November 2026 60p

Life



swcd-churches.org.uk

Life

Roger Harmsworth

rogerwilliam@talktalk.net

01458 445291

Articles for the December edition are due by Sun 15th November

We thank God that in our benefice during this period without a rector for the help we are receiving from the diocese, and all those within the benefice who are keeping our churches going with services and the general day to day running of our churches. our Associate Minister, Lay readers, church wardens, PCCs, and many others. We must continue with our prayers for them.

This month I am remembering Ana with a picture on the back whilst she was leading worship on Remembrance Sunday at Merriman Park a year or two back. On the front I have featured the entrance to the park with a recent picture.

The two picture pages inside, show the flower arrangements and gifts for the foodbank at St Andrews in Compton Dundon and Street Parish Church.

It is always good to have articles from or about our younger members, and this month ‘My faith journey features such members, and on page 7, Jackie writes about children and youth at the Mission.

The Rector’s page (2) is taken over by David with an interesting article on how we should move on after our loss of Ana, and some talk about geese!!

Roger.

Associate Minister's Letter

When one door opens …….

From time-to-time people use the phrase, 'when one door closes, another one opens.' I have found these happen at specific times in our lives. It raises the question of what we are doing and where we are going. For many, never an easy question.
A new chapter has begun in the life of this benefice. This is not what any of us planned, nor wanted. But here it is. Is it a long or short chapter? Only time will tell! But all the chapters are important, life does not stop, God doesn't and neither should we. We, you and I are inheritors of a rich legacy, the one Ana has given us. Projects begun, growing. They reflect Ana's zeal and passion; it is a rich bequest. But what is to happen to them in this chapter. If they are to exist, let alone grow, they need nourishment, prayer and even energy, from...? This summer, late August at least, we were awoken, not by birdsong, but deeper rejoicing from the field behind our home. Poking our noses out of the window the field was populated by Greylag geese. (I thought Canadian geese but told they weren't.) They were exploring the seeds left behind from harvest. If enjoyment is measured by volume, they were having fun. They mingled and waddled, quite a sight. We watched for some time. Eventually they left and as they circled the clear V shape of their formation stood out. The leader at the front sets the direction and speed, where they go, others will follow. However, there are times when the leader, for whatever reason, drops back. Another one takes their place. They have seen how it is done and step up. The flock is never leaderless.
Why did the geese come this year, never before had we seen it - I don't know. Is this something or nothing?
For me, it said, we, could, might, step up. In large areas or small. I recall a book about ministry, called or collared, it seemed to fit here. Does this mean me, you? Perhaps it does - where? That is rather more difficult to answer, as each of our churches is different, with a variety of 'gaps.' So is the way forward about

seeing, praying, discussing and sharing. I think it is a model that could work, through God's grace.

The church is never about one person, always a community, because we each have special talents for different occasions. A book I picked up talked about five types of wealth. The last one was money, the first was time. Time is a gift - from God. Has anyone guided us on how to use it? Never, it's mine, isn't it? Or is it ours? Perhaps it's God's? Which one do you come down on?

What I can say is, there are opportunities at a church near you! Wardens and myself would welcome you to share with us. Some would say though, not me, that the pay isn't great.' However, the insurance policy/pension is out of this world. Revd David Hatrey.

Compton Dundon Harvest

On a sunny Sunday morning at the beginning of October, we held our Harvest Festival at St Andrew's Church in Compton Dundon. It was a lovely, cheerful service with an insightful talk by Reverend Ronnie Crossman during which, along with traditional hymns and readings, including one by Lauren and Finn Miles, she handed out runner bean seeds gathered from her own crop for us to plant for a harvest next year!

The church looked stunning, having been beautifully decorated by a team led by Celia Linney and the decorations were completed by Julie and John Gordon who arranged all the foodstuffs, some of which had been donated by Compton Dundon School along with donations from many villagers. The decorations were completed on the Sunday morning with a magnificent harvest loaf baked by Steve King.

The service was followed by refreshments, including some delicious cakes from the Cake Shed in the village, which were much enjoyed by the many people attending.

The following morning some of the pupils from the school came over to the church to help pack up all the non-perishable items which were then taken by Pat King to the Salvation Army food bank in Street, where they were received with much appreciation.

Susie Robertson, St Andrew's, Compton Dundon

Bishop's letter:

A journey with God



One of the most significant places in the UK for me is the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, and the pilgrimages I've made to and from the island walking barefoot over the sands have been holy moments.

Unlike other journeys, pilgrimages are deliberate journeys of transformation. I went on a pilgrimage from Watchet to Stogursey this year with a group of laity and clergy from Quantock Deanery. It had moments of challenge, and moments of joy. We were definitely changed as we travelled. It was a holy time.

In Christian teaching, pilgrimage has long been seen as a form of martyrdom. Not the martyrdom of shedding our blood, but the martyrdom of shedding our preferences, our self-centred desires.

The psalmist wrote, "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on a pilgrimage." Those words show a yearning to be with God in his dwelling place, and that's a yearning we can all mirror in our prayers, whether we can physically undertake a pilgrimage or not.

One of the most famous stories of a pilgrimage is, of course, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. I find the closing words of the book among the most moving in literature, as they link our lives in this world to our journey's end with God. "I cannot describe what Christian felt when he came face to face with the King … I woke too soon. And besides, no one can dream the Unimaginable. I shall have to cross the River myself before I can say exactly what

the City of Gold contains. I would not have chosen to wake. But I did. I am awake now. Time to get up, then, I suppose, and continue the journey. I am on a pilgrimage, too, you see. Everyone is."

May God bless you on every step of your pilgrimage, and may you find your rest in him.

Fiona Gibson, Bishop of Taunton

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

swcd-churches.org.uk

Connections@theMission

Thursday

19th November

2-30pm

Mission Church Street

come along for a short talk by Sue Ripley (Street)

"How bad are bananas?"

There will be a cuppa and cake.

Walton news

What a wonderful harvest time we had.

Walton WI donated non-perishable food at their meeting and passed it to the church for distribution.

We welcomed Walton school on the Friday afternoon for their harvest service which the children confidently led with readings, prayers and songs. Every child brought a gift that was placed on the altar steps. It was a very moving service with poignant readings and fun, enthusiastic singing thanking God for everything except for brussel sprouts, garlic snails and mushy peas.

Friday was our harvest supper and thank you so much for the support we had from those who came along. We do really appreciate your encouragement. We shared a lovely meal and thank go to Gill Pople for all her hard work and guidance. So many thanks needed, to those who set up the hall, laid tables and cooked apple crumbles, waited on tables and washed up. A real team effort. A special thanks to Rough Round the Edges who entertained us, and for our game solo artists.

Saturday saw an amazing group who transformed the church with beautiful flower arrangements and cleaning. Every window and shelf was filled. Thank you once again for all your hard work.

Sunday service was lovely and even more gifts were placed at the altar.

Monday saw 5 of us with 2 full car loads and half a boot in the third car taken for the work of the food bank. We are all so grateful for our blessings and it is so good to give back a little of what we receive.

Sandra Gristock. Walton Church.

Children and Youth at the Mission

We have enjoyed an exciting start to the Autumn Term with enough children and teens (on a good day!) to form 3 classes –

Explorers – aged 3 – 6 years old

Adventurers – aged 7 – 11 years

Sunday Hub – aged 11 upwards

If a creche is needed toys and a soft area will be available at the back of the church during the service.

The Mission Church was packed on a Sunday evening in September when Hopestream led worship for the baptism of Seth and Asa Checkley. We filed outside towards the end of the service to support these boys as they went through the waters of baptism in a pool on the lawn at the front of church. Folk enjoyed refreshments after the service.

A huge thank you to parents for completing 'official' permission documents enabling us to take their children to outside venues. In fact, one Sunday evening during September a few youngsters went with our leaders to a church in Yeovil for a Youth Praise evening – so good for our few teens to be amongst so many of their peers worshipping God together.

Please continue to pray for our children and teens that they might grow closer in their walk with God.

Jackie Houlden (Mission Church).

TWO YOUNG FAITH JOURNEYS

Seth Checkley, 18 years old, Mission Church:

Tell us about your early faith journey.

I've been going to church since I was born. First at JustChurch, where I fell off my ride on car and dislocated a tooth. I always went to Holiday Bible Club at the Baptist Church, and attended Youth Zone and other clubs.

Several years ago, when I was at Youth Zone camp, I decided to start to take my faith more seriously. I started reading my bible every day, for about a month!

So, what lead up to deciding to get baptised?

Youth Alpha started up at the Mission Church, and I went because mum really wanted me to go, and if I wanted my tea, that's where it was. At first I found it a bit boring but after a few weeks I started enjoying the videos and discussions. A little while after this I got talking to Eleanor at college. We got chatting about God, and started hanging out. She invited me to her church. I knew I wasn't really living for God but I wanted to. I started to take Alpha more seriously, and church became quite a lot more interesting.

Back in July I prayed with my mum, and gave my whole life to God. When I read my bible, I use YouTube videos to help me understand, and we talk about it at home.

Why do you want to get baptised? I want to get baptised to honour God and to show what he's done for me. I expressed an interest, then Ana and Kevin came to Alpha to explain more about it.

What has Jesus done for you?

What's he not done for me? I've had some really sad times in my life, but I know God is helping me and is with me. I'm grateful that I grew up in a Christian environment and that we talk about Jesus a lot at home. Although I've always known about God, it didn't seem like anything special - just normal life. Now I know I have a relationship with God. I'm learning what it means to live for Him and follow Jesus, rather than just knowing about Him.

I went to CreationFest and reconnected with my Christian friends which has been great. I've been hanging out with Eleanor a lot and sometimes go to her church too.

Aṣa Checkley, 14 years old. Mission Church:

Tell us about your early faith journey.

I first went to church when I was about a week old. When I was little, I only going liked the biscuits and playing with the toys. Up until around 6 months ago I never really listened to any of it and it didn't mean much to me, and I had hardly been to church in the last few years because I found it boring. For some reason I decided to go to church again last year. I remembered the Mission Church from when I was a kid and thought it would be nice there. They are nice people and I started to feel something - I think it was God. I would sit at the back on the sofa but after a few weeks I joined the worship team on drums and got to know people more there.

So, what lead up to you deciding to get baptised?

I wanted to get to know God and live for him. I started to read my bible and it's the only book I've ever enjoyed reading. I'm still in Genesis and there's a guy on Spotify who explains each chapter

and really helps me understand God's whole story. Youth Alpha started at church and I felt I should go to learn more about what it means to be a Christian, which is exactly what it taught me.

Why do you want to get baptised?

I want to get baptised because I want to follow Jesus and try to live more like him.

What has Jesus done for you?

God's plan for everyone is to have a relationship with Him. Jesus died for me and rose again so this could happen. Even though for ages I didn't go to church, I still knew God was there, and knew he loved me but I wasn't really following him. Jesus has given me a blessed life and surrounded me with amazing people.

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Big Breakfast



The annual Big Breakfast Is in the Meadway Hall, Compton Dundon

On Saturday 21st November

9am to 11am

Do come and join us for cooked or continental breakfast, and browse the Christmas stalls.

We look forward to seeing you.

Pat King, Compton Dundon.

Holy Trinity Street Harvest















St Andrews





Compton Dundon









The New Men's Breakfast date is:

Saturday November 14th

All **men** from the benefice are invited to a Saturday morning breakfast at the Mission church on November 14th 8.45am - 10.15am. An opportunity to come and start the day by joining with others for food, chat and company.

Please do let us know that you wish to come so that we can arrange for the catering. There is a suggested donation to cover the cost of breakfast (£3). To sign up or for more information contact Tim Hindle (details on inside cover).





Quiz evening.





We are holding a quiz evening in the church on Friday 20th November. Teams are up to 6 members but please don't be put off if you are 1 or 2. We are a friendly bunch and we can make up teams on the night.

Bring your own drinks but tea, coffee and cake will be available. £5 per head towards our restoration fund. Please let Andy Savage or Sandra Gristock know if you are coming.

Sandra.

What are we doing when we share the Peace?!

This is really a good question to ask. It can help us to understand what we are doing and why we share the peace, giving it greater meaning. There are a number of ideas to consider.

Firstly, Jesus himself tells us (Matthew Chapter 5 verses 23-24) that before we come to worship, we should do so with clear conscience and an open heart. This means we should make peace and put right with others about anything where we have offended them or they us. Only by living in harmony are we ready to be God's people and receive all that he has for us.

Secondly, sharing the peace is a symbol, a visible gesture of our unity together as Christ's family. We are joined by faith. By looking one another in the eye we are saying, I belong to you and you belong to me. It reinforces our responsibility to one another within Christ and his church. This vision of peace draws on Isaiah's prophecy that one day all the world will treat one another with love. We are the first wave of that prophecy being fulfilled. In the early church gatherings, just as today people of all ages and backgrounds come together. This breaks down barriers, grows relationships so we can celebrate joys together as well as pray for one another. I am reminded of comments I received during Covid when so many missed this sharing.

Both St Peter and St Paul talk about greeting one another with a 'holy kiss.' Romans chapter 16 verse 16. 2 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 12. Indeed, Paul seems to begin all of his letters by sharing the peace. It became a Christian greeting, reflecting the peace that God seeks to give to us through the work of his Holy Spirit.

I do not believe it is a coincidence that Jesus publicly talks of sharing the peace following his resurrection. He is aware of challenges ahead but wants to remind his followers of his presence with them.

In Hebrew the word for peace is Shalom. Shalom is rich in meaning, going far beyond our understanding of peace. Shalom is about wholeness and being healthy. When we share shalom with others, we are asking God to bless them. Shalom is also

understood as creating harmony and asking God to give others prosperity.

It is easy to forget have rich sharing the peace is.

However, we need to be aware that some people find sharing the peace difficult. For whatever reason, they do not enjoy this, and we should respect their feelings. So yes, celebrate with those who show they want to greet you, respecting others who do not wish to do so. Some may simply want to remain where they are, reflect and pray. This is right for them.

I hope this has enriched our understanding of the peace and its importance for our churches. If you want to discuss this further with me, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Revd David



This past month has flown and by the time you read this, we will be planning the collection and delivery of our boxes to the drop off centres. Just a last few days to help in whatever way you can. No gift or donation is too small, so please get in touch. Also continue to pray for those that will receive your gifts. We have heard many stories of transformed lives through realising that they are loved and not forgotten. Bless you all.

Sandra Gristock. Representing our benefice.

SWCD Women's Breakfast

Food, Fellowship and Faith

On Saturday 10th October 2026, we held our SWCD Women's Breakfast meeting at The Parish Church, Street. We were thrilled to have 18 women come along from across the benefice and some for the first time.

On arrival everyone was offered tea or coffee and then sat down at one of the tables. Linda then welcomed everyone to the breakfast and Jane Durham, who had been invited to come along, gave thanks for the food.

The breakfast took place in a buffet style where each person could go up to the table as many times as they wished to help themselves from the mixed fruit platter, yoghurt, croissants, Jordan's crunch cereal, bread rolls, cheese, ham and toast with marmalade and jam. There were even some chocolate treats on the table!

There was good conversation with one another and getting to know each other better.

Pat King shared a short thought with us about Women of Faith which included the Woman at the Well (John 4), Christina Koch the astronaut and Michelle Agyemang, the young footballer who plays for England. There was a special story about each and how they shared their faith, bringing others to know God. Pat ended her talk by paying tribute to Ana, without whom these opportunities for coming together as a benefice would not have happened. We certainly had a lovely time together.

The next Breakfast will be on Saturday 23rd January 2027 at 9.30am at The Mission Church. We would so love to have moreof our Women from across the benefice come along to enjoy this lovely time together and to be encouraged from our short

thought/testimony shared at the breakfasts. We look forward to seeing you at our next Women's Breakfast. There is no need to book a place, just turn up. Please do let one of us know if there are any allergies, gluten free, etc. There is a suggested donation of £3.00.
Linda Clark (Mission Church), Pat King (St Andrews Church, Compton Dundon) and

Sandra Gristock (Walton Parish Church)

MacMillan

Coffee Morning.

September 24th.



Thank you so much for your wonderful support for this amazing cause. The church was buzzing with conversation and fun games. How many words can you make out of MacMillan? Well 104 was the answer. Wow.

We sent off £397.60 just by having fun and eating cake. Thank you all so much.

Sandra Gristock. Walton Church.

What Does Net Zero Carbon Mean?

The Church is called to be a people of hope; to live in harmony with our world; to treasure God s creation and our brothers and sisters around the globe - Bishop Graham Usher, Lead Bishop for the Environment

For the sake of creation, our fellow Christians across the world, and ourselves, we need to take action to reduce our own impact on the climate. The global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a critical matter of social justice, hitting hardest on some of the world's most vulnerable communities as well as future generations. In February 2020 the Church of England General Synod set the ambitious target for the Church to have a neutral, or 'net zero 'impact on the total amount of CO_2 in the atmosphere by 2030. That is either not emitting CO_2 or offsetting (balancing) any CO_2 emitted. The Church of England Routemap to Net Zero focuses on areas under its direct control which produce the most emissions such as the energy used in church buildings. The main way we can do this is by reducing the amount of energy we use from burning fossil fuels. This also helps reduce pollution in the atmosphere.

What are we doing?

Of the suggested ten steps to net zero the churches in our Benefice are well over half way through by: -

- Setting up an Eco Group
- Registering with Eco Church (and achieving Silver Awards),
- Monitoring our energy use
- Completing the Church's Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) every year Switching to and staying with green energy tariffs at minimal (and reducing) additional cost as contracts become due for renewal.

Where are we now?

- Compton Dundon Church has made most progress to net zero. It is a smaller building, does not use gas for heating and is on a green energy tariff.
- Development plans at Compton Dundon and Walton have the potential to further reduce energy use.
- Careful management of the heating system at Street Parish Church has substantially reduced our energy use (and costs). Even when paying through green energy tariffs this is important as heating is by gas.
- The Mission Church had solar panels installed 4 years ago thus reducing electricity use from the grid and exporting excess to the grid contributing to green energy generation.
- Our Churchyards are green spaces with trees and other plants which help to absorb CO_2; they also provide oxygen, support wildlife and are pleasant places to spend time in contemplation and prayer.

The Routemap focuses on 'getting our own house in order'; cutting the carbon emissions which the Church itself creates, so we can be credible in our call to the wider world to take action. We are concentrating on changing what we can. In this way we hope to be a role model for others to take climate action too. The Bible refers to stewardship. In striving for Net Zero we are demonstrating good stewardship not just of church buildings but also stewardship of the creation that we live in and the planet that we live on.

Susan Ripley, Street Parish
SWCD Eco Church Group

This article includes Information from Church of England and Liverpool Diocesan websites and focuses on Net Zero in the Church of England. Net Zero more generally is a much bigger topic, please feel free to speak to me if you wish to know more about it or my own Net Zero journey.

The Persecuted Church

⋯Jesus told us that we should expect to be persecuted if we decide to follow him. He was persecuted and therefore his followers would also be persecuted: because the world rejected him it will also reject us. …
… to follow Jesus here in the UK may not be a reason for friends and family to turn their backs on you, although this does happen in some cases. However, this is by no means the case everywhere in the world.

In other countries, it may result in immediately being cut off / cancelled by your own family: thrown out of the house and on your own. It might also mean difficulty in getting on in your job - or getting a job, except the worst / dirtiest that no one else will do, or in advancing your education. In school you might be picked on and ridiculed by teachers and your exam results deliberately marked down. It could mean facing verbal abuse on the street because you are not dressed like the majority. The police may treat you harshly because you are not a follower of the majority religion who may be favoured without regard to the evidence that you are in the right. Your church building or your home might be burnt down by armed militants with no security forces coming to rescue you - in areas of Nigeria, for example.

You may have to flee for your life and be forced to live in a refugee camp.

⋯In some countries, deciding to become a Christian literally means putting your life on the line: there will be those, including your own family, who will want to see you dead. And they will be quite prepared to …
… They consider telling others about Jesus more important than their own lives. How do they do this? The answer is, by

prayer and fasting. Jesus did both: if we really mean business with God, so must we.

Lack of persecution and religious freedom has made us weak and ineffective in the West. Who knows what the future holds? Militant secularism, militant Islam, and militant atheism are all on the march - and the triumph of the West should not be taken for granted. We are called to put our trust in Christ and the certainty of His return to earth, but the Bible seems to indicate there will be times of severe testing for God's people before that day comes. Surely, we should be doing two things

1. Supporting our beloved persecuted brothers and sisters in any and every way we can.

2. Preparing ourselves for the strong possibility that one day we may well be in the same situation. We are challenged to be 'overcomers' (Revelation 2 & 3), people who are 'watching', doing God's will, and I think that would include preparing (for example, in Jesus's parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids).

You can learn more about the persecuted church by looking online at organisations such as:

Open Doors UK. Elam Ministries (about Iran). Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

They will also provide you with day-by-day Prayer Diaries and details of how to keep in touch and help with much-needed financial support

Open Doors every year publish a World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

We are asked to particularly pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters on Sunday November 1st which is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. *Bernard Sinclair*

When you don't get what you want

'GROW IN GRACE …' 2 Peter 3:18

Winning gracefully can be harder than losing gracefully: When we win we're tempted by arrogance, power, insensitivity, gloating, and wanting to relive our success long after everyone else is bored by it. Gracious winners always remember what it feels like to lose. They are caught up in something bigger than their own wins and losses.

Abraham Lincoln had the wisdom to place the good of the country above his own ego, appointing his worst political critic, Edwin Stanton, to run the War Department. Stanton, a brilliant legal mind, could be brusque and condescending. As Frederick Douglass put it 'Politeness was not one of his weaknesses.' Lincoln, on the other hand, was keenly aware of his looks and his uneducated background (when someone charged him with being two-faced during a campaign, he responded: 'If I had two faces, do you think I'd be wearing this one?'). As outgoing attorney general of the losing party, Stanton had belittled Lincoln as 'the original gorilla.' How Lincoln treated Stanton is Civil War history. Lincoln trusted in him, confided in him, leaned on him, depended on him and Stanton responded with unfailing loyalty and affection.

On the morning of April 14 1865, Abraham Lincoln died after having been shot the night before at Ford's Theatre. The most famous words ever spoken after the death of a president were spoken that morning: 'Now he belongs to the ages.' The speaker was Edwin Stanton. Robert Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln's son, said that after his father died, he was visited in his room each morning for two weeks by Stanton who 'spent the first ten minutes of his visits weeping without saying a word.'

When nothing else works, showing grace does!

*From the daily readings in 'The Word for Today'. This booklet of devotional readings is published every three months and is available free of charge through the generosity of supporters, from: UCB Operations Centre, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF. Tel: 0845 60 40 401. Email: **ucb@ucb.co.uk***

*UCB is short for United Christian Broadcasters, who also produce Christian radio and TV programmes available on DAB digital radio, TV and online. Details at **ucbmedia.co.uk***

