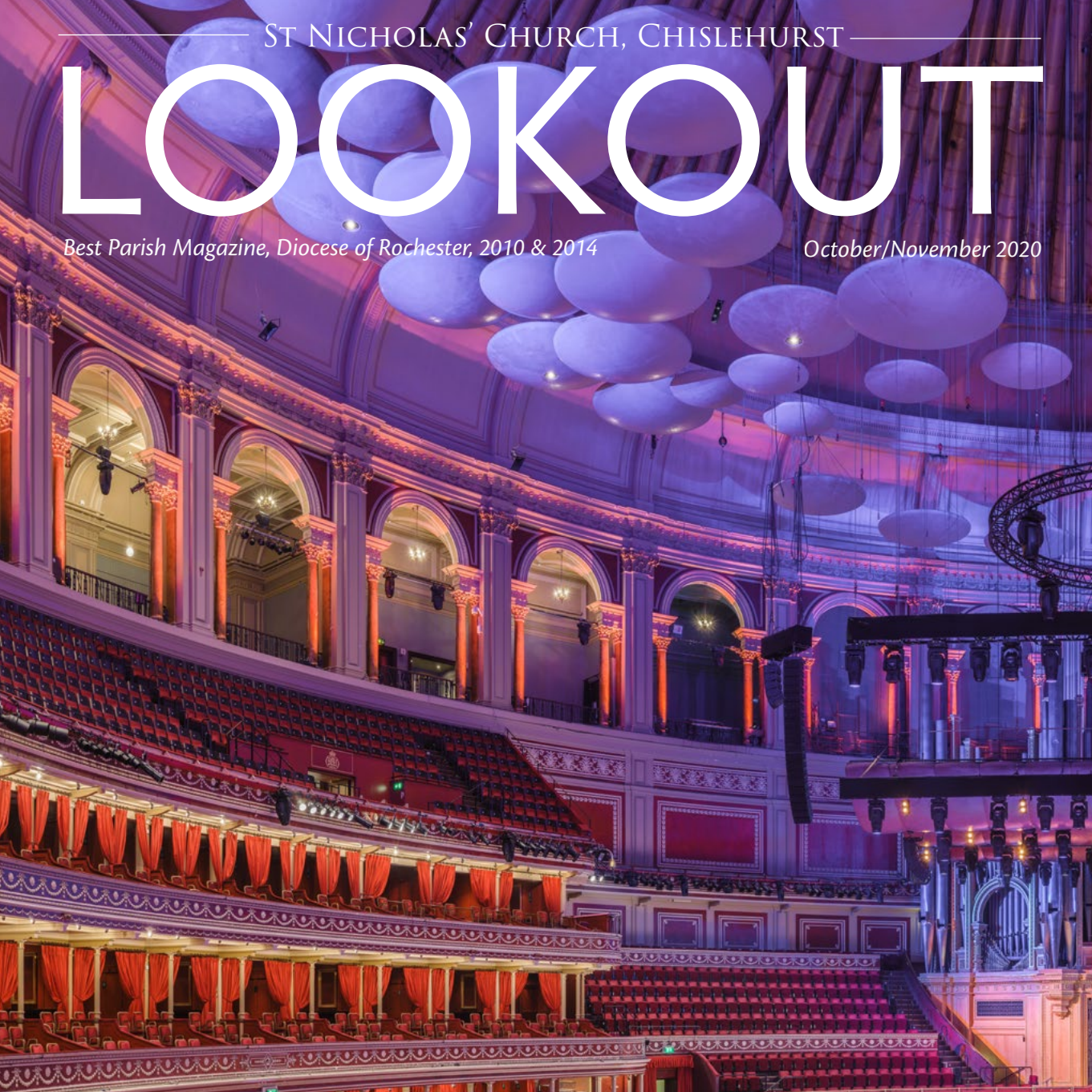


ST NICHOLAS' CHURCH, CHISLEHURST

LOOKOUT

Best Parish Magazine, Diocese of Rochester, 2010 & 2014

October/November 2020



LOOKOUT

WELCOME to the October/November *Lookout*. Two months ago, it seemed that life was beginning to return to some sort of normality with the church open again on a restricted basis and non-food shops and the hospitality sector trying to encourage people through their doors. However, what we hoped for didn't happen and the re-opening of venues such as sports stadia, etc was delayed as Coronavirus started spreading through the country again. What was not delayed was the re-opening of schools. I am delighted therefore to include in this edition of *Lookout* [articles about the re-opening of St Nicholas Primary School](#) from the perspective of the Head teacher and staff, parents and pupils. My thanks to all of the contributors, especially Ivy Lardner, aged 8 and her brother Max aged 13.

The live streaming of Rev'd Rachel Archer's ordination was a joy to watch. Rev'd Rachel's son, Noah, gave a confident, clear reading and Bishop Simon Burton-Jones' talk to those being priested was inspiring.

[In her Reflections this month, Rev'd June Hurn reminds us of the Beatitudes and Jesus' challenge to us all to be saints.](#) All Saints Day is on Sunday 1st November. To continue the theme of 'saints', Dr Alison Drew has written about [two interesting Saints](#) whose feast days are in October and November.

It is some time since we had news from Ruth Radley so I am especially pleased to bring your attention to the [extracts from her latest newsletter](#). We congratulate Ruth and the multi-faith chaplaincy team at Birmingham Children's Hospital on their work and send Ruth our love and condolences on the sad passing of her father.

Did you manage to listen to any of the Proms on the radio or catch any of those on TV? If you did, I'm sure you will agree what a marvellous job the BBC did in producing such wonderful socially distanced events. Keith Baldwin was privileged to be a part of the team that worked in the Royal Albert Hall (pictured on this month's cover) for the two weeks of the Proms and kindly [tells us all about his once in a lifetime experience of watching the concerts in the Hall](#) with only himself as an audience!

Most Charities have suffered this year as a result of the pandemic, so it's good to hear from two of them, who have weathered the storm and continued to provide support and help where needed. As you read the [article from St Christopher's Hospice](#) and [the one from Children in Distress](#) (who are supported by St Nicholas Church), I think you will conclude that their continuing success is due, in the main, to the unflinching love, sacrifice and hard work of the people who work for them.

Finally, as I said in the last edition of *Lookout*, I hope to retire from the post of editor at the end of this year. To date, no one has volunteered to take over. The job is much easier now that we are producing digital copies so please do consider if you, either alone or with others, could take over.

MARGARET DREW
EDITOR

REFLECTIONS

ALL SAINTS

Matthew 5 v. 1-12

We are all called to be saints! In the familiar words of the Beatitudes, Jesus shows us the character of saintliness. Jesus suggests a contrast, a way of thinking differently from the way the world thinks, Jesus challenges us to be holy, to be saints.



Character - Contrast - Challenge

In the Beatitudes, Jesus is speaking of the kind of people who receive God's blessing, The poor in spirit. They know their need of God and they rely on Him. Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (now). Ours is too, when we are aware of the need of God. Those who mourn. Not just those who are sad and grieving for the loss of someone they loved, but much more. Those who are distressed by the evil in the world, who see the realities of life. They will be comforted. The meek. Those of gentle spirit who are ready to yield to God, and sometimes to others. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. They work for good in the world. The merciful give service and show a forgiving spirit. The pure in heart. The heart must be clean in God's sight, not just in outward appearances. The peacemakers. They are truly the children of God as they strive to bring people together. And finally, those who suffer for just causes. This is what saintliness is all about – and it is a big order!

This kind of character is in sharp contrast to what was seen in Jesus' day, and in the world we live in today. Our world does not bless the spiritually poor, it praises the proud and self-sufficient. It is not sad for sin. It has little use for gentle spirits but glorifies the strong and glamorous, hungers for wealth and success, fame and pleasure, not for righteousness. Our world must be tough, not merciful. Purity of heart is not so important as keeping up appearances. Peace-making is so difficult in our world, where people are so determined to hate, persecute and kill each other.

Jesus promised that we would rejoice and be glad, but also, we would be living at odds with the world. In the Beatitudes, Jesus shows us the character of Saintliness. He shows us the contrast between saintly lives and the world we live in. And, he challenges us, - it is an enormous challenge – to be saints, as many of God's family are now and through the ages have been. The question is – can we accept his challenge?

REV'D JUNE HURN

All Saints Day is on Sunday 1st November 2020

ORDINATION OF RACHEL ARCHER

Having completed one year as Curate at St Mark's Church, Biggin Hill, Rachel was priested on 26 September at St George's Church, Beckenham by Bishop Simon Burton-Jones. A total of 10 curates were priested across the Diocese in different churches. Because of Covid, only three curates were priested at Beckenham and size of the congregation was severely restricted.

Speaking at the ordinations of those being priested at St George's, Beckenham, Bishop Simon Burton-Jones said:

"Though your ordination as priests will always be linked to the virus, do not be defined by it. As priests, you are viral with the Holy Spirit. The office you are assuming has status, though we should not become self-regarding, because it exists to give clarity and focus to your influence."

Rachel is now serving as the Curate to the two Parishes of Cudham and Downe under the Vicar, the Rev'd John Musson.



▲ Rachel with Rev'd John Musson, Vicar of St Peter & St Paul's Cudham and St Mary's Downe



BACK TO SCHOOL

Between them, the staff at St Nicks have amassed years and years of teaching experience, and with this, well-stocked toolboxes to deal with any scenario or eventuality that may come their way. Until a global pandemic emerges and suddenly one finds oneself in uncharted territory, with little more to rely upon, than government guidance...

In the depths of lockdown, five key things ensured that the children continued learning: Communication, Consistency, Technology, Empathy and Understanding for the differing situations that individual households found themselves in (for it's true: although we are all weathering the same storm, we are all in different boats). Of course, there were things that staff and children alike missed hugely. For Headteacher, Sophie Sear, it was the lack of 3D people and the joy that could be found in real conversation. 'Education is all about gauging feeling and understanding through interaction', Sophie tells me, 'so when that part of humanity is missing, and you're managing a school remotely, it's like having an out of body experience.' For the children, it was their daily connections with their teachers and friends and their well-established routines that they missed the most.

Whilst widely welcomed, the phased return to school in June for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children presented its challenges: The need to be absolutely 100% compliant, not just with the guidelines set out by Aquinas, but with government guidelines which, during the very limited time for rigorous planning, had not even been published. Then there was the social distancing. Of course, we all know that children don't social distance, but when children are essentially one big family, as they are at St Nicks, there is something very alien about expectations to maintain a two-metre distance from each other. There is also something very strange about needing to strip back resources, provisions and curriculum enrichments that have been months, sometimes years in the making, just to ensure Covid-secure classrooms.

Suddenly, so many things were no longer possible. No hot lunches in the school hall.

No Church on a Thursday morning. No visitors. No singing. No sharing and no Show and Tell. 'It just doesn't feel right', Sophie explains. 'These things make up the ethos of our school'. And yet, these restrictions would not define the Class of 2020. For every constraint imposed upon them, Sophie and her staff discovered new things that were possible, magically achieving the conventional, through the unconventional: Using TAs to teach bubbles of children who had become classes in their own entities, extending the school day past 3.20pm to allow Year 5 time in school with their teachers, using the pit as an outdoor stage to enable the Year 6 children to film their traditional end-of-year show for their families and bringing France to St Nicks since St Nicks could not go to France! The barriers are just our starting points', explains Sophie. 'It's amazing where creativity and problem solving can take you from there.'

With the return of the full school in September, the government slogans of, 'Hands, Face, Space' and words such as 'touch points', 'sanitise' and 'isolation' are used as frequently in school as they are in our wider community. There are a few others that have been added to the mix, the 'Covid Cave' being a favourite of mine: the PTA store cupboard where anything requiring quarantine can be safely deposited for 72 hours. 'Yet, there is one word that is used above any other', Sophie says, 'and that is wellbeing. This has always been omnipresent whilst teaching and learning has been our priority, but in these testing times, wellbeing has to come first.'

It is the reason Sophie set up the St Nicks You Tube Channel, to strengthen connections between all members of the school community, and the reason she has extended the Listening Ear provision, to enable children to talk about their worries and experiences. Ultimately, this is the St Nicks difference: In a wonderful Christian environment, supporting and nurturing so everyone knows that in good times and bad, at school or at home, we will weather this storm together and rejoice in God, our Father, for every rainbow we see along the way.

KATRINA PAULING

Chair of the Chislehurst ACC

Katrina Pauling is a member of St Nicholas Church and also a Governor at St Nicholas school, or as they are now called, an AAC member. Katrina, in collaboration with the Head Teacher, Mrs Sophie Sears reports on how the school managed during the lockdown and is coping with the return to full school in September.



THE RESILIENCE OF YOUTH

David Sharpe is also a member of St Nicolas Church and a parent AAC member of St Nicholas school. David looks at 'going back to school' from the aspect of a parent whose children returned to the school in September

It was with some trepidation that we sent our son and daughter back to school in September after nearly six months away from the education system. As a parent, you worry almost constantly about the safety and well-being of your children, the pressures and challenges they face daily and ensuring that they have the best opportunities available to them.

So, in a year when the world has been turned upside down, how do parents and children cope with trying to get back to normal in the age of COVID? My son and daughter both packed their school bags and went back into full time education on 3rd September. The night before they both seemed nervous, and we were too. How would their friendships be? Would their learning have been affected? Will they be behind? We asked ourselves all of these questions. There was a new way of going into school also, to minimise contact and help social distancing. All of these things added to the feeling that this new experience was going to be difficult.

We needn't have worried. The school has put all the necessary measures in place to ensure their safety, but without taking away the very essence of school, the companionship with others. The thing that really struck me, was how resilient all of the young people were those first few days. They instantly settled back into friendships, were excited to see the teachers, and loved the organised chaos of the school day. The excellent teachers and support staff at the school had ensured that the children would be kept safe and their well-being was a top priority. As a parent you put your trust in your child's school, and St Nicks has been excellent at delivering a safe environment for the children to learn.

If there is one thing that COVID has highlighted to me it is the capacity for people to work together for the benefit of all. The school worked with the parents, and worked with the children to provide a safe and nurturing environment for them to learn in, and to not make everything about this dreadful virus that has affected us all. Most impressive though was the spirit and enthusiasm of the children. Despite all of the pressures they must have faced this past six months, they showed that even something as serious as coronavirus can't dampen the joy and passion for life that they all have.

The entire school team, headed by Mrs Sears, have helped to show us that we can get through this, and we will do it with positivity and pride, not fear.

DAVID SHARPE

IMAGES: David and Michelle Sharpe with their son Harrison, right Ava Sharpe

BACK TO SCHOOL

The third article in the Back to School feature gives the perspective of two of the children who returned to school in September. Ivy Lardner (age 8) is the younger sister of Max Lardner (13) who in the previous edition of Lookout wrote about being home-schooled by their mum. This time, Max, joined by sister Ivy, tell us about what going back to school was like for them.

I am really happy to be back at school after the lockdown. The day seems much longer though and the work is lots harder in year 4. We are in bubbles but it's really no different because I just play with people in my class anyway. What I miss about being at home is my mum and dad and my brothers – and sleeping more. Luckily, we don't have to wear masks, except for one of my friends that has asthma. I can't think of anything that's changed except I'm not allowed to hug people and we have to keep washing our hands all the time, which is really annoying. I'm glad when I can get home and relax.

IVY, AGE 8

I was a bit nervous about going back to school to be honest. I did want to see my friends but I didn't want to wear a face mask or do social distancing. There is no hugging or high-fiving anymore and no morning briefings or assemblies.

I still have the same form tutor and the same children in my bubble but there are lots of changes. For starters, the teachers move around and come to us instead of us going to different classrooms for each lesson. Nearly all of the lessons are double lessons which is exhausting.

There is a one-way system which is confusing. At lunchtime we have to wait outside until we're called in to eat. Only two people are allowed to sit at each table. We used to go straight into lunch which was better. You have to wash your hands before you eat now.

We are not allowed to do actual cooking in Food Tech anymore. We just do the theory and learn about how food is made - nowhere near as much fun!

I try to be 100% positive and ready for action. I've got used to the changes and most days are good.

MAX, 13

CEDD AND MARTIN DE PORRES

26 October - Cedd, Abbot of Lastingham, Bishop of the East Saxons, 664

Saint Cedd was born into an Anglo Saxon family in the kingdom of Northumbria, but his spiritual heritage was Scottish and Irish. In AD 563 St Columba set out from Ireland and settled on Iona, off the coast of Scotland. Here he founded his monastery, where St Aidan was trained. Aidan and his companions set out for Northumbria in 635 and founded a monastery on the island of Lindisfarne, bringing with them Celtic practices that were quite distinct from those of Rome. These practices included church organisation based on monasteries, and a strong emphasis on personal asceticism and Biblical exegesis. At Aidan's monastery school on Lindisfarne Anglo Saxon boys, including Cedd and his three brothers, were trained to become priests and missionaries.

Cedd's first mission was to Mercia (now the Midlands). He was so successful that the King of the East Saxons (Essex) requested a similar mission, so in AD 653 Cedd sailed down the east coast of England from Lindisfarne to Bradwell in Essex, where the ruins of a Roman fort provided foundations and building materials for his monastery. Initially he probably built a wooden church, but within a few years it was replaced by the church we can visit today. The Chapel of St Peter-on-the-Wall is one of the oldest mostly intact churches in England and it is still in regular use. In 658 Cedd was persuaded to build another monastery in Lastingham, Yorkshire, where he remained abbot until his death while still maintaining oversight of his community in Essex. Three stones are embedded in the front of the altar in St Peter's Chapel, Bradwell: the stone on the left is from Lindisfarne, the stone on the right is from Lastingham, and the centre stone is a gift from Iona.

In AD 664 Cedd played a leading role as interpreter at the great Synod of Whitby, held by the Christian Church of the kingdom of Northumbria to decide whether the church should follow Roman or Celtic practices. A major issue was a difference as to how to calculate the date of Easter. Cedd was on the side of Colman of Lindisfarne, but he was trusted by both sides and knew both Latin and Irish. In his *History of the English Church and People*, the Venerable Bede compares Cedd's role to that of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, enabling different people from various backgrounds to understand St Peter, in spite of their different languages. The decision went against those advocating Celtic practice and many Celtic spiritual leaders departed to Scotland or Ireland. Cedd stayed in Yorkshire and died of the plague later that year in Lastingham, no doubt still in grief about the outcome of Whitby.

If you visit Cedd's Chapel at Bradwell-on-Sea today you can still experience the peace of the remote location by the North Sea, as it is about a 15 minute walk from the small car park along a track across farmland to reach the chapel. You will be treading in the footsteps of thousands of pilgrims who have been inspired by Cedd and the insights of Celtic spirituality.

3 November - Martin de Porres, Friar, 1639

Saint Martin de Porres is the patron saint of African Americans, Race Relations, Social Justice, Barbers and Hairdressers. He was born in 1579, the son of a freed slave from Panama and a Spanish nobleman of Lima, Peru. As a child he experienced prejudice and discrimination on account of being mixed race and he endured a challenging family situation. His parents never married and his father abandoned the family when Martin was young, leaving his mother to raise Martin and his sister in poverty in Lima. When he was 12 he began to make a living by becoming an apprentice to a barber-surgeon, learning how to cut hair and carry out medical treatments.



After a few years as a barber, Martin applied to the Dominicans to be a 'lay helper', which was lower in status than a religious brother, as the law in Peru at that time did not allow people who were black or mixed race to enter religious life. However his exceptional compassion and miraculous cures had such an impact that nine years later he was invited to make full religious profession. He took care of all people regardless of their race or social status and raised large sums of money for dowries for poor girls so they could marry or enter a convent. Martin was also known for his extraordinary rapport with animals and in icons he is often depicted with a cat, dog and mouse eating from the same bowl.

Martin de Porres was a good friend and supporter of another Dominican saint, St Rose of Lima, who was the first saint from the Americas to be canonised.

Dr Alison Drew

PRAYER FOCUS

HEAD, HAND, HEART

This neat alliteration encapsulates three attributes in people that society needs. Skills of leadership, the ability to think through problems and initiate new ideas. The work ethic that gets things done, producing the building from the blue print a love that puts others first, helping them progress and supporting them in need

In the church we have all these skills and more; but are they all being used?

St Paul compares the church to the human body, which is made up of many parts, calling us the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12: 12-31). So, everyone has a part to play, however large or small. We are dependent on each other. We are called to pray for each other And in these current times as we experience the COVID pandemic affecting all our lives, we must pray specifically for people high and low naming before God.

Community prayers

Father, we pray for our community, that all may comply with Government guidelines to restrict the spread of Covid19. We long for an end to the restrictions, but recognise that this is very much within our collective control. Amen

Father, we thank you for the doctors and scientists working across the world to develop a vaccine against the virus, for regulators who will test the safety and efficacy of their work; and we pray that when available, the vaccines will be delivered proportionately and fairly going first to the most vulnerable, Amen

Father, we thank you for our dedicated staff in hospitals, pharmacies, surgeries and care homes working at personal risk and continued discomfort, to save lives; may they be recognised, respected and rewarded, Amen

Father, we pray for school administrators, teachers and of course the children that they may be safe from the virus because they are faithful in obeying local rules. We pray that the disruption of their education, may not permanently harm the prospects of our young people, Amen

Father, we realise that the adverse financial impact of the virus on the economy is already immense; it will take many years for us to recover from it. So, we pray that the leaders of the nation, the politicians and their advisers would work collectively as in wartime, listening to each other and seeking the best solutions to the nation's difficulties.

Father, we pray for all who work in those areas of society most at risk in a down turn: music, theatre sports, hospitality and small businesses; may those of us not so badly affected, be prepared to share their burden through higher taxes.

Personal Prayer

Father, I thank you that I am not alone. Help me to see you at work in the good deeds of others; help me to see you in the needs of others; show me what you want me to do for them, Amen

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

It has been nine weeks since the UK came out of lockdown and day to day life as we'd previously known it pre-Covid, returned to some sort of normality. However, those who were shielding still had a month to go before they could resume normal activities.

By mid-August the trains and buses got busier than before and supermarket queues had ceased. Everyone assumed the virus had gone but the question on people's lips was when will it return? As we have seen in recent weeks there have been local lockdowns but no second national one -yet.

I have just returned from Wales where many counties apart from my families, thank the Lord (genuinely), are on local lockdowns. It was an emotional visit, as I'd not seen my family since before Covid began. This was made all the more difficult because, my Mum is terminally ill and has been on the church prayer list. Sadly, she was much sicker than when I'd seen her last, but we had a wonderful time. Lots of laughs and tears combined!

Covid -19 has certainly got me thinking about friends and family and the importance of human connection. Also, that nature and the natural world are important too. For many, including myself, walking and running has revived interest in the world around them.

Perhaps the most important commandment to come out of this pandemic is 'Love thy neighbour'. Perhaps we have all appreciated each other just a little bit more. I hope so.

MICHAELA DAVIES

RUTH RADLEY

Ruth works for CMS (Church Mission Society) in a multi-faith chaplaincy team at Birmingham Children's Hospital (BCH) providing spiritual care and support to children and families. Many readers will remember that Ruth worked as a CMS mission partner for many years in South Sudan. Ruth is on the St Nicholas prayer list and has been for many years. The following extracts are from her September 2020 link letter.

Hello to you all in this strange season we find ourselves in. I hope you are all keeping safe and well.

The chapel and prayer room at BCH were closed back in March, a sad situation as they are both such a haven for many people both with and without faith. We carried out risk assessments and both the chapel and prayer were reopened in September with limited hours initially but are now open 24/7 with restricted numbers.



Life in the hospital feels very different now. Being a children's hospital, visiting hours used to be all day. However, currently the patients are allowed only two designated visitors – one at a time, and at the height of the pandemic, this was reduced to one. Of course, this puts extra strain on our families as well as staff, and especially the longer-term families or those who have come in under very traumatic circumstances. Many follow-up appointments and clinics have been happening virtually and scheduled non-urgent operations were postponed, all meaning a lot less footfall around a normally very busy hospital.

As with many hospitals, all volunteers have been asked to stop coming in for the time being. This has dramatically changed the dynamics of the team, and we really miss the contributions our volunteers make. Our Mothers' Union volunteers have continued to send out anniversary cards to our bereaved families, with one chaplain dropping off resources to the relevant people. We have been so glad to have been able to continue to do this.

We have continued with our 24/7 chaplaincy service, although the number of chaplains in the hospital each day has remained lower than usual. At the height of the pandemic, it was just one of us each day, though others remained on call in case it was a different faith to the chaplain who was in and more religious care rather than pastoral or spiritual was required.

As part of keeping staff as safe as possible, we have been fit tested to ensure if we were ever in a COVID-19 situation we would be as safe as possible and know where our vulnerabilities lie. The test itself is quite unique! A hood is put over your head and a 4% special solution is sprayed through a small hole until you can taste it. Then an FFP3 mask is put on and the hood is placed back over, while a 100% solution is sprayed in. It becomes quite a workout as you move your head from side to side and bend over at a 90-degree angle! I am pleased to say that I passed it all!

Of course, our regular calendar has also been disrupted. For many of our bereaved parents, this has been really difficult as we have been unable to hold our annual memorial service. Our hospital videographer worked with us to produce an online service which was available to all families, along with the opportunity to call chaplains at the end to talk if needed – we were very keen that we did not want to leave struggling people alone at such a time. As we continue in this situation, we are all doing our best to get creative in what we do and how we do it.

Sadly, a very difficult part of this time has been that my dad got sick in early March. Initially it wasn't thought that he had COVID-19, since his symptoms at the time were not typical. Eventually he was admitted to hospital, diagnosed and we were informed that the staff did not think he would make it through the first night, he was so poorly. He did and fought on for nearly two weeks. The most amazing thing was that this hospital allowed visitors (only one at a time) for palliative care, that is, care to allow a dignified and as peaceful as possible death. I visited him late on the Tuesday evening in Holy Week, arriving at the hospital at 11.30pm after a call from a doctor earlier in the day. I am so glad I was able to go. I was able to spend some time with Dad, and, though he was exhausted, we were able to have some good conversations. He died in the early hours of Easter Day. I am aware that grief does take time and it will not feel real for a long time yet.

Love,
Ruth



THE PROMS 2020

KEITH BALDWIN AT THE PROMS

After working for some 10 years as a steward at the Royal Albert Hall I was asked to work for two weeks on the socially-distanced BBC Proms events, culminating in the famous Last Night of the Proms. Before I and a small group of my colleagues were able to work at the Hall, we were given extensive training on the new Covid precautions. The Hall had put in place temperature checking of every person who entered the outer doors and a rigorous hygiene system of sanitizing, masks, even to the point that each of the seven stewards were given their own sanitized radio, masks and keys. Additionally, our stewards' room had been radically changed so that we each had individual desks allocated to us.

My duties included welcoming all the artists including orchestra members at the doors, seeing each artist to an individual box and ensuring that they were familiar with the Covid regulations in the Hall.

It has been exciting, exhilarating as well as extremely unusual. I have welcomed twelve different orchestras, including Simon Rattle, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, the London Sinfonietta, the Philharmonia and the Aurora Orchestra to name but a few. When the artists were shown to their boxes, they were initially excited and then shocked that other musicians couldn't join them. Musicians were called to stage on the PA system in twos to take their seats on the stage which were a minimum of 2m apart.

For each concert, the stage and lighting were awe inspiring. My work has enabled me to speak to many of the musicians, including a violinist who allowed me to hold his bow and told me that the bow had been passed down to him through his family line and this was one of his treasures. During the day time, I was fortunate to sit inside the Hall on my own whilst the orchestras and soloists rehearsed. The BBC were adamant that no persons, apart from TV crew, should enter and I had the privilege of ensuring this. To realize that I was the only person sitting in the Hall listening to the intimate rehearsals, was really exciting and very interesting.

I have formed a real friendship with the BBC lead cameraman who has now generously given me individual instruction before the rehearsals of the operation of the wonderful BBC cameras, this has been a lifetime wish of mine now fulfilled.

Listening to the rehearsals, I noticed the importance of each note a composer has written and the responses from one instrument to another. The conductor aims to ensure an almost human dialogue between the instruments reflecting each with its own nuance's excitement, frustration and range of tone and the variation in intensity.

The abiding memory of this period at the Hall is that music is made and composed for others to listen to and enjoy. Imagine a comedian that tells amazingly funny jokes but there is nobody there to laugh, cry or comment. We know that the music of the Proms has been broadcast on Radio 3 and different TV channels. Music is about performing and people listening: about instant response, good or bad, mostly signified by applause. So, the two weeks were a wonderful experience, but music needs an audience. During previous years as a steward at the Hall I have met and talked to hundreds of people who suffer all types of illnesses, some almost unable to speak. Give them music, laughter, social interaction, and the tonic takes effect in seconds. A warm welcome and music gets them smiling, laughing and almost kicking their feet.

From these experiences my message to all, is communicate with your friends and neighbours. If you feel like singing to them, have a go. In these difficult times, we can all make a difference. So, after two wonderful, if not reflective weeks, think about how you can change the lives of others by providing social interaction and music.

KEITH BALDWIN



Ivy and Geraldine who care for people staying in the hospice, in their PPE

ST CHRISTOPHER'S HOSPICE

The summer of 2020 may not have been the one that we were expecting, but at St Christopher's Hospice we still had a lot to be thankful for. Despite everything going on, our wonderful supporters continued to keep us going, and found innovative new ways to fundraise, such as the online 'open gardens' event at Norland's' estate, Chislehurst! *

In addition, the appreciation shown to our staff and volunteers, and the practical support that we have received as a hospice this year, has been overwhelming. From simple messages of thanks, to donations of ready meals for staff, hand-stitched PPE gowns, donations of visors from local schools, deliveries of hand creams, gloves, tea, chocolate and more from individuals and companies... we have been so heartened by your response.

Meanwhile, at St Christopher's, from our buildings in Orpington and Sydenham, we continue to provide support for those who need it, despite challenging times. Around 1,200 local people are looked after by the hospice every day, mostly in their own homes. Our care teams, wearing PPE to keep everyone safe, look after patients and families on our wards and in the community. Wherever possible, teams use video consultations, to reduce the risk of infection by connecting with people online.

In addition, during the lockdown, the drivers from our charity shops (which necessarily were forced to close) teamed up with our quickly established Community Aid Team, to deliver hundreds of essential food packages and prescriptions for vulnerable people who needed to social distance and stay at home to keep safe.

Our teams also reacted quickly to move some of what we do onto the internet. Within days of lockdown we were providing learning online for colleagues in hospitals and care homes, as well as offering online wellbeing sessions for patients and the community on everything from mindful breathing to arts and exercise classes to gardening.

We know that this support and opportunity to connect meant a great deal to so many, especially those who were living alone and feeling isolated. Liz, whose mum, Betty, attended our online art class said, "Thank you so much for arranging the Zoom art meetings. I can see it's bringing my mum, Betty, great joy just talking to the group and the fact that everyone can chat and stay in touch is heart-warming."

St Christopher's is a charity, and of course, with so many fundraising events cancelled or postponed, and our 26 charity shops closed for several months, we have felt a big shortfall in our fundraising income since the outbreak of Covid-19. We expect this to continue into 2021, as planning large events is still not possible. You can continue to support the hospice by donating goods to our shops (including those in Petts Wood, Locksbottom and Orpington), fundraising, and volunteering. Please visit www.stchristophers.org.uk to find out more.

Of course, it looks like there will be many more challenging months ahead, and we are working closely with our colleagues in local care homes and the NHS, and adhering to all government

guidelines, to be sure that we are ready to meet those challenges and make sure that we are always there for the people of Chislehurst, Bromley and South London, wherever and whenever you need care and support.

Finally, after such a tumultuous year, we would like to invite you to join us on Sunday 6 December 2020 for a special, online remembrance event, just before Christmas.

The Remembering with St Christopher's event will be live, online, so wherever you are, we can all come together virtually to reflect on the year and remember people that we love who are no longer with us. This feels especially poignant after 2020's unprecedented events, and this service will be a moment for you to take a breath and remember our shared experiences.

This free online event is open to everyone, not just families who have been supported by St Christopher's. All are welcome, whatever your background or beliefs. Whether you lost someone unexpectedly to the Covid-19 virus, or you weren't able to attend the funeral of someone who was important to you, this event is an opportunity to mark the loss, as part of the community.

The event will be led by Andrew Goodhead, our Spiritual Care Lead, with contributions from special guests. It will broadcast live on our Facebook and YouTube channels at 4pm on Sunday 6 December. We can share information on exactly how to access these online platforms, if you'd find that helpful.

There will also be an opportunity to dedicate a light in memory of a loved one. This year, lights will be displayed all around the hospice gardens in Sydenham. To find out how to make a dedication, join the event and for updates nearer the time, visit www.stchristophers.org.uk/remembering to register your interest or telephone 0208 768 4679.

SUZY FISK

Communications and Marketing Lead

Due to the cancellation this year of the fund-raising Open Gardens Festival for St Christopher's Hospice, the members of NEISS (Norland's Estate Information and Support Service) who were due to open their gardens agreed that a video of the gardens should be made and used to raise funds for the Hospice. A NEISS member, David Purl, prepared the video of the gardens, circulated it to NEISS members who could share it with family, friends and members of the church. Through their generosity the staggering total of £1,345 was raised for the hospice, who sent a huge thank-you to everyone who contributed.

St Christopher's Candle of Remembrance



CHILDREN IN DISTRESS

The following is an address that Rev'd June wrote and recorded whilst in the church by herself. The recording will be used by Children in Distress during their online Thanksgiving Service later this month

St Nicholas Church has been a long time supporter of Children in Distress, ever since 1993 when I first went to Romania to help at St Lawrence's Children's Hospice in Cernavoda. Today we are giving thanks for the dedication of our supporters, staff and trustees and for their devotion to the children in our care, especially during the present pandemic. Staff at St Margaret's in Bucharest, isolated themselves in the hospice in order to stay safe for the children. The response to the Covid 19 appeal for help for the extra personal protective equipment was so very generous that there have been no infections in the Hospice.



The contrast between this time last year and today is huge. Last year we celebrated with two Thanksgiving services – one in the Romanian Orthodox Church in London and another in the Anglican Church in Bucharest. Today, I am alone here, but joined with all our supporters on the Internet. We are still giving thanks for the work of Children in Distress – a small charity which over the years has done a big job. It was the realization of a dream, that although we cannot save all the suffering children in our world, we can make a difference in the lives of one or two. To cure sometimes, to help often, to comfort always.

In our world today, where so many children are in distress through wars, starvation, neglect and displacement, our small charity focuses on a few, but these few represent so many.



We give thanks for the hundreds of people over the years who have been willing to give their time, their energy and their love, through volunteering in the hospices, filling shoeboxes, sponsoring a child or donating money. Every supporter, far and near, has done their bit for the children that we care for. Sometimes it may have seemed a drop in the ocean, but every single drop counts.

We give very special thanks for our CEO, Valentina Zaharia, for her incredible energy and total commitment to our children. And, behind her, our strong rock, Paul Kubasky, who has been steadfast and faithful from the beginning. We give thanks for all the Romanian staff who care for the children and for the many people in Romania, who are involved in the work of Copiii in Dificultate, with new initiatives focusing on the children. This is the way forward, which was always the aim of the charity. We look forward to the future, and we hope that we will continue to be able to give support to their work.

My final thanks go to one little Romanian boy, suffering with AIDS, who taught me a most important lesson many years ago. He asked me "Unde Isus?" (where is Jesus?) and not knowing much Romanian, I repeated, "Unde Isus?" (where is Jesus?). He replied, with a smile as he played with his toy, "Isus est aici!" (Jesus is here!).

Let us all remember as we give thanks today, that Jesus is here. St Luke tells us that Jesus put a child beside him and said to his disciples "Who ever receives a child in my name, receives me". In whatever we think or do or say, let us all give thanks that Jesus is here with us to the end of time.

REV'D JUNE

CHILDREN IN DISTRESS

The following letter to Peter Ridge was sent on behalf of Valentina Zaharia, CEO of Children in Distress to thank all those at St Nicholas Church who supported the Charity.

Dear Mr Ridge,

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over, but we were so touched by the support of all of you helping us to achieve amazing results until now.

I write this with heartfelt thanks for your special assistance in meeting the extraordinary costs to St Margaret's hospice because of COVID-19. Thanks to you, our generous and gracious supporters in the UK, a sum of over £36,000 was raised to meet these immediate and extraordinary costs. Your generosity has helped us meet the urgent expenses and continues to help us with on-going expenses for protective equipment, sanitizers and on-going testing of children and staff.

Our costs rose dramatically last spring, three times our normal, because of COVID, resulting from the need to purchase protective clothing, sanitary stations and equipment, and tests of children and staff for the virus. The most expensive cost last spring was complying with the Romanian government mandate of two-week nursing and care-giver placements in our hospices, without permission of the staff to leave the premises. This required us to purchase on an emergency basis 12 beds for the quarantined staff, as well as provision of food to cover their 14-days in quarantine. At the same time, CID was required to self-quarantine the other half of the nurse and care staff at home, with full salary and benefits. On a 14-day rotation, the staff who worked at the hospices were released to go home, into self-quarantine, with full salary and benefits, while those who had been quarantined at home were required to enter two weeks in quarantine at the hospices.

The fight against COVID-19 is not finished. We continue to test and use all the protective equipment and other protocols to keep our children and staff safe. Up to the beginning of September the results of the PCR tests showed negative results for both children and staff.

During this period, we did not receive any assistance from the authorities. Practically we had to fight alone the COVID-19 pandemic. We could not have done this, with a zero-infection rate until now, without you!!

Thank you and best wishes for your safety and well-being,

Valentina Zaharia

CEO CID UK and Romania

RIDE AND STRIDE - 2020

I'm afraid that I only managed to visit 17 out of my target 20 churches this year. This was due to two fatal, (almost) errors. The first was by turning left instead of right, thus leading me for almost an hour deep into the Kent countryside and on my way back towards Charing. The second was far more serious when I started out along the south bank of the River Stour, expecting from my reading of the map, to be able to cross to the north via the bridge and to make my way to 4 churches in Minster (Isle of Thanet) and thence on a reasonable track to my final destination of Sandwich and the train home by 1800hrs. When I got to the bridge, it was in fact not a public one; but a means of transferring coal to the north side. I was condemned to an ever increasingly bumpy ride along the bank, with a gate every 500 yards or so, where it was obvious no-one had been through for several years. Each crossing over the feeder streams would have best been facilitated by use of a billhook to cast aside the deadly barring brambles and then, just as it got dark a bridge appeared, not on the map; but again, locked and a commercial one. At its entrance were notices "Beware - HIGH TENSION CABLES" - "BEWARE - BULLS". Then later a notice I barely spotted of "Beware - Weil's Disease" - "Can cause severe symptoms sometimes leading to death".

Darkness wrapped me in its cloak, the bats seemed to be snapping at my ears and there was heavy breathing of the most unwelcome kind. To compound all this, the closer I got to Sandwich, the more use was there of kissing gates - very romantic in normal circumstances; but causing me to lift my bike into the vertical and juggle it round the swinging gate, in order to get through.

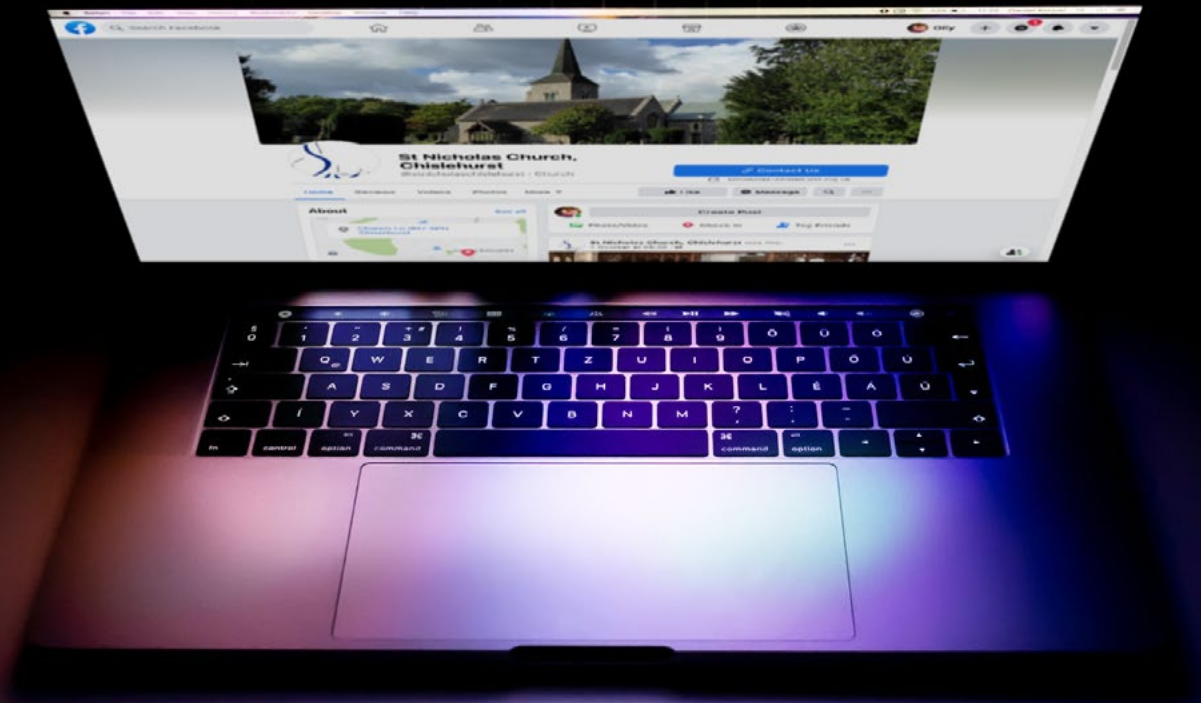
But I made it to Sandwich at 2045hrs, fortunately meeting 2 very kind people who called Jilly to say that I was safe - but I don't know about the 'sound' bit.

I had been encouraged both at the start where the roof, much bigger than ours, of St Gregory and St Martin in Wye was being re-tiled with the help of The Friends of Kent Churches' support and then at the last church before my epic bank-side ride, the redundant All Saints in West Stourmouth, with, standing beside it, the replacement, modern living church; built with the help of The Friends.

So, my friends, your sponsorship has been of certain effect in keeping these outlying churches going. (Of course, too, St Nicholas receives the immediate benefit of 50% of the sum I've raised). To date, the total stands at £1,062 including Gift Aid) and those who wish can still contribute to this wonderful, wonderful effort by going to virginmoneygiving.com/PeterAPPLEBY3

Come with me next year if you will and let's try to double this year's total. You can set a calm pace, stopping to take in the outstanding beauty and calm of England's finest village churches.

PETER APPLEBY



CHANGE IS NOT NECESSARILY ALL BAD

We live in strange and uncertain times. Like seeing the Archbishop of Canterbury taking the Easter Service in his kitchen and the Pope in a deserted Saint Peters and like many of you I have missed the opportunity of being able to go to church on Sunday mornings for several months because of the lockdown.

Although we can now go to church, I find the restrictions in place like having to wear face masks, booking a seat, no wine with the bread and no singing etc strange and not normal. I suppose to a certain extent because of this I have fallen out of the habit of going to church. I know there are many people in the church hierarchy who are worried that church attendance will fall or not return to previous levels when all the restrictions are lifted. There is a worry that people will have fallen out of the habit of going to church.

Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

We are all creatures of habit – we become used to doing particular things, often we do these things unconsciously. For example, standing aside at a door to let a stranger go through before us, using different greetings, types of questions and tones of voice when talking to different people. We adjust our words and body language depending upon who we are talking to – a close friend, a stranger, a work colleague or even the vicar. We change and adapt the way we speak according to who we are with because we have learned this is the socially appropriate thing to do and they become habits. We are creatures of habit and become used to doing these things often without thinking.

If we do these things by rote, they perhaps lose some of their power to change us. Maybe to change we need to sometimes break with our normal way of being or doing things. Maybe by not following our usual habits it makes it possible for us to develop different sides of ourselves. So maybe watching services online or in church in different circumstances may give us an opportunity to appreciate or develop a different side of ourselves and our religious practice.

So, although many people feel unhappy and disillusioned with the way the church has responded to this present crisis, maybe it is an opportunity for us as individuals to break out of our old habits and develop a new or different aspect to our faith which might be a good thing.

I am writing this whilst viewing the service online in the evening with a glass of wine. Cheers to the new normal.

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, CHISLEHURST

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