



COWLEY ST JOHN
TWO CHURCHES
ONE COMMUNITY

COWLEY ST JOHN PARISH MAGAZINE

£1

September 2017



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Websites for Cowley St. John Parish:

- **Main website:** www.cowleystjohn.co.uk
- **Facebook Group:**
<https://www.facebook.com/cowleystjohn.parish/>
- **St. Mary & St. John Churchyard Project:**
www.ssmjchurchyard.org.uk
- **‘Home’, an experimental Christian Community in Oxford:**
www.home-online.org
- **Magazine issues:** <http://cowleystjohn.co.uk/parish-magazine>

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- **St Alban the Martyr**, Charles Street, Oxford, OX4 3AH
- **Bartlemas Chapel**, Cowley Road, Oxford, (turn down the lane next to the vicarage at 271 Cowley Road, OX4 2AJ, and you will reach the chapel at the heart of Bartlemas Village).

Parish Postal Address (Vicarage): 271 Cowley Road, OX4 2AJ

REGULAR SERVICES

Sunday:

- **8:00am** Said Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John
- **9:15am** Sung Eucharist at St. Alban
- **10:45am** Sung Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John
- **6:15pm** Said Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John

Monday to Thursday:

- **8:00am** Morning Prayer at St. Mary & St. John
- **5:00pm** Evening Prayer at St. Mary & St. John

Wednesday:

- **12:00pm** Silence and Stillness at Bartlemas Chapel, (During colder months at Bethlehem Chapel, All Saints Convent*).

Thursday:

- **10:30am** Said Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John

Friday:

- **8:00am** Morning Prayer at St. Alban
- **9:00am** Said Eucharist at St. Alban

* All Saints 15A Magdalen Road Oxford OX4 4EN (<http://allsaintssistersofthepoor.co.uk/>)

If for any reason you are unable to get to church but would like a visit from one of our clergy, please contact us. We could bring Holy Communion or simply come and pray with you.

SOME REGULAR EVENTS IN RICHARD BENSON HALL (Next to St. Mary & St. John Church)

Alice's Mad Hatter Tea Parties:

Held on the 2nd Tuesday of every month, 3-4:30pm, a friendly place where people who have experienced mental health issues in their lives can relax and just enjoy a cuppa, cake and a chat.

A Place to Be:

Held on the 4th Tuesday of every month, 12-2pm, a friendly monthly lunch for people with dementia, their family, carers and friends.

Marhaba:

Held on the last Tuesday of the month, 7pm, a collaboration between various Oxford groups that sets up a platform for sharing music between communities. *See details in the notices section.*

To find out about other events, see the notices section in this magazine, visit the Parish website www.cowleystjohn.co.uk or visit the church.

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“CONSISTENCY IS THE HOBGOBLIN OF LITTLE MINDS” (Emerson)

By Fr. Phil

“...we live under the tyranny of not being too puzzling, both to ourselves and others...But...it is when the pressure to understand is taken off that the most valuable words are spoken or written; the act, the struggle to make oneself intelligible, must therefore be some kind of distraction; in psychoanalytic terms, some kind of defence. The words that matter most are the words we don't understand”

In Writing Adam Phillips

*

We are still obsessed by sense making and I often get tied up with myself in my determination to work everything out and to have a coherent narrative. It is a relief to discover that there is more to life than making sense! But of course, the truth is that we cannot throw away reason and common sense if only because we need a sufficient amount in common in order to communicate at all!

So, while the quotes above come with a health warning, they hopefully help us to see that ‘meaning’ is not something that we have total control of.

I visited Stowe at the weekend and was given a tour of the garden by one of the helpful National Trust guides. We saw that wonderful view of the school the other side of a lake and up an expanse of grass. It was all very romantic English pastoral. The man giving us the tour clearly thought it had been better before when they had had extremely formal gardens in the French style similar to Versailles. These gardens were landscape shaped to give a particular message about England and about the owners of the estate. But as is often the way, the

gardens were so perfect that I was left yearning for some French formalism; a more autocratic and clearly defined space!

In the Gospel last Sunday Jesus asked his disciples “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” and he is given various answers but then he asks, “But who do you say that I am?” and it is Peter who answers, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God”. In one sense Jesus asks a question and Peter answers it – this all seems pretty cut and dry. However, we could spend a lifetime trying to answer the question and a lifetime trying to discern what Peter’s answer means for us. Often our struggle for creating meaning out of Peter’s response will lead us down paths which seem to lack consistency or coherence. And when we look at our lives in the light of ‘the Messiah, the Son of the living God’ we can feel bamboozled by our failure to make sense of the phrase in all of our living and relating.

Sometimes we should allow ourselves to rest in the truth that we cannot always make total sense of ourselves or other people. That try as we might to bend the landscape of our hearts and minds to a particular vision of the religious life, it sometimes doesn’t come together, doesn’t make sense. But being in the presence of God is not always about making sense, and sometimes it is in our failure to make sense that we allow our defences to fall and discover a fresh vision of the divine.



LES LONG AND MEMORIES OF COWLEY ST JOHN

By Ian Fergusson



The above picture shows the Cowley St. John School football team, 1932 – 1933 season.

The line-up is:

Back L-R: Ron Royal, Ron King, Les Long, G. Cope, Reg. Norse

Middle Row L-R: Tiggy Morgan, Dolph Talbouys, Mr. Hunt, George Heath, Eric Bradbury

Front L-R: *Harry Smith, Len Sharp, Stan Allen.*

The trophies are the Elementary Schools Shield and the Elementary Schools Cup.

I came upon this picture (and several others) whilst researching the life of Les Long, my father in law, during the second world war.

Les was born on 2nd May 1919 to Frederick & Francessca Long, living at 24 Bullingdon Road. Les attended Cowley St. John School and the next photograph was taken about 1925. Les is on the extreme left of the front row, with the striped tie.



Les was a very keen sportsman and played for St. Alban's United. He always played in goal. Third from the right in the next picture (below) is Jack Amor, Les's best friend throughout life. He lived at 30 Hurst Street. Jack is now 98 years young and lives in a residential home in Herne Bay, Kent. We speak with him on a regular basis. He moved to Herne Bay in 1989, having spent his entire life up till then in Oxford, working with Morris Garages, and later the transport division of



Thames Valley Police. His wife Joan (nee Rawlings) sadly passed away in 2006.

Les worked as a college servant where he carried on his sporting interest, rowing for Christchurch College Servants. The next photograph (below) is from 1936 and shows him rowing against the Oriel College Servants. Les is second from the bow in the further boat.

He was in the Territorial Army Royal Medical Corps, so his life was not all sport. He signed up on 15th July 1939 and was assigned to the Royal Signals. He saw action with the Norwegian Expeditionary Force, and in January 1941 was sent to Singapore. He was taken prisoner at the fall of Singapore in February 1942, and was transported



to Japan, by “Hell Ship”, where he was in OMI Camp, a Japanese Labour camp till August 1945, when Japan surrendered.

He returned to Oxford and in January 1946 married his fiancé, Evelyn Irene Brooks, from 19 Glanville Road, at St. Mary & St. John Church (see the next photograph – below). He was PC53 in the Oxford City Police during the 1950’s and later Landlord of The Marlborough Arms St. Thomas. In 1971, he became landlord of The White Hart in Old Marston. Although Les was scarred with the memories of being a Far East Prisoner of War, he lived a happy life.

He had planned his retirement for 28th June 1984. However, on the night of 5th June Les had a fall and was taken into hospital, and sadly passed away on the evening of Saturday 9th June.



I hope these memories are of interest, and might evoke some memories of parents or grandparents.

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A PRAYER OF LAMENT FOR REFUGEES

God, our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble, how long must those suffering in conflict wait for rescue?

How long must children separated from their families yearn for comfort?

How long must young people be denied a better future?

How long must those with psychological scars suffer with their trauma?

How long must families risk perilous journeys at the mercy of heartless traffickers?

How long must the internally displaced people of the world be forgotten?

How long will countries with plenty refuse sanctuary to those in need?

How long, O God, must you wait for your children to be welcomed, shown kindness and care?

O Lord of hosts protect them, God of love, be their refuge.

Amen

*

SUE WAS MY PRAYER PARTNER

By Ruth Davies

Sue was my prayer partner at St Luke's in Northampton. I was the Vicar's wife. Once or twice every week we would get together, sometimes at home, sometimes for a sandwich somewhere for lunch. We prayed for church people, for those local things that were on our mind, people in trouble. We clicked well together. I have never had another prayer partner after Sue. By the way, she is still alive.

In October 1986, Sue's husband, Jim, found it hard to breathe. He ignored it until on November 25th Sue found he was hallucinating and she called an ambulance. He went right into the intensive care ward, followed by an operation, and he then became deeply unconscious.

Sue had not even had time to say goodbye. As Jim lay unconscious, Sue turned to her Christian faith. My husband, Cadoc Davies, came every day to the ITU. I came when I could to pray with Sue.

Sue took comfort in the Bible and felt God's presence. On December 18th, the Doctors said that they could do no more. Jim could die at any time. They still did not know what Jim had. Cadoc (who was called Trevor at St Luke's) rushed to the hospital and said the prayers for the dying. Sue prayed and let Jim go. "I release him to you, God." I stayed with Sue and we prayed.

The next day Jim was still alive.

Cadoc rang Sue that afternoon and said, "Let's try one last thing. We will hold a prayer service for Jim on Monday if he is still alive." Then everyone in the parish got on the phone to people all over the country. From Scotland to Sussex people prayed.

On Monday afternoon Cadoc and I went to the Hospital and we had a New Testament laying on of hands on Jim, asking for healing and for the doctors to find a new way of curing him. That night St Luke's was full—not only with members of our parish but many community friends who had never even been to church. Sue stayed with Jim—the link of our Service with Jim.

Two days later Jim's lungs were less infected. And on Christmas Eve Sue arrived at the Hospital to be nearly knocked over by me. "Jim is awake," I cried. He had come out of unconsciousness.

It was spring before Jim went home. I remember always praying for his feet—so that he could walk again. And by spring he did walk and was able to walk into our church for the community's Service of Thanksgiving.

Cadoc told me that when he prayed the prayer for the dying for Jim, he had also prayed silently for healing for a purpose. He prayed that Jim would live and become his Church Warden. It was 2 or 3 years later that Jim did become the Warden of the church. Jim lived for 20 more years. He was buried on the anniversary of Cadoc's death.

Jim's illness and cure marked a watershed in my spiritual life and for all of us at St Luke's. It gave the parish the confidence and faith to pray for—and receive—healing for other people.

*

GLEANINGS: A gathering of random thoughts from various sources

By John Purves

"Ignorance breeds confidence, reflection leads to hesitation."

Thucydides

*

"Between 1709 and 1876 approximately five million acres of land in Britain were enclosed under the General Enclosure Act. By concentrating land into fewer hands this cemented the disparity between the extremes of wealth and poverty which has helped to shape modern Britain."

Hugh Barker. "Hedge Britannia"

“If rules become rods, eventually they break people.”

Hooker 1554 - 1600

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“Nothing is impossible for pure love.”

Mahatma Gandhi

*

“I never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

*

*“When reason fails, with all her powers,
There faith prevails and love adores.”*

Isaac Watts 1674 - 1748

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“Life without death would be hell.”

Anon

*

*“Heavenly treasure does not grow less as new claimants partake of it.
For of all spiritual things it is true that they increase by giving.”*

Anon

*

“A vast store of information makes for a vast confusion.”

Russell Page

*

“I firmly believe that unforgiveness is the most significant cause of physical, psychological and spiritual ill-health today. There is another way. Relationships can be restored and the future of forgiver and forgiven can be far better than we can ever hope or imagine.”

Mike Holroyd

*

“Lord temper with tranquillity

Our manifold activity;

That we may do our work for Thee

With very great simplicity.”

Anon

*

A CONVERSATION WITH SOO TIAN

Sadly, after five years at Cowley St. John, Soo Tian will be leaving in October to return to Malaysia where he will marry his fiancée Hui-En. Soo Tian has been so much a part of the community, and done so much for the church, that it is difficult to imagine the church without him. Anyway, I thought it would be a good idea to interview Soo Tian while we still have the chance, and find out a little more about his life and his faith. Here follows Soo Tian’s account in his own words:



“As a Christian Malaysian who is ethnically Chinese I am rather unusual in being a fourth generation Christian. Most Malaysian Chinese Christians converted more recently than this. My great great grandparents travelled from Fujian province in China to Malaysia in the late nineteenth century, and it was their children, my great grandparents who became Christian. My paternal great grandmother heard the preaching of a man called John Sung, who played an instrumental role in the

Christian revival movement among the Chinese in mainland China, Taiwan and South East Asia in the 1920s and 1930s, and became a Methodist Christian. My maternal great grandfather became a member of the Plymouth Brethren, but his son, my grandfather, became an Anglican in Hong Kong in the 1950s. I still have his 1928 (Proposed) Book of Common Prayer. This may seem to be a somewhat unusual book to have, because, as many of us know, it failed to be approved by the British Parliament. Many non-conformists, liberals and evangelicals didn't like the Anglo-Catholic influences in it, and so it was voted down. However, the Convocation of Canterbury passed a resolution that it could be used by permission of the local bishop, and this is probably what happened in Hong Kong.

My mother became a Methodist for the simple reason that in our home town of Alor Setar there was no Anglican church but only a Methodist one. An Anglican priest visited once a month, but this was insufficient to foster real Anglican community. So, I grew up going to the Methodist church. My parents hosted church house groups regularly at our home and many of my close friends were from church. I became

baptised at age twelve (older baptisms are normal in Malaysian Methodism) and became closely involved in church. Prior to the 1980s there had been a 'social gospel' movement in South East Asia, which sought to change society for the better. In the 1980s there was an evangelical revival, which put more emphasis on personal experience of faith. When people ask me about my conversion experience, I remember the time when I was fourteen at a Christian union camp. The speaker was talking about the gospel and about turning to Christ, and gave a conversion prayer for everyone to pray. For me, as I prayed this prayer, I was committing myself to serving God and being a Christian, not just because four generations of my family had been Christian, but because I chose to do it myself.

During my teenage years I was a very serious Christian. I became Church Youth Fellowship President and went to Christian camps. One particular camp was set up for young potential Christian intellectuals (a rather pretentious idea, I now realise!), and a number of those I met there became my close friends. At age 18 I received a scholarship to attend a university in the US, but it was then that I hit a major road-bump. I suffered my first bouts of depression and mania and was diagnosed as Bipolar and had to give up my place. The dream of going to study in the US on the scholarship was shattered. I continued to go to church, but the emotional bond I'd had with Church as a teenager was partially severed. I didn't understand why it had happened. My mother took some time out to help me, and once suggested to me that perhaps through my experience of bipolar, though it was horrible, I was being prepared for something. Perhaps it would help me grow in some way. I could relate strongly to the part of St. John's Gospel where it says: *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, so that it will be even more fruitful."* John 15 1-3. Perhaps as teenager I was becoming proud and arrogant, and the experience of bipolar was to make me consider what was truly important in life.

My Bipolar is a lot better now. Managing it has helped me to be a lot more organised. With Bipolar you have to be very careful to get enough sleep, and to avoid things which may make you too emotional and trigger mania or depression. You also have to avoid alcohol, and this I think has been a blessing for me, because there is some alcoholism in my family. I think it has also made me a lot more compassionate towards people with mental health issues, in a way I wouldn't have been if I hadn't had this experience.

In the end, I studied first at a university college in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. In the third year of my course I had to do a year of studying abroad, and went to Reading in the UK. In Reading I sought a church and went once to the Christian Union, but didn't like it there. Back home there had been many generations in the church, but the Christian Union and the churches they recommended were full of students. They also had ideas I didn't agree with, like women shouldn't teach men, but should only teach women. This comes from St. Paul's letters, but I feel it needs a more inclusive interpretation! I headed for the Chaplaincy which had an ecumenical atmosphere, with Anglican and Catholic services as well as a Quaker meeting, and became a member of the Chaplaincy community. I went for a time to the church of St. John & St. Stephen, which was a 'middle of the road' Anglican church and had a warm environment.

At that time, I was studying law, and began the study of jurisprudence and the philosophy of law. These subjects put the spotlight on the foundations of law, with for example feminist and Marxist critiques of the law. I realised that the law is in fact built on very shaky ground, and I also realised that I couldn't in good conscience become a lawyer.

More radical Christian ideas were at that time appealing to me. I went to various talks and conferences, and became interested in political movements such as Christian Socialism, and Christian Anarchism. Indeed, before arriving in UK, a Google search led me to a Christian

Anarchist Conference in Sheffield (organised by Jesus Radicals UK), and arranged to attend when I arrived in the UK. These organisations appealed to me because they sought to change unjust structures and oppose war and injustice.

When I graduated from Reading, I had a few months before my PhD programme in London began. I thought of travelling around, but decided I wanted to do things which would make a real change to my life. I therefore decided to spend a week at Taizé, a week with the London Catholic Worker, and a week at the Catholic Worker Farm in Hertfordshire. The Catholic Worker Farm expresses the agrarian portion of the Catholic Worker philosophy and programme. These experiences really set the tone for the next five to six years for me. Taizé has a wonderful liturgical structure and rhythm of daily life, while the activities of the Catholic Workers target injustice by operating soup kitchens, helping asylum seekers as well as resisting war through protest and direct action.

In London, I attended a wide spectrum of different churches, including a Forward in Faith parish. These parishes are still protesting against women priests but I didn't know this at the time! I attended a Fresh Expressions church and other conservative evangelical churches, as well as more liberal churches. I never felt properly at home in these churches. I remember Rowan Williams was visiting one church, and I wanted to hand him a letter over an issue of injustice in South Africa (the persecution of a Social Movement in Durban). This issue had support from the local bishop in South Africa. I went through the formality of asking the vicar for permission to do this and he said that it wouldn't be appropriate. This seemed inappropriately dictatorial and I decided to leave.

St. Francis House at 227 Cowley Road was the Oxford home of the Catholic Workers (the community closed in July 2015), and I was invited to live there while doing my PhD in London. London was too hectic for me, so it was nice to live in Oxford. Opposite St. Francis

House in Oxford of course is the Church of St. Mary & St. John and I started to worship there. I love the liturgy and the warm and friendly atmosphere, and I have had a congenial home there for five years. I was confirmed at Christ Church at the Easter Vigil in 2015. For me, becoming an Anglican feels right for all kinds of reasons. My family has Anglican roots, and let us not forget that John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, lived and died as an Anglican. Brother Roger, the founder of the Taizé movement, also had a philosophy of embracing catholicity without breaking existing fellowships, which feels absolutely right to me.

In my view the true division within Christianity, and indeed within other faiths and groups, is between liberals and conservatives. Often there is interfaith dialogue, with liberal Christians forming close ties with liberal Muslims, liberal Hindus etc., but the real challenge as I see it is forming ties between liberals and conservatives. A barrier to this happening is the stereotypes we have of one another, and what we believe. Dialogue, finding common ground, and mutual respect is surely the way forward.”

Many thanks to Soo Tian for sharing! We wish him all the best! If you want to be interviewed don't be shy!

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UNCLE FRANK

By Christine Stewart

Editor's note: Christine Stewart is an Australian friend of mine who visited St. Mary & St. John Church in Christmas 2012, and felt very much at home here. Unfortunately, she is now terminally ill with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF). She was expecting to pass away

before the new year, but is still going strong (and is very upbeat and cheerful), and with this extra time has decided to write about her life in the form of a scrapbook. Here is an extract about her Uncle Frank, which she has kindly consented to having in the Parish Magazine.



My brother and I treasure a grisly heirloom — a candlestick fashioned from spent shell-cases. Trench art, I think they call it. It wended its way down through grandfather Stanny's family to us. Perhaps my brother and I are the only ones who know its full significance, and can tell the tale of Uncle Frank.

He was one of Stanny's family who came regularly to our family Christmas feasts. I recall an old man, with strange-smelling breath which I later realised was alcohol. He would beam at me, present me with some tiny gift — a little girl's handkerchief, maybe, or a hair ribbon — and then beg me: Give us a kiss, darlin' This was uncomfortable, as his chin was badly shaven, but nevertheless, I sensed an innocent warmth from him. Mum explained that his gift was so small because he had no money, no family of his own. He lived in a pitiful hut somewhere out on Sydney's urban fringes, where he odd-jobbed for a family who had a smallholding, and that was how he survived.

Uncle Frank, unlike his mainly professional brothers and sisters — nurse, engineer, school-mistress and so on — was a stockman. In 1917, he enlisted somewhere way out west for the Great War, and just before the war ended, he was invalided with a bullet in his buttock, and eventually discharged and sent back to the bush. A few years later, he applied for and received the medals due to him. I suspect that the wound was superficial — I cannot imagine anyone returning straight to stock work and droving with a severe wound in the backside! And that the

real reason for his short-lived military career was that he was clearly shell-shocked from those last few months in the trenches. This, explained Mum, was why he seemed so simple. But back then, shell-shock was not recognised as an illness. These days we call it Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Many years and several wars later, my brother was studying engineering at University in the middle of Australia's military draft for the Vietnam war. Like so many of that era, he was strongly opposed to our presence in a strange country which had not attacked us, and concerned, as were his fellow engineering students, that the draft was not a simple ballot, but skewed in favour of gathering up medical and engineering students who could be of the greatest use to the army. He engaged in a lengthy correspondence with the Draft Board, offering all sorts of substitute help so long as he did not have to go and kill people with whom he had no quarrel.

It was late in the year, final exams were coming up. Unbeknownst to any of us, someone from the Draft Board visited my parents, and tried appealing to Dad as an ex World War II combatant to instil some patriotism into his son. Dad refused. He wasn't particularly in favour of militarism, and hadn't been a combatant anyway. Instead, he had spent the war teaching gunnery to officers, working in intelligence in Sydney and then as an interpreter of Japanese. So, the Draft Board went off to try the same smooth-talking on Uncle Frank. Within a couple of months, the old fellow was dead. Maybe it was coincidence, who knows. But still....

My parents did not want to upset Steve just before his exams, and did not tell him until years later about either of these visits. Steve was shocked and angry, and so was I when he told me. And to cap it off, Dad took it upon himself to sell Uncle Frank's medals when they were found amongst the belongings of one of Frank's sisters when she died.

And this is why Steve and I treasure a pathetic piece of trench art, and refuse to support the Defence Force and the Government to make such a jingoistic banquet of Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and the like. We mourn Uncle Frank and all those like him, without the trappings of wreaths and parades and bugles and trips to Turkey. We have our own ways.

*

ECO CHURCH,ECO DEANERY....,ECO CHAMPIONS

By Janet McCrae

The Diocese is relaunching one of its mission priorities '*the environment*' soon and suggests that churches work together by linking people who are actively interested in (and preferably passionate about) the many aspects of our relationship with the environment i.e, climate change, biodiversity, sustainable living, Fair trade, sourcing food locally, recycling, growing your own food, preventing waste, using renewable sources of energy, investing responsibly, sharing cars etc – They want to be in touch with people who are willing to join forces to try to make a real difference locally as well as globally. If you are interested in hearing more do contact Rodney Burr or Janet McCrae who have already expressed an interest. Minimum involvement will be to receive e mails about progress, otherwise it is up to you as to how involved you become.

A few things to ponder.....

- People often express regret that we are increasingly disconnected from the natural world – but many think it is time to stop seeing nature as something separate from us and realise we are living in a completely interconnected and interdependent

world. If we want to look at nature we need to take a good hard look at ourselves too.

- When we are regularly confronted by hyped-up headlines about the state of the world it can be difficult and frustrating to reconcile them with our daily lives and picture how we might make a difference. Perhaps we read the headlines with despair and we send off our recycling without really knowing where it is going or what happens to it - and whether it makes a difference.
- Religious naturalist Ursula Goodenough (author of *'The Sacred Depths of Nature'*) uses the phrase '**Eco morality**' – seeking right relations between earth and its creatures. This is based on an understanding of inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of the 'natural world' - the earth and its creatures (of which we humans are part) and our responsibilities.

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IN THE CHURCHYARD

The churchyard group have met each week all through the summer, working hard to keep down the taller growth and long grass. At this time, we try to leave seed heads to allow natural reseeding, but there is always a balance to be struck between this and keeping down tall plants and those which crowd out the ones we want to encourage. We were delighted to find an orchid growing in the churchyard in the late spring – a first find here. The seed was probably blown in from the Convent. We are hoping it will continue to thrive and spread its seeds for us.

A walk through the churchyard:

There is a written guide 'A Walk through the churchyard' on the Parish website: www.cowleystjohn.co.uk. To help newcomers I propose singling out a feature in the churchyard each month. This month it is the Society of St John the Evangelist (SSJE) Memorial because of the recent visit of a group of SSJE brothers (also known as the Cowley

Fathers) from America. They were exploring their Oxford roots and joined us for a service and lunch at the vicarage. The order was created by our founder Father Benson in 1866, and was the first Anglican religious community for men since the Reformation. They served the spiritual needs of this East Oxford community. Many of them are buried in the churchyard in graves marked by simple wooden crosses. A few examples of these still remain. Most have now been replaced by the memorial which is found when you enter the churchyard from Leopold Street, half way along the first path to the right, after the Garden of Thanksgiving and Remembrance. It marks Father Benson's grave and is a distinctive tall and narrow Celtic cross with pronounced bosses, made from very pale granite.

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BEYOND BUMS ON PEWS

By Daniel Emlyn-Jones



I have just stayed in Singapore with friends for six weeks, and on Sundays have been attending Roman Catholic mass with my host. The first thing which strikes one when attending

church in Singapore is that across the denominations there is a huge church attendance. The church we visited had roughly the same floor area as St. Mary & St. John Church, and I estimated there were 500 – 1000 people there (see photo above). Communion was a major logistical operation, and my host hurried me out before the dismissal so we

wouldn't get stuck in traffic jams leaving the premises. And it wasn't just Sunday morning mass. All five Sunday masses are the same!

Maximal church attendance is often put on a pedestal as the *ne non plus ultra* of a church's success, but is it? There are obvious disadvantages to gargantuan congregations, such as seeing a priest for a chat when you have a priest: parishioner ratio of 1:1000! Also, the communal experience in such a church would be entirely different compared with the more modest sized congregation. Church attendance of course has to be measured, but my conversation with Darren Dalton in the August edition taught me that it is only one dimension out of hundreds of others which could begin to pin down what church does and what church is. The work of our ministry team at Cowley St. John for example extends into schools, hospitals, communities here and abroad, universities, streets, cafes, refugee centres, online forums etc. etc. Besides which, how exactly do you quantify the spiritual impact which a church has on individual souls? One conversation can change the course of a person's life, while a lifetime sitting on a pew every Sunday morning can do nothing.

In the news, falling church attendance often comes with a quote from a bishop or archbishop berating an 'anti-Christian' culture, which I find singularly unhelpful. Christianity can disappear into an exclusive self-righteous little bubble, or it can listen to what people are saying when they don't come to church, and see falling church attendance as a calling and as an opportunity, rather than as a failure.

'Church Online' is increasingly popular these days. Using such a setup, the entire church service can be relayed live by camera and microphones, via the internet, to the entire world. In other words, it is possible to have a world-wide congregation of a thousand, ten thousand, a million!? I do sometimes wonder if services in our parish will one day be broadcast across the globe: 'From the Anglo-Catholic heartland of East Oxford, join us on a Sunday morning as we live stream our

mass...’ There could also be an internet forum for pastoral engagement, and on the practical side a PayPal account for the collection.

Speculation aside, the central point of all this for me is that church isn’t about them (non-Christians) and us (Christians). It isn’t about getting people to join our tribe and plonk their bums on our pews. It is about bringing the unconditional love of Christ to the world. Christ himself wasn’t a Christian, and I suspect he wouldn’t have liked the idea of his followers branding themselves so. In the end, we can count bums all we want, but the world will always be our true church, and its work will always be, to a certain extent, unquantifiable and ineffable.

*Do you have thoughts on Britain’s church attendance ‘crisis’?
Don’t be shy! Write an article!*

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PRAYER CALENDAR: September 2017

Daily Collect for use during September: *Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope and charity; and, that we may obtain that which thou dost promise, make us to love that which thou dost command. Amen* (Book of Common Prayer, Trinity XIV)

Fri 1	St. Giles, Abbot (710 AD) and the forthcoming St. Giles Fair in Oxford
Sat 2	Those suffering from skin diseases
Sun 3	Trinity XII
Mon 4	Gregory the Great, Teacher of the faith AD 604
Tue 5	Birinus, Bishop of Dorchester AD 650
Wed 6	The “Emmaus” Charity at Cowley
Thur 7	Health Centres and their staff

Fri 8	Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sat 9	Our Parish and Clergy
Sun 10	Trinity XIII
Mon 11	Hospitals and hospital chaplains
Tue 12	Libraries
Wed 13	The deaf and the R.N.I.D.
Thur 14	Holy Cross Day
Fri 15	Dentists
Sat 16	Our elected representatives
Sun 17	Trinity XIV
Mon 18	Artists
Tue 19	The housebound
Wed 20	Ember Day. Ordinands in training
Thur 21	St. Matthew. Apostle and Evangelist
Fri 22	Our theological colleges, especially St. Stephen's House
Sat 23	Ember Day. For more vocations to the ministry
Sun 24	Trinity XV
Mon 25	St. Cyprian, Martyr 258 AD
Tue 26	Ember Day. For those being ordained at Michaelmas
Wed 27	Young Families
Thur 28	Our two universities

Fri 29	St. Michael and all Angels, Our City Church St. Michael at the North Gate
Sat 30	St. Jerome, Doctor of the Church AD 341 - 420

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NOTICES

Archbishop of Canterbury's Mustard Seed Appeal: This is a special appeal, inspired by Justin Welby, to tackle poverty:

"Debt and money problems can be devastating, creating stress and anxiety, hardship and hopelessness. Relationships, family life and mental health suffer as people become stuck in a spiral of debt as more of their income is spent on paying back loans. Without advice or alternative sources of support, people become vulnerable to loan sharks and pay-day lenders. But it doesn't have to be like this..." Justin Welby

More information can be found at www.mustardseedresources.org.uk
This year at Cowley St. John we want to make the Mustard Seed Appeal a part of our Harvest celebrations. Do you have any fundraising ideas? Speak ASAP with Susannah or Phil who are spearheading the project.

Dances of Universal Peace: There will be Dances of Universal Peace in St Alban's Church on Saturday 16 September from 2-4pm. These are simple, meditative, circle dances from different religious traditions. All are welcome, no experience needed. Each dance and chant is taught. We have live music and refreshments afterwards. Children are welcome. For more details please contact Susannah Reide (sr@reide.plus.com)

Come along and try them!

Future dances will be on the 3rd Saturday of the month, so subsequent dances are: 21 October, 19 November, 16 December.

Oxford & Cowley Deaneries Holy Land Trip: For anyone interested in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the Oxford Deanery are welcoming us to join them 10-20th April 2018. This Journey is a very exciting opportunity to see a part of the world where our faith was founded. People tell us it will change our lives, open our eyes, inspire us and challenge us to make connections between the Holy Land and our Christian faith today. Please do come! We plan to take 40 people (age 16+) representing both deaneries, with a cost of \$1,500 (approx. £1,180) per person in a double room. Single supplement \$560/whole trip. Please note that flights and holiday insurance are not included in this price, these must be arranged individually. See details below.

Price includes: Accommodation in 4-star hotels with breakfast and dinner, Lunch every day, Transportation in air-conditioned buses, Entrance fees to biblical sites, boat ride, Dead Sea beach, Special dinner at oriental restaurant, English speaking tour guide, Dinner at oriental restaurant with folklore show, Honorariums for speakers, Tips for the guide, driver, hotels and restaurants.

Price excludes: Drinks at hotels and restaurants, Travel Insurance, Flights, Any other service not mentioned above.

To book your place(s) please follow these steps: **1)** Register your interest to come on the trip to the Oxford Area Dean's PA at mariatenajustice@gmail.com. **2)** Wait for her to send you an application form (with a refundable £200 deposit) to be filled out and returned by November 15th. **3)** After November 15th, you will receive (suggested) flight information-we will be suggesting a well-priced EasyJet flight-to aid you in your flight booking. **4)** Your place(s) will then be confirmed when you send us a copy of your flight details along with the completed payment by 1st December.

You will visit Bethlehem, Hebron, Musalaha, Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. Inspiring talks about peace, services, visits etc etc.

THE FRONT COVER

On the front cover is a photograph of Betty and John Purves, each side of the Richard Benson Wall Hanging (see the article on page 12 of the August 2017 edition).

NEXT ISSUE

Many thanks to all who contributed to, and all who read this issue. Thanks are also due to the work of the Parish Office. They are responsible for the effective printing and distribution of the magazine, and it is to them we owe thanks for the high quality booklet we see before us every first Sunday of the month!

The deadline for the next issue is ***Sunday 24th September, Midnight.*** The deadline for submissions is always midnight on the last Sunday of the Month, and publication on the first Sunday of the month. The Magazine runs twelve months a year. Electronic submissions are to me, Daniel Emlyn-Jones, daniel_ejnew@yahoo.co.uk (underscore between 'daniel' and 'ejnew'). Please put handwritten submissions in the Cowley St. John Parish Magazine pigeon hole by the St. Mary & St. John back door. Late submissions will automatically roll over to the next month's edition.

Soft copies of the Parish Magazine can be found at:

<http://cowleystjohn.co.uk/parish-magazine>

If you wish to subscribe to the magazine for a year (12 monthly editions), with the option of receiving it through the post, please fill in the form on the next page, cut it off with scissors and hand in.

COWLEY ST JOHN PARISH MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION FORM

I would like to subscribe to the Cowley St John Parish Magazine for one year.

For £6.00 / £13.00 incl. post and packaging
(please delete as applicable)

Name:

Address:

Please write cheques to Cowley St. John PCC, or give cash in person to Phil Ritchie or Rosy Hancock. Cheques can be sent to: The Vicarage, 271 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 2AJ.