

Alison Skinner – ‘A crisis for indigenous people.’

David Peat – ‘Climate Crisis, Internationalism and Christian Tradition.’

David Rhodes – ‘Climate Change – the Challenge to the Churches.’

Christians Aware 2021 Summer School – Wednesday July 28 – on the zoom platform ‘Hope. Healing. Harmony. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree.’

Autumn Webinars

Rowan Williams – Former Archbishop of Canterbury – ‘Climate Justice and Christian Vision.’

– September 30, 7.00pm

Adele Jones – Deputy Director of the Sustainable Food Trust – ‘Issues facing the future of Farming.’

– Wednesday, October 13, 7.00 pm



SOME DIARY DATES

2021

November 14 – 21 Interfaith Week

2022

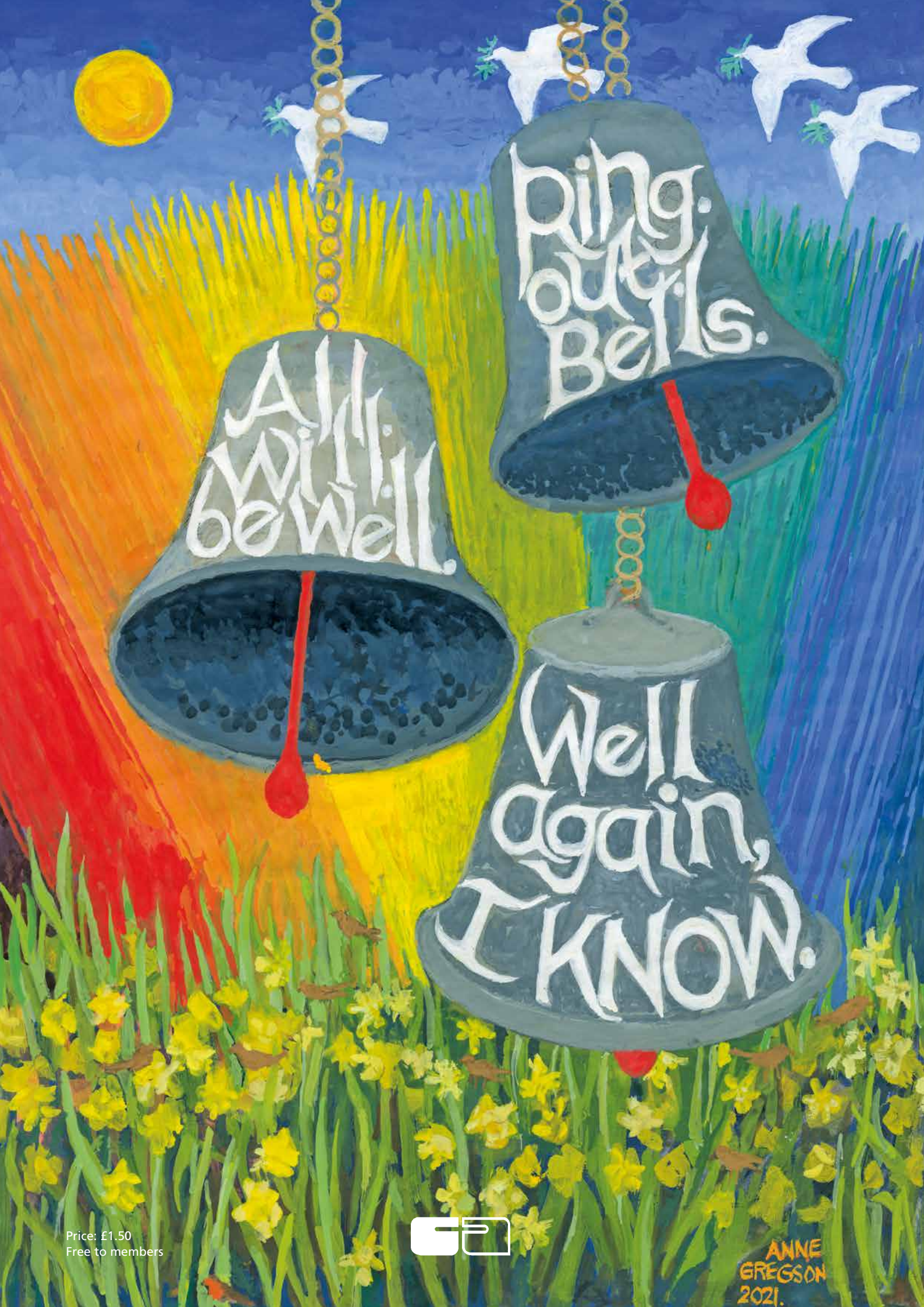
January 14 – 16 Christians Aware Annual Conference – at the Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire – ‘Transcending Divisions in a World of Diversity.’

May 21 – 27 Somerset Pilgrimage – (There are a few places)

July 18 – 22 Summer School – Parcevall Hall, Yorkshire Dales.

2023

May 13 – 20 Lindisfarne Pilgrimage.



All
will
be Well.

Ring
out
Bells.

Well
again,
I KNOW.

Price: £1.50
Free to members



ANNE
GREGSON
2021.