WELCOME to the April/May 2021 edition of Lookout in which Rev’d Jonathan’s reflections are upon Easter and moving on to the ‘new normal’ through the lenses of post-Easter faith, whilst Lynton Golds challenges us to cook a Simnel cake and Margaret Sawyer has provided an Easter poem.

Our prayers by Peter Ridge reflect on the pandemic as we hope and pray for all of those who have saved lives and who through the vaccines renew our hope for the future. We have previously looked at the effects of Covid-19 on front-line staff, parents and children and now, Giles Cordwell reminds us of another group of key workers – teachers who worked in schools and online throughout the whole of the pandemic.

The good news from the Church Army’s Marylebone Project, one of the Church’s chosen charities, is that they continued to support homeless women, many of them rough sleepers, throughout the pandemic, despite having to close their Day Centre. The staff were very creative and kept the women busy with activities and online training. They also devised fund-raising challenges and even involved the women who use the Day Centre in assisting with plans for its future refurbishment. When finished, the new Day Centre will provide a 24/7 service.

In 2019 the Mothers' Union (MU) linked up with the Clewer Initiative, the Church of England’s campaign against modern slavery. They recently reported that it has come to light that throughout the Covid-19 crisis in 2020, calls from victims of modern slavery reduced dramatically but that there is global concern that there will be a steep increase in the number of vulnerable in a post-Covid world.

The Feast Day of St Wulfstan is 19th January. This particular Saint came to our attention when Bishop James mentioned him during the licensing service of Rev’d Jonathan on the 19th January this year. Appropriately, St Wulfstan was a Benedictine who is said to have been an opponent of the slave trade and to be known for his pastoral care.

I hope that you’ve managed to get a break from looking at a screen whilst working at home and home-schooling and have found time to relax with a book. A good way of ensuring you really do keep up your reading is by belonging to a Book Club. You will be interested to read about the choice of books by the Church and NEISS book clubs and may even be tempted to read the books reviewed.

We were all shocked and saddened to read in the church Newsletter dated 24th January that three long-standing and loved members of the church family had died. Peter Rawlins, Colin Saxby and Felicity Williams had sadly all passed away. All three of them made outstanding contributions to the life of the Church and Lookout is privileged in being able to include Tributes to each of them in this edition of the magazine.

MARGARET DREW
REFLECTIONS AT EASTER

A MOVEABLE FEAST

_Easter is still a moveable feast – unlike Christmas which is fixed to the same date every year. This, however, may change in the future as the main Christian Churches (Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic Churches) have apparently agreed – in principle – to a fixed date for Easter. These things take a long time though!_ 

You may or may not know that the date for Easter is determined each year by the first Sunday that falls after the first full moon of the Spring (Vernal) Equinox (March 21st). Once you know the date of Easter, everything else has to fit around it - school terms, holiday dates, etc. I do hope you have a blessed Easter and that something of the promise of new life and renewed hope will be part of your Easter celebration this year.

_Easter is at the heart of our western calendars, and at the heart of Easter is the affirmation of life itself. Easter is not simply a call to give mental assent to the mind-blowing truth that God’s crucified, dead, and buried son was raised to new life.....no, Easter is to be found in the very nitty-gritty – the heart - of our everyday lives....in the way life speaks to life, in the affirmation that light is stronger than darkness, love is stronger than hate. This is the deep and lasting truth at the heart of Easter._

_The writer, Clarence W Hall is noted for these words: “You can put truth in the grave – but it won’t stay there”_

_Thank God it didn’t stay there! We are an Easter people! To be Easter people is to have hope and to remember. Remembrance is an important theme I want to explore with you..._
What a year
We have passed a significant marker – March 23rd 2021. That date marked a year since the first lockdown. So much happened during that year, and now beyond. There is much to reflect on and anticipate. For Christians, this reflecting is done best through the lenses of a post-Easter faith; it is a faith which takes seriously both the pain of the world, and the hope to which we are all called.

Good Friday reminds us of the painful sickness of the human heart. Despite our capacity for great good, the human heart is also the lodging place of much evil. The cross is a reminder of the countless places where human beings make other human beings suffer unspeakably - and of the fact that most of us, most of the time, don't notice, and even when we do, can't do anything to stop it or make things safe. The resurrection is a reminder, that despite all this, there can be hope in the power of light over darkness, love over hate, and life over death. Death will not have the last word on our lives. We need that truth now, perhaps more than ever.

As we move towards an approaching 'new normal' – whatever that will look like – we do well to reflect on the powerful terrain we have navigated not only as individuals but as communities, nations, and a world. That wilderness journey has felt long and arduous, and at times almost impossible to pass through. The wilderness has a powerful place in the Scriptures and I want to reflect on it a little with you.

A reflection on the Scriptures

Deuteronomy 4

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you....

See, just as the Lord my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!' For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.

This is Moses speaking to the God's people – they've come through the wilderness journey and they have arrived on the eastern side of the Jordan. They are preparing to enter the Promised Land – the land that God promised to them so many years before. But Moses has been told by God that he is not crossing over. He will die and not enter the Promised Land. You can imagine that Moses is giving these last words of instruction everything he's got, reminding them of where they've been, what they've experienced and advising them, "don't forget, don't forget". He is telling them they have to take these things into this new chapter, this new 'Promised Land' in their lives.

The Scripture I shared with you finished with the most critical verse: But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.
REFLECTIONS CONTINUED

Scholars reflecting on this passage break this passage down to its most crucial elements:

- Love God
- Learn the commandments
- Teach them to your children and your children’s children
- Beware of the power of prosperity – when all is going well – it can lead to complacency
- Don’t forget the difficult past, learn from your mistakes

There is much for us here, just over a year into the pandemic which has changed so much of life. Over that year we have seen and experienced much. And as more and more people are getting vaccinated (thanks be to God, thanks be to scientists and front-line workers who are administering those injections) we too stand at a place where we also will ‘cross over’ back into, not life as it was necessarily, but a new chapter in our lives together.

Moses gave the Israelites really good advice in telling them never to forget. We have seen the good, and the truly painful, we have seen things that, although they were in plain sight before, stared us harshly in the face during the pandemic. Things like socio-economic injustices, racial inequalities, how people have sought to take advantage of others – even at the most difficult and challenging of times. We have also seen how so many people have been heroic and selfless. It’s so important, as we begin to open up again, and to cross over into what will be a new reality for us, that we never forget.

We must remember what we saw, so that when we are out of this wilderness experience and we cross over into a new territory of hope and promise, we hold fast to the reality that we have been changed, for good. But there is still much work to do.
**Vaccines and volunteering**
As we make our way into new territories, we do well to ensure we encourage all to accept the vaccine – to protect ourselves, and others. Over 30,000 volunteers have been recruited to help with the administration of the vaccine at countless centres across the land. I am one of those volunteers, trained to administer the vaccine. Maybe I gave you yours! We owe a debt of thanks to so many frontline staff, key workers, the NHS and care agencies, and countless volunteers across many sectors. Our task is to play our part by participating and protecting ourselves and others. The journey is not over yet. Moses warned against complacency and forgetfulness. We do well to heed the warning, in this post-exilic time too.

**Double Love**
Maybe now is a good time to revisit the law of love that is at the heart of the Christian faith – the law that Moses first gave to the people direct from God. Read the Sermon on the Mount again, and take from it what Jesus would have us do and be to shape our lives; the most important of all the laws, he said, is the double-love commandment: love God and love your neighbour. It turns out that love is not heart-shaped; it’s cross-shaped.
Never forget.

With love,

JONATHAN+
The 19 January 2021 was a memorable occasion for St Nicholas Church. It was the day on which Rev'd Jonathan was licensed on Zoom to be the Priest in Charge. During the service Bishop James mentioned how appropriate it was that the date of the service coincided with that of the Feast Day of St Wulfstan, who was a Benedictine and was remembered for his pastoral care.

As mentioned in previous Lookouts, although the Church of England commemorates many of the same saints as those in the Roman Calendar, it has no mechanism for canonizing saints and makes no claims regarding the heavenly status of those commemorated in its Calendar of Saints in which the title ‘Saint’ isn’t even used.

St Wulfstan was born c.1008 at Long Hichington, Warwick and died on the 19 January 1095 which is his feast day. He was the Bishop of Worcester from 1062 and was the last surviving holder of the bishopric after the Norman conquest as well as being the only English born bishop after 1072.

His uncle after whom he was probably named, was Wulfstan 11, Archbishop of York. It was probably through his uncle's influence that he studied at monasteries in Evesham and Peterborough before becoming a clerk at Worcester. Wulfstan later joined the priesthood and was ordained in 1038, soon joining a monastery of Benedictines at Worcester. He was consecrated Bishop of Worcester in 1062, which at that time was in the diocese of Canterbury.

Wulfstan is remembered as a social reformer who worked to alleviate the suffering of the poor and he was a strong opponent of the slave trade recognised for being responsible for ending the trade from Bristol. He managed to get the 400 year-old trade of slaves between Bristol and Dublin banned in the 11th Century.

In addition to his pastoral care, Bishop Wulfstan was noted for the efficiency he displayed during the three decades in which he rebuilt his cathedral, cared for the poor and worked hard to alleviate the harsh decrees of the Normans upon the vanquished Saxons. He was canonized in 1203.

MARGARET DREW
THOUGHTS ON HOME SCHOOLING

A TEACHER’S PERSPECTIVE

In the last edition of Lookout, we heard from a parent, a grandparent and a child about how the ‘closure’ of schools has affected them, so I thought a teacher’s viewpoint might be of interest as well.

You will have noticed the inverted commas around the word ‘closure’ in the previous sentence; because, of course, schools are not closed. We remain open for children of key workers to attend, and also for vulnerable children, who may be at risk if they remain at home for extended periods. In my school, that equates to around 20% of children being able to come into school at some point of the week. I currently teach Year 4, and out of 47 children in the cohort, 12 have a place at school allocated to them. This means that the school has to be adequately staffed so that the children are safe, fed and receive proper support, while remaining in ‘bubbles’ to prevent excessive mixing of different year groups.

At the same time, of course, we have a legal responsibility to provide lessons to the children who are at home. Different schools are approaching this duty in different ways, but at my school we are providing live lessons via the internet and covering as much of the curriculum as is feasible. This includes daily maths and English lessons, and weekly science, computing, history or geography, music, art and PE lessons. These all have to be carefully planned, of course, to make them workable for children who are at home, who may not have access to the resources which are available in school. It is also important to make the lessons, as far as possible, manageable without having to give too much individual support, as this is virtually impossible remotely. We also try to ensure a reasonable amount of time can be spent by the children away from the computer, so independent tasks have to be adapted to allow for this.

At present, then, I am teaching approximately 20 children over the internet and 12 children in the classroom simultaneously, which can present a range of challenges. For example, I might be helping a child in the classroom when another child at home asks a question, not being able to see what is happening in school. I can therefore be charging around the room from child to computer and back again pretty much non-stop. I am also having to mark work and provide feedback remotely, so children are being asked to photograph and email their work to me so that I can respond to them. This takes far longer than it would if they were in class, when you can provide feedback as the children are doing their work.

I can honestly say that I am working harder during lockdown than I would be during more normal times. I would want my class to be in school anyway, but I am definitely looking forward to having them back in the classroom just as much as parents and grandparents are looking forward to them not being at home!

GILES CORDWELL
Simnel cake is a light fruitcake formerly eaten during the pre-Easter period in the United Kingdom, Ireland and some other countries. It has also become a traditional cake for Easter Sunday. It is distinguished by two layers of almond paste or marzipan, one in the middle and one on top. The top layer is capped by a circle of "eggs" made of the same paste, and is lightly browned under a grill.

Simnel cake was originally made for the fourth Sunday in Lent, also known as Laetare Sunday, the Refreshment Sunday of Lent, when the 40-day fast would be relaxed, Mothering Sunday, the Sunday of the Five Loaves, or Simnel Sunday – named after the cake. However, in more recent times it is also eaten throughout the pre-Easter period, and especially on Easter Sunday. While the popularity of simnel cake waned throughout the twentieth century, it has recently enjoyed a marked resurgence, which has been largely attributed to public endorsements by a number of prominent bakers, including Mary Berry. We all enjoy her cookery programmes, I am sure! I especially loved 'Celebrity Home Cook' and admired the creativity and talent demonstrated by all the celebrities. This month's article in Lookout is going to test your skills and suggest you bake a Simnel cake.

Simnel cakes have been known since at least medieval times. Bread regulations of the time suggest they were boiled and then baked, a technique which led to an invention myth, in circulation from at least 1745 until the 1930s, whereby a mythical couple, Simon and Nelly, fell out over making a Simnel. One wished to boil it, one to bake it and, after beating each other with various household implements, they compromised on one which used both cooking techniques!

Simnel cakes are often associated with Mothering Sunday, also known as Simnel-Sunday. According to historian Ronald Hutton, in 17th Century Gloucestershire and Worcestershire the custom of live-in apprentices and domestic servants going home to visit their mothers on Mothering Sunday started, checking that their families were well and taking food or money if needed. This was a time of year when food stocks were low, and the high-calorie simnel cake was useful nutrition. The cake later became simply an Easter cake.

The meaning of the word "simnel" is unclear: there is a 1226 reference to "bread made into a simnel", which is understood to mean the finest white bread, from the Latin simila meaning "fine flour" (from which 'semolina' also derives). John de Garlande felt that the word was equivalent to placenta cake, a cake that was intended to please.
A popular legend attributes the invention of the Simnel cake to Lambert Simnel; however, references to the cake were recorded some 200 years before his birth. Different towns had their own recipes and shapes for the Simnel cake. Bury, Devizes and Shrewsbury produced large numbers to their own recipes, but it is the Shrewsbury version that became the most popular and well known.

Conventionally 11, or occasionally 12, marzipan balls are used to decorate the cake, with a story that the balls represent the 12 apostles, minus Judas or Jesus and the twelve apostles.

Now, here is a recipe for Simnel cake – enjoy your Easter baking challenge!

**Preparation time - less than 30 mins**  
**Cooking time - over 2 hours**  
**Serves – 10**

### Ingredients
- 100g/3½oz glacé cherries
- 225g/8oz butter, softened, plus extra for greasing
- 225g/8oz light muscovado sugar
- 4 large free-range eggs
- 225g/8oz self-raising flour
- 225g/8oz sultanas
- 100g/3½oz currants
- 50g/2oz chopped candied peel
- 2 lemons, grated zest only
- 2 tsp ground mixed spice

### Method
Preheat the oven to 150C/130C Fan/Gas 2. Grease and line a 20cm/8in cake tin.

Cut the cherries into quarters, put in a sieve and rinse under running water. Drain well then dry thoroughly on kitchen paper.

Place the cherries in a bowl with the butter, sugar, eggs, self-raising flour, sultanas, currants, candied peel, lemon zest and mixed spice and beat well until thoroughly mixed. Pour half the mixture into the prepared tin.

Take one-third of the marzipan and roll it out to a circle the size of the tin and then place on top of the cake mixture. Spoon the remaining cake mixture on top and level the surface.

Bake in the preheated oven for about 2½ hours, or until well risen, evenly brown and firm to the touch. Cover with aluminium foil after 1 hour if the top is browning too quickly. Leave to cool in the tin for 10 minutes then turn out, peel off the paper and finish cooling on a wire rack.

When the cake is cool, brush the top with the apricot jam and roll out half the remaining marzipan to fit the top. Press firmly on the top and crimp the edges to decorate. Mark a criss-cross pattern on the marzipan with a sharp knife. Form the remaining marzipan into 11 balls.

Brush the marzipan with beaten egg and arrange the marzipan balls around the edge of the cake. Brush the tops of the balls with beaten egg and then carefully place the cake under a hot grill until the top is lightly toasted.

**LYNTON GOLDS LLM**
A HOSTEL AND REFUGE FOR VULNERABLE AND PERSECUTED WOMEN

We hope this finds you in good health during these unprecedented times. Within this newsletter, we hope you get a sense of how we as a Project have been coping in the last few months, and what we have done to meet the ever-changing landscape of regulations, balancing that with the health and wellbeing of all we serve. You will discover some big changes we have on the horizon, not least the refurbishment of our Day Centre drop-in for rough sleepers.

I personally have been struck by the immense generosity that every one of our supporters has shown throughout this period. It has been so valued to know that we are still thought of at a time of personal difficulty for everyone. Your generosity has contributed so greatly in keeping all of us going through these times - thank you. I would love to hear any thoughts, feedback, suggestions or ideas you may have, no matter how wild you may think they are and I look forward to working with you. I wish you and your loved one’s good health.

Marylebone Project’s COVID response
Blessed with an incredible dedicated staff team, we have continued to support our women throughout this period. Sadly, in mid-March last year we had to make the hard decision to cease all of our activities and temporarily close our Social Enterprises and drop-in for rough sleepers, offering them telephone support instead. Staff were deployed into one team to facilitate working from home where possible, operating a two-tier system, 50% working from home, 50% on site. We arranged with Westminster Council for parking to be made available and paid for taxis for staff commutes.

Throughout June and July, with the help of Westminster City Council, we moved a number of women into independent accommodation. It has been a joy to house rough sleeping women and see them come in to safety after being placed in hotels in early April. We have delivered activities and online training wherever possible and provided goody bags filled with small luxuries to help our women during this time. The addition of 3 communal TVs with Netflix subscriptions have proved incredibly valuable.
Last August we temporarily opened our drop-in again, but have since closed it due to current lockdown guidelines. It’s our aim to reopen this service again once the refurbishment has been completed. Our Social Enterprises are still suspended as we are not yet in a position to be able to reopen. As you can imagine, this time has been challenging and difficult, but we have been heartened by the support and strengthened community spirit demonstrated. Like most people, we are seeing an impact on mental health, but with an abundance of creativity and unity, we are coming through this together.

Activities during lockdown
Last March we had to put on hold all the activities that we usually run. It was a tough time for many of our women and, with limited Wi-Fi access; staff had to get creative to keep the women connected and active during this time. The Munch team created weekly baking bags with ingredients and instructions for the women to create their own beautiful bakes in the kitchens on their own floors of the hostel. Due to their popularity, we’ve decided to continue it, with residents often sending us photos of what they’ve made. We also made a YouTube channel for our tutors and volunteers to upload fitness/wellbeing videos for the women to play in their rooms, including yoga, meditation and creative writing sessions. We even had a video from a previous resident who is now a qualified yoga instructor!

With the London Marathon cancelled last year, we also had the opportunity to take part in The Challenge 2.6 in April. The Challenge replaced the marathon’s fundraising initiatives and participants were encouraged to take part in challenges that related to the number 26. The women and staff at the project had a brilliant time coming up with different challenges including a 26-minute danceathon, 26-minute bake challenge and a 26-question quiz. We were so thankful for all the wonderful donations we received during this period, such as painting and colouring materials plus board games and jigsaws. We really could not have got through lockdown without them.

Day Centre refurbishment
Last summer, we put in a bid to fund a major refurbishment project at the Marylebone Day Centre. Once finished this year it will become a 24/7 service. Refurbishment started in September and is almost complete! The Day Centre will be transformed with a brand-new reception area, shower block, toilets, laundry room, kitchen and lounge, together with a fully refurbished interview room, training room and IT suite.

Last October we organised a feedback session for residents who frequently use the Day Centre, asking for their input. They were given samples and brochures to look through. Their choice of colours, textures and materials was really impressive. Everyone is really excited about how the Day Centre will look once the work is complete. Women that visit will not only receive top quality help and advice from our dedicated team, but will do so in a safe, welcoming and comfortable space that is truly unique and created by them!

Face mask-making sessions
Throughout last year we ran a very popular sewing class for beginner and intermediate learners and so, during the height of lockdown, women borrowed sewing machines to make masks in their rooms. We were sent patterns from a women’s sewing project in Malawi called Mayamiko Trust and our women used these as a base to create masks here in London. When lockdown eased and face masks were required to travel on public transport, we were able to hold small groups to continue to make masks for all those in the project. One resident researched how to make fabric masks that provide more protection and shared with the group that idea of including a third layer made with a plain J Cloth. This gives the wearer more protection.

Thank you, St Nicholas Church, for your wonderful support over many years ....

PHILLIPPA
GENERAL MANAGER
MODERN SLAVERY

The Mothers’ Union (MU) is a Christian organisation that has been supporting families worldwide for over 140 years. Founded by Mary Sumner in 1876 in her local parish, the MU has grown into an international charity with over four million members in 84 countries.

As a Christian membership charity, the MU demonstrates its faith in action by working towards stopping poverty, stopping inequality and stopping injustice. Members work at grassroots level around the world. They bring hope and practical support to millions of people every year through parenting, literacy and community development programmes.

Since the lockdown of 2020 the MU has been very active on digital channels and social media. This includes broadcasting midday prayers live on their Facebook Page which has had an increasing audience as the word has spread. They also run a monthly e-Newsletter, featuring a round-up of current events and stories from across the movement.

In 2019 the MU signed up to partner Clewer Initiative, the Church of England’s campaign against Modern Slavery. The initiative is funded by the Clewer Sisters, an Anglican order of Augustinian nuns founded in 1852 to help marginalised, mainly females, who found themselves homeless and drawn into the sex trade by providing them with shelter and teaching them a trade. The work of the Clewer Sisters mirrors the work that MU members are doing in thousands of communities around the world and this had led to the natural partnership to end modern slavery.

The key focus of the work of Clewer and the MU is in

- Identifying and setting up training opportunities, materials and manuals for volunteers, staff and members. Creating presentations, posters and video clips to help raise awareness
- Producing a credit card sized card to help communities identify and respond safely to potential cases of modern slavery
- Collaborating on key contacts at national and local level to develop and get involved in local initiatives to identify and prevent modern day slavery as appropriate
- Creating national and local advocacy campaigns that members and others can get involved in to raise awareness of the subject, including involvement in Anti-Slavery Day and the safer car app
- Establishing a prayer network that regularly focuses on this initiative

The question of how COVID affected modern slavery victims and whether it has resulted in an increase in victims or the crime being pushed even further underground has been looked at and the following data has been made available:

‘Between 23 March 2020 and 23 September 2020, the Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline responded to 2,942 calls, 790 online reports and 30 app submissions, making a total of 3,762 inbound contacts. This is compared to 8,494 contacts for the same period in 2019 – a massive fall in calls. In 77 cases, the pandemic was directly cited as an influencing factor by the person contacting the Helpline. Similarly, when lockdown measures were first introduced in France, there was an apparent 75 per cent reduction in the detection of Organised Immigration Crime (OIC).

‘However, in the long run, the global recession and ongoing hardship caused by COVID is likely to see OIC increase. According to OXFAM, there are 547.6 million additional people in poverty due to COVID. 239.8m of these come from East Asia & Pacific, 128.8m from South Asia and 54.3m from Latin America & Caribbean. As a result, there are increasing numbers of vulnerable people across the world, trying to escape poverty and find a better future.

‘In the UK, we know that many of the socio and economic drivers that help modern slavery and criminal gangs flourish are growing. There is increased unemployment, growing numbers visiting foodbanks, rises in undocumented immigration and general vulnerability. Combine this with Brexit and the fact that many NGOs, who provide vital support, are facing significant cut backs and we have the making of a perfect storm.’

MARGARET DREW
THE FOURTH WISE MAN

A story has it that four Wise Men originally set out for Bethlehem, but that one of them stopped so many times along the way to help others that he only arrived in time to witness the Crucifixion.

‘I was at the start, called by that star to the west,
But my beast went lame and I dropped back, fell in with a man in distress
Whose all had been taken. I paused to help as was best –

‘Saw him safe to an inn – gave him some from my store,
Then rested my mount before journeying on
And that was the way that it went – my physician skills needed,
I stopped, stayed, before moving on.

‘At a caravanserai I met my comrades travelling home
And listened, enthralled, to the tale that they told
Of a child, base-born, as it seemed,
And yet with an air so wonderous to behold

‘They were sure they had seen the One born to be King,
And urged me make haste him to see without fail.
So next day I packed, made ready to leave -
But a man begged me yet stay, with his wife in travail –

‘And so, I lingered yet, remained in that place
And left it too late, ’twas my heart told me so,
But yet I returned not but still waited – for what?
For the dream in the night that compelled me to go!

‘Then I counted the years, and my own greying locks.
I had grown old, so the babe was a man.
And his stars told me – more clearly
Revealing the future, as only stars can.

‘There that star shone, the brightest one yet.
What before had just gleamed now had a glory around.
So, my waiting was over, for now I was told
In his city, at last, the Great King would be crowned!

‘Ominous, the sky was, and black at the night.
A night without stars – a night for despair –
For I saw there my King – and knew it was he –
As I gazed at that cross, saw the agony there.

‘Then, in spite of the distance, his eyes met with mine,
And I heard when he spoke, as I swear to this day.
So clearly, he spoke, the words with me still.
In the tone of a victor, ’It is done!’ I thus heard him say.

MARGARET SAWYER
REFLECTIONS ON THE PANDEMIC

The guest on BBC 1’s ‘Breakfast’ programme on 18th March was Michael Rosen, author of children’s books who wrote the poem ‘These are the hands’ to mark the 60th anniversary of the NHS back in 2008.

The hands are the hands that do all the jobs needed to look after patients, carrying, cleaning, feeding, soothing, mopping up – caring! The poem has been updated with help from hospital staff to mark the anniversary of the first Covid-19 death at Southport Hospital. Michael himself nearly died from the disease and had been hospitalised there from March to June in 2020. He spoke of the nurses who literally held him between life and death in his darkest period in HDU of which he has no memory. Michael described the care he received as love. To care for someone is to love them.

Prayer of praise
Lord, we thank you for all the men and women whose vocations necessarily exposed them to the risk of the pandemic, while others stayed at home as instructed to stay safe. We especially praise you for the dedication of hospital staff working 12-hour shifts with travel to and from work in addition. And we thank you again most heartedly for the doctors, the scientists and those with the foresight and courage who have produced these effective vaccines which are today saving lives and renewing hope, Amen.

Prayer of response
Lord, we rejoice that the impact of Covid-19 in the UK is diminishing. We dare to hope that we can soon take back control of our lives and not be constrained. But as life returns towards ‘normal’ will you challenge us not to forget the sacrifices of time and sometimes of life itself by those in the emergency services. We recall the words of Jesus, who sacrificed everything for us, that when we care for one another it is as if we are caring for him. Help each one of us to pursue acts of kindness to match the words we say, Amen.

Prayer for the Nations
Lord, we pray for the many nations suffering from the pandemic without the consolation of effective treatment. We pray for the leadership of the World Health Organisation and the leadership of richer nations that they might work together in humanitarian accord to make access to vaccines freely available to every country, Amen.

Withhold from no one a favour due to him when you have the power to grant it. Do not say to your neighbour, ‘Come back again, you can have it tomorrow – when you could give it now.’ Amen
CHURCH BOOK CLUB

The previous edition of Lookout included two references to our book club, which meets every six weeks or so. Each member takes a turn to nominate their choice of book and 'host' the meeting where the book is discussed. It certainly makes for some interesting reading as the choices vary widely. Some of our more popular choices are introduced below.

In his Prayer Focus Peter Ridge extolled ‘The Unquenchable Flame’ - Discovering the Heart of the Reformation by Michael Reeves. When our group met (on Zoom) to share views some members started their contributions by remarking this was not a book they would have ever stopped to buy, or even pick up to browse through - having to go along with others' choices is the vicissitude of being a book club member! But they then went on to say how grateful they were to have been required to read it.

The book covers this vital period in the history of our church in a way that is very approachable, and often humorous, while reminding us of the bloodshed and prejudice that was endured (and in some cases perpetrated) by the reformers. Inevitably it starts with Martin Luther’s efforts to provoke debate about how the church needed to improve. In his time the church taught that everyone on dying automatically experienced the waiting room of purgatory. The only way to reduce how long one spent there, and possibly to avoid going on to hell, was by purification. In actuality this meant acquiring (transferrable!) indulgences - for example by doing good works, making pilgrimages, or visiting religious relics. The church set the formulae for calculating the value of indulgences, and controlled their issue.

It is hard for us now to imagine worshipping without personal access to a bible we can read for ourselves and in our own language; without the freedom to believe in “salvation by God’s word”(also described as “salvation by faith/ faith alone”). The reformers fought to earn these blessings for us; the book helps us to understand them better.

On a whirlwind journey, as the reformation takes hold, we go through Europe and the influence of Zwingli, Calvin and others, before moving on to the Puritans. At the end is a challenge to consider whether the reformation is now over. Throughout there is wit and amusement - did we know that Cranmer secretly transported his wife using a box with air holes?

It is not a scholarly work, but an informative and entertaining history for anyone with an interest in the subject. Is there any criticism? - well it has protestant bias, and it would be balancing to read an account of the same period written by a catholic.
Since then, our group has read and discussed ‘Becoming’ by Michelle Obama. This is an inspiring story of achievement, and love at first sight. Michelle’s message is that through encouragement by family and friends, confidence in oneself, and hard work anything is possible as she herself has shown.

The first part of the book deals with her childhood in a declining neighbourhood surrounded by an extended and loving family. They were not poor - they owned a nice car, and her father had a good job as a municipal engineer; as teenagers they had a phone extension in their bedrooms (this is America!); but they didn’t own their house.

It is impossible to read the book and consider their circumstances without thinking about wider issues of racial prejudice, equality of opportunity, and our legacy for future generations. There are no easy answers, but her story shows how much can be achieved by application and faith.

She becomes a powerful advocate for women and girls; she promotes and facilitates healthier eating and living for poorer families; she creates openings in higher education and initial employment for those who deserve them. Her accounts of meeting Barack, their courtship and his proposal are romantic, and make for warm reading.

The book is long and some of us struggled through the middle. Nor is this an account of American politics - Michelle actively campaigned for new legislation and encouraged the leaders of her church to raise political awareness, but surprised some of us by explaining that she would never want to be a politician. If you want to know more about the presidency and politics then you need to follow Barack’s books.

On a related topic it is often possible to borrow a copy of a popular book from your local library. As a library member you can even borrow E-books and E-audio books free of charge via this link https://glllibraries.overdrive.com/

If you are looking for reading recommendations while we remain under ‘house arrest’, our group has also given high scores to these books:

- A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles
- Naples 44 by Norman Lewis
- Scottsboro by Ellen Feldman
- The Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman
- Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens

STEVE RIPLEY
NEISS BOOK CLUB

As many readers will know, the Norlands Estate Information and Support Service (NEISS) is a free to join organisation for neighbours who live on any of the roads that make up the ‘Norlands estate’. We were formed with the aim of helping neighbours in every possible way and up until last year held a number of social events every year, including popular fund-raising ones like our Open Gardens for St Christopher’s Hospice. The only activity we’ve managed to maintain during 2020 and so far, this year, is our Book Club which started in 2017. Since then, we have read 44 books! Coronavirus hasn’t stopped us having our monthly meetings which during most of 2020 and so far, this year, have been via Zoom.

The genre of the books, chosen in turn by members of the Club, has introduced many club members to books they might not have chosen for themselves, but our in-depth monthly discussions have demonstrated that despite strong doubts about particular books, members have enjoyed the challenge of reading other members’ choices. The following two short reviews by one of our book club members reflect this.

MARGARET DREW

‘In January 2021 the Book Club read ‘Girl, Woman, Other’ by Bernadine Evaristo; a contemporary tale of 12 women which won the Booker Prize in 2019. Evaristo tells each woman’s story as a standalone tale but the stories and the women do intertwine with each other. Most of the women are black and Evaristo uses their stories to represent the multiple and varied lives of black women today. Generally under-represented in contemporary literature this book explores themes of motherhood, sexuality, the varied impacts of racism and sometimes how these things intertwine in the lives of black women. Some in the book club thought the stories mere vignettes others enjoyed the pacy storytelling and views into the worlds of theatre, youth culture and rural life.

‘In February 2021 the Book Club read ‘Lincoln in the Bardo’ by George Saunders; a Man Booker Prize winner in 2017. The book traces the death of Abraham Lincoln’s son Willie, which took place during the American Civil War. But Saunders mixes fact with fiction, historical record with fictional archive as we see a moment in which Willie is trapped between life and death and meets others suffering the same fate in a Georgetown Cemetery. Multiple narrators tell the story which weaves across time and realms exploring themes of grief, loss, religion, class, race, avoidance and what it is that makes us who we are. This book split the book club with those who didn’t enjoy the structure or found characters too perverse and others who thought it inventive, witty and challenging. Some recommended the audiobook, unusually narrated by over 40 actors rather than one.’

REVIEWS BY SEEMA MANCHANDA
TRIBUTES

PETER RAWLINS
COLIN SAXBY
FELICITY WILLIAMS
IN MEMORY OF

PETER RAWLINS
1930-2021

Peter Rawlins passed away on the 18th January 2021 having lived a long, happy and until the last couple of years a healthy life. He was born in Kings College Hospital on the 4th April 1930 and spent his early years in Dulwich with his parents, brother and twin sisters.

During the war Peter was evacuated to several places and then latterly to Devon and to this day has remained in touch with the family in Devon, meeting up annually until he could no longer drive – we always referred to them as his ‘second family’. When Peter left school, he joined National Provincial Bank and spent his whole career with them, retiring in 1987.

Family holidays and time spent with the wider family (particularly at Christmas) were really important to him – he liked nothing more than a good family ‘get-together’. Church was very important to him, he was a member of the PCC, edited Lookout for many years, was part of the Church Trust committee and helped set up the Memorial Garden along with Bruce Hurn and Colin Saxby.

From Peter’s funeral service – Helen shared the following reflection:

A number of years ago we were in Church on the Sunday after Christmas. During the service the Rector asked the congregation what they were most thankful for during the year that was drawing to a close. Quite a number who responded said that it was England winning the world cup – rugby of course. I thought Dad might say this – it would have been understandable after so very many years of supporting the England team, along with John (his best friend from school whom he had known for almost 80 years), through the many lows and not so frequent highs. Or perhaps he would be thankful that his treatment for prostate cancer had been successful. But I was wrong: when asked Dad simply said, my family. And on reflection I thought how true this was and this has been much on my mind during these last weeks. And has been often said in the many lovely cards and messages that Mum has received since Dad’s death.

How, blessed Sarah and I have been to grow up in a family knowing that we were loved and valued – that we mattered – and to see this love extended as the family has grown over the years, not just our immediate family but the wider family too. Family gatherings were always special occasions to be looked forward to and enjoyed, whether it was a wedding or a Christmas gathering playing all sorts of games and enjoying a drink but mostly about being together. And, of course, such occasions were the opportunity to share a joke or two – Dad had a real ability to remember jokes that were told to him.

When I think of Dad it is of someone who is kind and caring; loyal and committed to whatever he did, be it work, rugby, bowls, Church or his friends. His name, Peter, was well chosen for him, our rock. A calm but strong presence in our lives – a good man to be there in a crisis – a true friend. May he rest in peace.
It was with great sadness that we heard that Colin Saxby passed away on the 16 January 2021. Colin was a treasured church family member for over 45 years.

Many parishioners will know Colin well but many others who may not have known him well will remember him as the tall, upright man who regularly sat in the back pew by the west door during the 9.30 communion services.

During his long association with St Nicholas, Colin spent much of the time volunteering and will be long remembered for his work on the PCC, as Church Treasurer and as the Church Warden. In addition to his volunteering, he was also financially very generous to the church and was involved with its original carpeting, the installation of the first sound system and help with some of the vestments and work in Scadbury Chapel.

Colin and Bridget had four children, 10 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. The sad thing about being ill in hospital during Covid-19 restrictions is that none of his family could visit Colin. The numbers attending his funeral on Friday 26 February 2021 at St Nicholas were likewise restricted and he had just a small, yet intimate and moving, family service which was taken by Rev’d June Hurn.

As we pay tribute to Colin, we send our condolences to his family and our thanks to Bridget for the love and support she gave Colin during their long marriage.

MARGARET DREW
On 19th January 2021 Felicity passed into the presence of the Lord at the age of 75. The loving wife of Dewi for 53 years celebrated on the 6th January.

Her life was one of devotion and service to Jesus’s call. Born in Zambia her family moved to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) where she grew up. She met Dewi at a Baptist youth group. After their marriage they moved to Windhoek, Namibia where their three sons were born and where they worked with missionaries from America. Youngest son Duane passed to be with Jesus in 1987 and the oldest Gareth lives in South Africa while the other, Aaron, lives in New Zealand. Four years in Mississippi, where she studied in college, on to New Orleans where she worked in seminary, sharing in mission and the love of God, then the family moved to South Africa where they worked for and with The Leprosy Mission before coming to England.

Felicity always had a love of Christ, the mission to share His love and message in whatever way she could. This was reflected in her work as a carer and warden in care homes and ultimately at Cedarmore Court from which she retired eight years ago.

Her legacy is one of care, compassion, the church, but most of all her thoughtfulness, friendship for everyone she met in person and more recently through social media groups.

A person blessed by God and to all a blessing in their lives.

DEWI WILLIAMS

At Felicity’s funeral Dewi read the poem, “You can shed tears because she is gone, or you can smile because she lived”. We at St. Nick’s do indeed smile and remember especially her great affection for our young families. At All Age Worship and the third Sunday Family Service she was always there to welcome them with that lovely smile of hers, to gather up the little ones who rushed into her open arms and to be a loving and supportive friend to their parents whenever they needed one.

We have incredibly fond memories of Felicity. She was the first person to welcome us into the St.Nick’s family and from that moment we remained close friends.

Felicity was such a lovely and kind person – she was a member of our extended family. She always met us with a huge smile and laugh, and she will be dearly missed by us all.

NIKI, PHILIP ANNETT & FAMILY

Felicity was always very kind and welcoming to us at church. We have very fond memories of her sitting at the back of the church with Harry when he was very small. She would entertain him throughout the service. A particular memory is a show and tell Christmas Day service where she spent time playing with Harry and Mr Potato Head. We always looked forward to seeing Dewi and Felicity at church and Felicity will be greatly missed.

BRAD, FELICITY, HARRY AND MILLIE WESTON

A wonderful woman

KATE MURDOCH-SMITH

Felicity’s chosen ministry was to the youngest members of our church family but friends of all ages at Nick’s will cherish her memory. She was a good woman who did a lot of good in Jesus’s name.

ANNA SLOWEY
ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, CHISLEHURST

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