

NEWSLETTER

MAY & JUNE 2025



Pastoral Letter – Good News

I have lost count how many times, recently, I have been involved in conversations about the news - with a particular emphasis on the persistence of bad news and the many troubled places and desperate situations around the world. These things are very real and we cannot fail to be moved with compassion and must not ignore them or fail to pray and act in any way we can to bring hope and relief. The trouble is we so easily suffer from compassion fatigue and some folk I know are now avoiding watching the news because it is overwhelming – too much bad news and very little reason for hope. We are called to be hope bringers.

Yet we often look on with a sense of despair, feeling helpless in the face of disaster, war and heartless injustice and we wonder where God is in it all. We may pray our socks off, crying out for those we see and hear suffering such terrible situations. What is God up to? Why don't things seem to change. Easter reminds us that even through the most horrific of situations when darkness has seemingly won, God is at work and God is in control. Even when we

cannot perceive God at work, our faith reminds us that God is working. God is sovereign and, even though it may stretch our faith, almost to breaking point, we need to hold on to the fact that God is our only hope. God is the only hope.

When we look at the situation facing the church in the UK today the news doesn't seem very positive either. We may lose heart and feel that there is no future. With aging and dwindling congregations, fewer workers for the harvest, we may wonder just how much longer things can carry on. But God is not finished with us yet – the future may look different, the way we do church and the priorities we have may look different but there is life and future for the church including our little corners of God's vineyard as local congregations in the Ipswich and East Pastorate.

Here's some good news. In the past few days, the Bible Society have published a report entitled "The Quiet Revival" with the lead line, "Church decline in England and Wales has not only stopped, but the Church is growing, as Gen Z leads an exciting turnaround in church attendance." Church attendance has risen by 50 per cent over the last six years, busting the myth of church decline.

The findings come in a survey commissioned by Bible Society and conducted by YouGov. They show that the most dramatic church growth is among young adults, particularly young men. In 2018, just 4 per cent of 18–24-year-olds said that they attended church at least monthly. Today, the report reveals, this has risen to 16 per cent, with young men increasing from 4 per cent to 21 per cent, and young women from 3 to 12 per cent. I will aim to make the report available to all our churches and will try and get some print copies produced.

Friends, take heart! God is at work, at home and abroad. Behind the scenes perhaps, but God’s purposes will prevail and God’s promises are sure. Let’s hold fast to God, as we read in Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

Revd Adam Earle

Pastoral Matters – From Christine

I’m sure many of us felt such joy when it rained through the night recently after what felt like a long drought. Suddenly all the gardens were refreshed with growth continuing, a freshness in the colours coming through. Yellows of the different daffodils, the brilliance of the tulips. Now the clear blue of the forget-me-nots.

Maybe this is how God works in supporting and aiding us in our belief that life is better when we stand

together. Our collective prayers sound stronger and are heard more clearly.

It all says, spring is here. There is hope that our cohesive strength may be conveyed to all who struggle because of war, greed, and ill health.

If you able to come and sit in the church garden awhile. Peace and order will come to each and everyone of you.

We pray for all within our church family, whether we meet each week, less often, or are housebound. We remember you all.

May God’s enabling strength within us help us share each other’s burdens. Amen

Reminder

Please note that worship will resume in the Sanctuary on Sunday 4th May. This will be a joint communion service with our Methodist friends and be led by the Synod Moderator, Revd Lythan Nevard.

Worship Leaders

May 4 Rev. Lythan Nevard (H.C.)
(Synod Moderator)
11 Rev. David Rees
18 William Glasse with
Phil Speirs
25 Rev. Andrew Berry
Pamela Hewitt
June 1 Rev. J. Cook (H.C.)
Susan Matthews
8 Rev. Adam Earle
(Pentecost)

15 Allison Smith (Trinity Sunday)
with Pamela Hewitt

22 Rev. David Rees (C.M.)

29 Rev. David Rees

Church 125th Anniversary

N.B. On 29th June there will be **NO** morning service. We shall gather at **3pm** instead to celebrate 125th anniversary of the church opening its building for worship.

We shall be inviting other churches from the town and pastorate. If you know of anyone who might have previously been associated with the church, please extend an invitation. Tea will be served afterwards in the hall. To help with catering, it would be helpful if you would let Christine know that you are attending.

Thank you.

Our Shared History

The quote that follows comes from a book I was reading at the time entitled, "The Darkening Age: The Christian Destruction of the Classical World" by "Catherine Nixey".

It threw me back onto why it is so dangerous to ignore our history. Why it is so dangerous for Christians to deny the Old Testament, or as we prefer these days, the Hebrew Scriptures. The quote is this:

"Any attempt to write about ancient history is fraught with difficulty. Hilary Mantel once said that, 'history is not the past . . . It is what is left in the sieve when the centuries have run through it.'"

We cannot be quite so casually blasé about the Scriptures. By its very nature the Word of God will always

have something new to impart to us. They were quoted time and again by Jesus, and by Paul, as central and foundational. They have been the comfort and support of many in times of trial and difficulty. And inspiration for the future.

If we're honest they are part of the illumination for ourselves each week, helping us understand the message of Jesus. Many commentators have written thousands of words about the Hebrew Scriptures, from both Jewish and Christian perspectives. And, yes, those perspectives are different. They make for extremely interesting Bible Studies when conducted for us by a Rabbi, for instance.

It made me think about family history, even the history of Felixstowe United Reformed Church, conflated as we know it is. [*Hopefully June 29th will help unravel some of the mystery*] Does anyone now really know the full details? Have they been lost to time? Are we trading on assumptions rather than facts? It is being proposed to hold the church anniversary celebrations this year, 29th June, with an eye to making our history known more widely. I wonder what information you have of which we're not yet aware?

What is left in our minds? Is it like our childhoods .. all the summers were bright, sunny, and warm? Was the history here always smooth, friendly, convivial, melding two congregations easily together? How real are we about our conditions or the context of the Gospels, the Hebrew Scriptures, even Paul's

letters? History is important. We all want to know where we came from. It helps in projecting the future, to see where we're going. So, you may wish to ask, Where is this church going for the future? We have a MAP but it's only a guide, open to changes and new suggestions. What has been lost, overlooked, and needs to be recovered? To what bold new places can go? *jac*

Diary for May / June 2025

May

- 2nd 18:30 CtF post Lent study meal (pls ask Brian for details)
- 3rd Prom Praise Wonder - from the Albert Hall
- 10th 10am Coffee morning Trinity for Christian Aid
- 12th 14:30 Monday Club – Members afternoon
- 17th 10am Coffee morning St John for Christian Aid
- 27th 10:30 Reflections

June

- 4th 14:00 Elders' Meeting
- 9th 12:00 (for 12:15) Monday Club lunch at the Dooley.
- 10th 10:30 Reflections
- 14th 14:00 Pastorate Elders' Meeting at Felixstowe
- 21st Synod Little Day Out at Dovercourt, 11am to 4.30pm
- 24th 10:30 Reflections
- 30th 10:00 Ips & East Advisory Meeting via zoom

Monthly Charity Collections.

My profound thanks for your additional donations of £50 to The Leprosy Mission, which brings the church's donations to this charity up

to £115 so far this year. At a time when there are so many additional challenges for people living with leprosy, every penny helps to improve their lives. Bless you. £50 was sent to Commitment for Life, Bangladesh at the end of March. There is a certificate on the notice board to this effect, along with Spring update on the situation in Bangladesh. Please feel free to take the newsletter off the board to read but replace afterwards for others to look through. Thank you.

At the AGM on 15th April the decision was taken to close the deposit account which the church holds with Shared Interest. There was only £103 in the account. The Meeting voted to donate this money to Christian Aid's Emergency Appeal for Myanmar, following the devastating earthquake which has left many in a precarious position. If you would like to add to this fund via the church, then please let Ann or Christine have your contribution or place in the designated envelopes at church. Thank you. Can we double the amount sent?

Charity collections for May and June will be for:

May - Christian Aid

June - QVSR Seafarers

Chrisitan Aid Week – 11th–17th May.

In this 80th year since the charity began, Christian Aid hopes to raise money to help farmers facing the effects of climate change to adapt their practices.

£125 could pay for someone to attend specialist agricultural training that leads them to transform their family's diet and income.

£450 could buy the solar dehydrator that means farmers can dry foods that sustain their family through lean periods.

Daily devotional material, entitled 'Abounding hope' and envelopes will be in church from 11th May for your donations.

**Not thought for the day -
Thought for the two months, or,
After The AGM.**

At a recent Church meeting Rev David used some words Moses spoke to Israel on the cusp of the Promised Land. And from comments he made thereafter I maybe treading on his toes somewhat.

The words are the "famous", perhaps well-known, much loved, much used, quote of "choose life". They could have been spoken in many ways; we have no way of knowing. We, of course, impute the best of motives.

True he could have been the benevolent old man imparting his wisdom to the people of God. He could, on the other hand, have been the grumpy old man venting his spleen on a recalcitrant people. He could have been the patient minister trying to explain to a dull people how the future might pan out.

What we know is that they eventually ignored him, and worse, God. The result was exile. Because God keeps his promises! Those promises included our rescue, our

salvation. We believe that came through Jesus, his death on the cross and eventual resurrection, as Adam has said. In June we celebrate the culmination of those promises with Pentecost – the giving of the Holy Spirit - and Trinity Sunday – the hard~worked~out, by ancient people known as The Church Fathers - and their understanding, now ours, of who God is. It is we who must now decide what we believe and, importantly, how we respond. It is partly why we come to church each week, to learn more about God, as well as offering our worship.

The shared theme between the two events – the long-ago Moses and the upcoming festivals in June – is positivity, and the future. There is a lot to be positive about, even quietly confident. The sceptic may well see alternative points of view. The pragmatist will see the pitfalls. Some will bury their heads and hope for the best. Again, a shared response is how we respond. You choose. Above all don't leave it to someone else.

jac

From the Editor:

*All items for the July / Aug edition to be with John C by **Sunday 15th June, please, otherwise I'll be on holiday.***