

NEWS & VIEWS

The Free Church Hampstead Garden Suburb



MAY 2021

PLEASE TAKE ONE

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB FREE CHURCH

(United Reformed and Baptist)
Central Square, London, NW11 7AG
www.hgsfreechurch.org.uk

Sunday Services: *11 a.m. (and 6.30 p.m. when announced)*
Holy Communion is celebrated at Morning
Worship on the first Sunday of every month.
The Junior Church meets at 11am every
Sunday

Minister: **Revd Dr Ian Tutton**
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Safeguarding Statement

Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church believes that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all those who are vulnerable (children, young people and vulnerable adults). We expect all of our leaders, volunteers and those who use our premises to share this commitment and value the support of those who worship here in achieving this.

The Elders (Trustees), Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church
January 2016

NEWS & VIEWS

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB
FREE CHURCH
Central Square,
London NW11 7AG



MAY 2021

Dear Friends,

May 17th is the day which the Government has identified as the beginning of the next stage of the gradual lifting of the restrictions placed upon us during the most recent lockdown. As always, we should remain cautious, heeding the advice of those who know what is best for us, and continue to stick to the rules. The future remains at best uncertain and acting in a foolhardy or reckless manner can only risk undoing the progress we have made thus far in curtailing the worst effects of the ongoing pandemic...

...However, in line with the present regulations, it has been good to welcome back into the Church, and into the Church Hall the many user groups whose activities involve children and young people. It has been a joy to see people enjoying themselves on our premises once again...

...And so too for us as a Congregation. Even though Sunday worship is still not quite as we would want it to be – we want to sing! – nevertheless, the numbers attending and the general feeling of confidence, goodwill and grateful thanks for the opportunity to gather to worship have created a very real sense of togetherness, at-one-ness, prayerfulness and yes, even rejoicing...

...With this in mind, we look forward to life in Church post May 17th. The Sunday following, the 23rd, is Pentecost; often described as the ‘birthday of the Church’. And so, what better day could there be for a party. Immediately following the service, everyone is invited to share together in a picnic lunch on the grass adjacent to the carpark. Even if you don’t come to the service, you can still come to the picnic, and those of us who do come to church, why not invite family and friends who don’t usually come to church to at least join us for lunch. Each of

us will have to provide our own lunch – we cannot ‘risk’ a ‘bring & share’ – and we will have to sit in family/friendship groups but even then, it should be a good time for everyone, so put the date in your diary now...

...But the service itself will also have a particular significance. Ever since the imposition of the first Lockdown in March of last year it has not been possible to arrange a Baptismal Service. A number of our congregants have been waiting patiently, some for up to 18 months, for the opportunity to witness to their faith in Baptism. Therefore, it is intended that at the heart of our Worship Service this coming Pentecost will be our sharing together in an act of Believers’ Baptism...

...Understanding Pentecost as the ‘birthday of the church’ should have a special resonance for us this year. We need to have that sense of a new beginning. Circumstances will continue to dictate to us that it is unlikely we will ever get back to how things were. But is that necessarily a bad thing? Might it be that within the Providence of God there will emerge a Church – local and global – recast, reshaped, remoulded according to the demands of a post-pandemic society. Jesus Christ remains ‘the same, yesterday, today and forever.’ That does not mean the Church which bears witness to His life, death and Resurrection; the Church enabled, equipped and empowered by the same Holy Spirit that raised Him from the dead; the Church brought into being to anticipate, prefigure, and reveal the active presence amongst us of the Kingdom of God, of God’s Kingly rule cannot be open to that which might be thought of as ‘new’. ‘Behold, I am making all things new’ is a word in season for us all... See you at the picnic.

Ian Tutton



URC Thames North Synod Meeting on Zoom – 20th March 2021

This was the last Synod meeting for the moderator, the Revd Andrew Prasad, who retires at the end of May. He spoke very movingly about his 12 years in the job, both its highs and lows. There were commendations from three Synod representatives. The new moderator is to be the Revd George Watt. He is presently shadowing Andrew and will take over from him at the beginning of June. His induction service will be on Zoom at 2.30 pm on the 5th June.

Synod was mindful of the ecological crisis that is confronting the world. It has created a voluntary position called the Green Apostle. All churches are being asked to consider joining the Eco Church movement and examine their green policies.

During the meeting we were divided into random groups of about eight people and invited to discuss what discipleship means to us and to the churches to which we belong. This was a challenging discussion because it is something we at the Free Church will have to examine in the very near future. The Elders would welcome your input.

It was encouraging to hear of churches in different faith traditions cooperating in community projects as we do with the Night Shelter. This chimes with the discussion that a small group of Elders are having with St Judes on the Hill.

At the end of Synod, after closing worship, the technical enabler invited everyone to unmute their zoom connections to clap a warm and fond farewell to Andrew.

Carole Lindfield



Bible Study: Joshua

Joshua chapters 15 - 17 describes the allocation of land to the west of the Jordan. This was done on a tribal basis. The land east of the Jordan had already been distributed. In chapter 15 we have described for us the extent of the land given to the tribe of Judah. Judah is the first tribe to receive its allocation, indicating its place as the most significant of the tribes. This is on account of the 'death-bed' blessing pronounced by Jacob upon each of his sons. Although Judah was not the first born, in Genesis chapter 49 we are told that Reuben, the actual first born son of Jacob had effectively disqualified himself, *'because you climbed into your father's bed, and defiled his concubine's couch,'* (Genesis 49, 4b). Next in line would have been Simeon and Levi but, *'weapons of violence are their counsels. My soul will not enter their council, my heart will not join their assembly; for in anger they killed men... a curse be on their anger, for it was fierce; a curse on their wrath, for it was ruthless! I shall scatter them in Jacob, I shall disperse them in Israel.'* (Genesis 49, 6-7). As for Judah, on the other hand, *'Your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's sons shall bow to you in homage.'* (Genesis 49, 8). Therefore, it is no surprise that the compiler of the Book of Joshua begins his account of the tribal allocation with describing that apportioned to the tribe of Judah...



...The first 12 verses of Joshua chapter 15 are given over to a detailed description of the area of land involved and whilst much of what is described involves place names that by now have been long lost to history, there are two particular references that give a sense of the enormity of what was allocated. *'The Eastern boundary is the Dead Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan and the adjacent land northwards from the inlet of the sea, at the mouth of the Jordan.* (Joshua 15, 5) – *'The Western boundary is the Great Sea [Eastern Mediterranean] and the land adjacent.'* (Joshua 15, 12) ...

... Given what was to happen in subsequent years, it is also interesting to

note that the allocation of land involves territory that was to become the stronghold of the Philistines: *'Ekron, with its villages and hamlets, and from Ekron westwards, all the towns near Ashdod and their hamlets, Gaza with its villages and hamlets as far as the wadi of Egypt and the Great Sea and the land adjacent.'* (Joshua 15, 45 – 47). It is quite possible that this is written 'after the fact' as it were to justify the wars with the Philistines as being necessary in order to ensure that the land which God has promised to the Jews was their land regardless of who else might live in the land, or even lay claim to the land. In the otherwise relatively obscure prophecy of Obadiah, we have this description of the ultimate extent of the land to be occupied, *'My people will possess the Negeb, the mountains of Esau, and the Shephelah of the Philistines; they will possess the countryside of Ephraim and Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead. Exiles from Israel will possess Canaan as far as Zarephath, while exiles from Jerusalem who ate in Sepharad will possess the towns of the Negeb. Those who wield authority on Mount Zion will go up to hold sway over the mountains of Esau, and dominion will belong to the Lord.'* (Obadiah 1, 19 – 21). This is a description of the absolute limit of the land; what has been described as a 'Greater Israel' and is regarded by some as the rightful inheritance of the Jewish nation even to the present day. If we are to understand the politics of the Middle East, we have to be sensitive towards the theology that underpins much of what passes for political discourse within Israel, between Israel and their Palestinian 'neighbours', and between Israel and the Arab states which surround them. It doesn't mean to say that we have to accept any and every claim as legitimate, but at the very least we have to understand the perspective which governs attitude, outlook and approach...

...And then the chapter draws to its close with this enigmatic reference concerning Jerusalem. *'At Jerusalem the men of Judah failed to drive out the Jebusites living there, and to this day Jebusites and men of Judah live together in Jerusalem.'* (Joshua 15, 63). It would be some hundreds of years later that Jerusalem itself would finally be subdued. *'The King and his men went to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the region. The Jebusites said to David, "You will never come in here, not 'till you have disposed of the blind and the lame", stressing that David would never come in. Nonetheless David did capture the stronghold of Zion, and it is now known as the city of David.'* (2 Samuel 5, 6-7). Until then, Hebron had been the 'capital' but now under David it was to be Jerusalem. **Ian Tutton**

GRASPING NETTLES

Just one of a thousand and one ways in which we'll be missing Ian Tutton as our minister from next year is his capacity to raise issues that make us think. As I write, on the 21st. April 2021, we have his Covid Wednesday letter on the subject of the trial and the judgment passed on the Minneapolis policeman Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd. I am going to follow Ian's example by raising controversial points myself and acting as devil's advocate.

In a the US, a country of continental size with a large and diverse population and very little gun control, how can you expect anything other than brutality and a trigger-happy attitude from their police forces? The citizen's right to own a gun for his or her defence or for hunting is enshrined in their written constitution. It is backed up by a mighty pro-gun lobby that leaves enlightened presidents such as Obama and Biden virtually incapable of improving a situation described by Biden as a source of national embarrassment when viewed by the rest of the world? Every time a policeman in the US flags down a driver for a traffic offence, as he or she approaches the vehicle, they have to think that the driver may have next to him a gun which he may decide to fire at the policeman. This knowledge is unlikely to attract to their police forces men and women of an enlightened nature, well-disposed towards their fellows. Derek Chauvin committed a heinous crime and got his just desserts. Fortunately for him, Minnesota is not a state which has the death penalty, so he is left with his life to deal with guilt, remorse and atonement. But unless Chauvin is condemned to isolation, in which case he will surely go mad, he is very likely to be killed in prison as an act of retribution. Thus unless the question of gun control can be addressed, such apparent triumphs for the "Black Lives Matter" movement as the judgment passed on Chauvin are, in my own opinion at least, largely futile. It is strict legislation that is required rather than high emotions.

Ian in his letter then turns away from the US and focuses on us and our attitudes towards other races. Ian considers institutional racism and what he describes as "arms-length racism." He reproaches himself for the following reason: at a football match someone in the crowd makes a monkey noise when a player of colour has the ball and he, Ian, does nothing about it. I'm going now to bracket Ian with my hypothetical American policeman approaching a car where the driver may well be armed. If Ian were to reproach a possibly thuggish youth for making a monkey noise, this youth with some "friends" might lie in wait for him

NEWS OF PEOPLE

Since the last issue of News and Views we were sorry to learn of the death of *Jean Hackett*. Jean and family lived for a long while on the Suburb. When I arrived it was just her and husband Malcolm at home. They both played a full part in the life of the Church, faithfully supporting regular



Sunday worship as well as the many special events that had been organised. More recently they had moved together to Sussex to be near to family, and it was there that Jean passed away. Many of us have many happy memories of Jean. Our sympathies continue to be with Malcolm, with their daughter Kirsty and her children, and with their son, Brian.

More recently we have heard of the passing of *Andrew Rix*. Andrew was a longstanding member of the church choir as well as belonging to a number of other choirs and opera societies. Music was his passion, and he was a regular attendee at our many music recitals and concerts. During the last year he fell ill and had to be admitted to a nursing home, and it was there that he died. We will miss Andrew very much. We extend our sympathy to his brother Bruce, and his sister who lives in the USA. *Ian Tutton*

afterwards and beat him up for his disloyalty. (Having a go has its place but should be used only with a degree of caution and a strong survival instinct). Thus, as with the need for strict gun control in the US, so here it's not personal intervention that is required so much as official action. Before the start of every football match an announcement should be made to the effect that any disrespectful noises aimed at specific players will cause the match to be stopped forthwith. It is only with unequivocal official action of this kind that respect can be imposed at least at large gatherings. How people behave in dark alleys and their own backyards is, clearly, much, much harder to control. We should not, however, despair. I have lived long enough to see in this country the abolition of flogging (1948) and of capital punishment (1965); the Clean Air Act (1956); the introduction of homosexual law reform (1967) and other acts of parliament intended to improve the status of women, people of other races and the disabled. The funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh ended with the naval call to action stations and we would be well advised to follow his wise instruction. *Verity Smith*

LITTLE GREEN SHOOTS ARE SHOWING



After such a strange, different and difficult year, I don't think Spring has been so much awaited and appreciated as it has this year. At the time of writing, surrounding gardens and parks are a mass of vibrant colours - bulbs in abundance and above them masses of brightness from camelias and flowering cherries etc. Even in the passageways and footpaths, wayside flowers can be seen, from the humble sweet-smelling violet to the tall cow parsley already showing white beside the bluebells. Perhaps I can understand the thoughts behind one of Eddie Askew's devotional books (Eddie gave 37 years of service to leprosy sufferers) when he was walking beside the author Laurens van der Post - then in his eighties. They were walking through one of the remaining wild parts of his beloved Africa. Eddie referred gently to his age and asked: "Laurens, are you looking at all this as though it might be the last time you see it?" "Yes, there's always that thought," he replied, "But it's much more important to try and see it as though for the first time."

Eddie made the following observation: "To see something you love, as you did the first time. The joy of discovery, the sudden breath-taking revelation of beauty - whether a view of nature, a painting, a piece of music, or a person. We grow used to things, to people. We grow comfortable with them. It's a good thing in its way, a quieter different kind of love. But that can slip imperceptibly, dangerously into a taking for granted, into a lack of appreciation."

Perhaps this awful pandemic has woken us up before its too late to appreciate so many things. It's not until you lose something precious that you realise how much those everyday, ordinary things are essential for your well-being and comfort. Nothing can make up for a comforting pat on the back or heart-felt hug. I'm missing those understanding smiles behind the face-masks - and for those hard-of-hearing we can't lip-read any more - although that will change with a transparent mask! We've all been inspired by examples of people waking up and seeing a need and acting on it to make a difference. In the 'Metro' paper a few weeks ago there was an article about the 'Sunday Supper Project' in Liverpool. This project to feed the homeless, which started in a tiny student kitchen just a year ago, now boasts a headquarters and a Premiership footballer among its volunteers. Healthcare worker, 22 year-old Jess Healey, funded the project in December



2019 when she was a student living in hall at John Moore's University. Jess said: "Living in a city you can't help but notice homelessness. I'd always wanted to do something, but never knew how to go about it. One day, I decided to cook eight meals in our hall's kitchen and go and give them out. After friends offered to help within two weeks we were cooking and handing out 60 meals

between us."

There are numerous examples like this - some in the limelight but many just happening unnoticed except by the people helped. To my mind these are people inspiring green shoots to grow.

I'll end with a very thought-provoking meditation by the Rev Michaela Youngson on the Daily Service (25 March) entitled 'How Long?'

"We Thought We Knew - how the world was meant to be - day following night and every week had a Sunday and that was the day for church.

We Thought We Knew - how the world was meant to be - we made our plans, booked our holidays, kept a roof on the church and the show on the road.

We Thought We Knew - how the world was meant to be - we would see colleagues, loved ones again - and we would embrace, laugh and share stories as we always have.

But Now We Know Something New - that the world is not ours to control and that our plans are compounded by the smallest microbe.

And Now We Know Something New - we know we are not committed to our faith, it is not just a formal agenda, and not just a building - it is us, active in the home, street, refugee camp, hostel.

And Now We Know Something New - we only have today with those we love - today is the day to say I love you - to mend an argument - to hold one tight.

God is with us in the mess - He knows who we truly are - joy comes in the morning and there is hope - grief is not the end of the story - new life lies beyond."

And now I'm off to plant my sunflower seeds knowing that flowers and Spring bring hope and joy. In a recent TV gardening programme a lady, whose husband has been in hospital for more than six months, said her garden had been her hope and lifeline - "You don't plant seeds unless you believe they will come up." Look around for these small 'green shoots'.

Rosemary Birch

Inspired by Hope

During Lent our Bible Study Group (on Zoom) followed a course, 'Inspired by Hope'. This very up to date challenging Lent course is written by the charity, EMBRACE the Middle East. Hope ebbs and flows as it responds to our changing circumstances and perhaps for many of us across the world today hope seems a long way off. However Easter hope is much more reliable than any political, economic or public health initiative. The course guide explored the rich heritage and faithful witness of Middle Eastern Christians. We learnt about how during the hardships they face, God is very active and therefore they root themselves in hope rather than fear.

On the 5th to 8th March we saw televised pictures of Pope Francis in Iraq and despite the dangers the 84 year old led services and prayers amidst the ruins. When Saddam Hussein was in power (president 1979 -2003) there were one and a quarter million Christians in Iraq but today there are only a quarter of a million Christians left. Pope Francis said he was very pleased to come to Iraq, which he described as the "cradle of civilisation". He said, "Iraq has



Inter-faith prayers in the city of Ur, birthplace of Abraham

suffered the disastrous effects of wars, the scourge of terrorism and sectarian conflicts often grounded in a fundamentalism incapable of accepting the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups. May the clash of arms be silenced... may there be an end to acts of violence and extremism, factions and intolerance!"

The session on 'Hope and Memory' referred to looking at the ancient and modern past to understand the Middle East today. All the region's great cities, and many smaller towns, are shaped by centuries of interaction and exchange. However movement in pursuit of livelihood or leisure has become harder. Many of the region's challenges today come down to conflict of ownership and use of land. The desire of people to move is usually a combination of push and pull factors. Refugees in the Embrace Beirut or Cairo partner programmes, or Palestinian farmers subjected to



Meeting Christians in Iraq

harassment, want a safe place to call home. Across the region people want to be able to move around without fear of unwelcome interaction with soldiers, militias or minefields.

In her biography of Kierkegaard (Philosopher of the Heart 2020) Clare Carlisle writes about how when we move forward “we

circle back in recollection and race ahead of ourselves in hopes, fears and plans. By these looping, stretching movements we shape our souls, make sense of our lives – and this is precisely what I found Kierkegaard doing in his journals.” When we connect Claire Carlisle’s image of looping and stretching with the Psalms’ exhortation to wait on God and remember his past goodness, we can see how memory can be part of shaping ourselves in such a way that our hope becomes rooted in and focused on the character of God, not on the ups and downs of our lives. The story of God’s people has been shaped by their experience of struggle and their engagement with God. Their struggle can be likened to Jacob wrestling with God at Peniel (Genesis 32). For Christians, belonging to the Body of Christ should make us feel responsibilities to others, not least the members of Christ’s Body that we have never met but to whom we belong nonetheless. In this way we are able to connect stories of struggle and loss to the biblical unveiling of God’s character and ultimate victory seen in the light of the Resurrection, which we celebrate at Easter spreading through the Church and illuminating our lives.

Jenny Stonhold

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

“Many think the opposite of love is hate, but the opposite of love is really indifference. How often do we fail to even give notice to the pain of others? We hold them at arm’s length, not allowing their circumstances to break our comfort. We may not always be able to help, but the first step of love is to share in the pain of another.” (Mother Teresa)

Remember that the first step can be a simple letter, phone call or enquiry!

Rosemary Birch

JOHN BIRCH'S DIARY

As I write, over a year has passed since the first lockdown started at the end of March 2020. Things are changing: my last Diary was written during the third lockdown. Hopefully - to quote another adage of my Grandma - things, good or bad, do come in threes. Tangible vestiges of lockdown still exist - the most visible of these being the wearing of face-masks. I travel by tube into and out of central London each working day and then part of my job gets me out and about in central London, mainly walking. There is virtually 100% compliance with mask wearing - and from observations those not kitted out are probably exempt. Some of my journeys are by bus where there is still a 30 person maximum rule - again kept to, with potential passengers accepting that "as many people as you can cram on" no longer applies. This sensible attitude may - at least partially - stem from the fact that workaday London is considerably less busy than pre-lockdown. Historians, when researching the lasting effects of the lockdowns may well define a turning point in the way business is carried out - now that so much of research, negotiation and finalising can be done remotely, without tortuous journeys and face-to-face office clashes. However, in my business of residential lettings, to state the obvious, physical viewings are very important, if for no other reason than if a property is rented "sight unseen" there is a considerable chance of an acrimonious outcome.

Winter - in the way of sharp winds and low temperatures - seems to have persisted for much longer than usual (although as Rosemary and I saw



when we went up to Totteridge Lane earlier today) Spring is happening and the majority of trees are well on their way into leaf. When there has been a couple of warm days, then colder weather has returned quickly. Perhaps the pattern hasn't changed very much: 800 years ago, when Chaucer's pilgrims set off to Canterbury, the story begins: "When that April with its sweet showers ..."

Rosemary and I have both had our second jab. There are indications that the actions taken for mass immunisation are generally working -





hopefully this will continue and, with more leisure opportunities a “normal” late Spring and early summer will be enjoyed.

The death of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, has made me think of the tremendous good that an individual can still achieve: in particular, his

encouragement of young people to explore and reach their potential - which hopefully will continue for many years. You don't have to be a Prince (or even particularly talented) to do lasting good: there is nothing amiss, when you help others, in a bit of metaphorical self back-patting. In Prince Philip's life not only did he help others, but he also enjoyed doing it, often with wry comments delivered with humour and without malice. Prince Philip lived his life, made positive contributions and has left an enduring legacy.

Legacies sometimes come to mind when prompted by some thought or experience. I've been to Bristol several times: synonymous with the City is the Clifton Suspension Bridge. My maternal grandmother was born in 1877 and was the youngest of eight children. Her eldest brother was a riveter who worked on various building jobs which are still with us and are now regarded as iconic. As well as the Bridge, he was also employed in the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. Both of these achievements not only still enjoy a useful life but are also monuments to an age when there was optimism, a belief in the future - and no reason not to go on with cutting-edge projects.

My conversations, both socially and through business contacts, are beginning to open in me something which started as a hope but is now morphing into an expectation, that the long-term effect of the very different circumstances experienced, in one way or another, by us over the last year, may result in an appraisal - something which starts inside and then becomes part of our “web and weave” - leading to our giving more consideration to our attitudes and actions, before making a response, basically progressing from selfishness. This is innate in all of us -ie “what can I do for others?” To have this and to act on this is a great personal achievement.

To finish with the weather: it may be unseasonably cold - not helped by wind from the North - but Spring is definitely arriving. Rosemary and I have come back from a short drive around Mill Hill and Totteridge Lane - Spring is bursting out everywhere, trees rushing into their new green leaf splendour!

John Birch

A funny piece from Montrouge

This piece was written by Violaine Vignal, a good friend of the Free Church, and known to many of us. It appeared in the magazine of our twinned church, the Eglise Protestante de Montrouge, Feb. 2021.

Every year all the family gathers in Paris to celebrate Christmas, and with our 8 grandchildren we always plan a special Christmas game. This year, because of Covid we had to meet 370 km away from Paris in the family house which allowed us to meet the lockdown requirements. However, we could only meet for 2 hours, but happily we still managed to play our familiar game. We were able to tell the Christmas story - in our own way, and we have some good actors. So I'd like to share with you the special way we celebrated Christmas in lockdown.

In Lockdown

Characters: Jesus, Two Policemen, Mary, Joseph

It is 8.30pm; Jesus is walking outside. two policemen approach him.

Policeman 1 (PC1): Sir! The curfew! Don't you know about it?

PC2: Your papers, please.

Jesus: I don't have any.

PC2: Well, well, you haven't any papers! Name, your name?

Jesus: Jesus.

PC1: Is that your surname or your first name?

Jesus: You can add Emanuel if you like. Jesus Emmanuel.....I'm also called the Galilean around here.

PC2: Date and place of birth?

Jesus: 25 December in Year 1, in Bethlehem, in Judea, which used to be called Palestine. But no-one knows when I was actually born. They have talked about the 25 December since the 14th century, and above all since the 12th century. My anniversary replaced others which had marked the winter solstice, since ancient times.

PC1: You are confusing us! If I understand you, you must now be 2,020 years old! You are also a vulnerable person! Given your age, I'd have thought that by now you'd be in the old person's home in Ehpad?

Jesus: No, "my kingdom is not of this world".

PC2: Let's cut it short. Have you any documents which allow you to be outside here?

Jesus: I don't know what you are talking about.

PC1: But what are you doing out here?

Jesus: "I am carrying out my Father's work".

PC1: OK, show us some proof of your permission to be out here.....Case no. 8, perhaps? "Participation in a task of general purpose demanded by the administrative authority". Is that your job?

Jesus: I've already told you, I'm carrying out my Father's wishes.....which are therefore under the administrative authority.

PC1: Since you talk of your father.....the names, first names, dates and places of birth of your parents?

Jesus: My mother Mary was born in Nazareth, I don't know when. My father Joseph was also born in Nazareth. He was a carpenter with his own business. But my real father is God.

PC1: This gets better and better! Either you blaspheme in order to escape justice or you are mad, and that means you need a psychiatrist. Perhaps you were adopted?

Jesus: Certainly not. My birth is a complicated story. It would be best if you would look at how the story is told on Zoom.....

Translated by Joan Holton



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The entries for 1913 and 1951 tell of 'dastardly doings' at the Free Church. (The 1913 account probably comes from a local newspaper of the time). The reason for targeting the Free Church in 1913 is not known, as the suffragettes usually targeted 'Establishment' institutions (even pillar boxes and halfpennies) whereas our church was founded on the principle that it was independent of the State. Perhaps it was simply a mistake - they mistook our Church for the neighbouring Established Church - St Jude's. However, the 1951 theft had no such high minded motives - it was just a theft! The 1911 adverts tell of another world - the mind boggles at re-used artificial teeth and knitted corsets!

April 1913

FIRE AT GARDEN SUBURB CHURCH

Minister Warned of Suffragettes. Water Streams from Melted Pipe

Last night the Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church narrowly missed being burnt down, the fire being attributed to the suffragettes.

About 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon a young fellow went up to the church to practice on the organ and found it full of smoke. He at once called a policeman, but already damage had been done amounting to about £100.

The Hendon Fire Brigade was sent for, but owing to the fact that the fire had been started in a cupboard in the vestry, in which was a lead water pipe, the heat of the fire melted the pipe and the water itself put the fire out. The policemen worked hard with buckets of water.

It is thought that the fire was the work of suffragettes, in view of the fact that the minister of the church, Rev J H Rushbrooke, had been warned by Scotland Yard, that damage was intended to his church.

The vicar of the adjoining Anglican Church of St Jude-on-the-Hill (Rev Basil Bouchier) had also been warned within the last few days that the suffragettes meditated damaging his church.

The Garden Suburb Church was opened in October 1911 with an interdenominational constitution, which was then believed to be the only one of its kind in the country. The constitution was so wide as to admit members of any Evangelical denomination, and no member on joining had to abandon any of the specific tenets of his own denomination.

The Hendon Fire Brigade, under Captain F W Adams, turned out, but their services were not required. Only on Tuesday night, on representations made to them, the Hendon Council placed fire appliances at the Institute, Hampstead Garden Suburb, which is situated opposite the church.

May 1951

From the Choir Minutes Book (1935-1954)

May 1951 Missing Choir Members Property.

After the choir practice on 6 April it was found that a raincoat belonging to Mrs Mayles and a mackintosh belonging to Mrs Dovey was missing. After discussion by the committee it was thought unlikely that a claim made by either under the Church's insurance policies or our individual policy would be successful. Mr Youatt proposed that in view of omission to lock the door to the vestry, the choir were obliged to admit liability in this case and that the cost of replacement should be met from choir funds. Mr Youatt also proposed that the matter should be reported to the Deacon's Court for their consideration. This was seconded by Mr Harding and agreed by the committee. The Asst. Secretary was asked to inform the Treasurer, Mrs Dovey and Mrs Mayle of the committee's decision.

Mr Youatt was asked, and agreed, to be responsible for locking the door on Sunday mornings and evenings at the beginning of the service. Miss Butcher agreed to lock the door at 8.15pm on Friday evenings.

Mr Watson Harding, Choir Master and Organist

March 1911

From the Church Evangelist March 1911

OLD ARTIFICIAL TEETH BOUGHT

Call or forward by post, full value, by return -
Messers Browning, Manufactrs,
63, Oxford Street, Lond. Estab 100 years

CHEAP CHAIRS

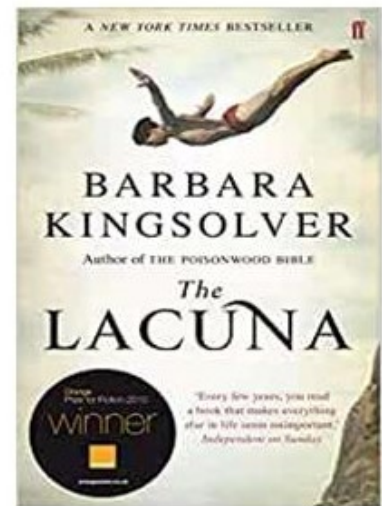
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Anne Lowe

Book Review: The Lacuna by Barbara Kingsolver

Kingsolver's *Lacuna* is another of what might be called her docu-fictions - ie the mixing of imagined characters with real people and real historical events. She has previously done this with *The Poisonwood Bible* (western interference in the Congo) and *Flight Behaviour* (global warming).



In this novel, the main protagonist - one William Harrison Shepherd - finds himself and his life involved with real historical figures in 1930s Mexico - in this case the artist Frida Kahlo, her husband Diego Rivera and the exiled Leon Trotsky and wife Natasha. Shepherd is born in the US to an American father and a Mexican mother who is always looking for a richer husband. In 1929, when Shepherd is 12 years old, his mother starts an affair with a big Mexican landowner, and she takes her son to live on her lover's estate. Adrift, the boy spends his days swimming and learning how to cook from the kitchen staff. When he runs into the artist Frida Kahlo at the local market, Harrison goes home with her and puts his dough-rolling skills to use by mixing plaster for Kahlo's husband, the muralist Diego Rivera. Eventually, Trotsky moves into the household, and Shepherd becomes his secretary as well as a witness to his assassination. Later, as a young adult living back in the States, Shepherd is targeted by the House Committee on Un-American Activities because of his past association with revolutionaries. Throughout all the artistic, political and erotic turmoil swirling through the Kahlo-Rivera household, Shepherd has kept a diary, which is published posthumously and composes the novel we're reading.

The title *Lacuna* comes from the mysterious undersea tunnel which Shepherd explores as a boy in Mexico; the tunnel leads to a cave (with ancient religious and human remains) which can only be accessed by swimming through it when the tide is absolutely right - and many have died misjudging the moment for return! It also proves to be his way out of life at the end of the novel.

A common criticism of the novel is that its main protagonist - Shepherd - is a colourless character of little interest in himself. But this is not entirely true. Very often his character has to be inferred as it were. For example, the fact that he is gay becomes obvious through events - but is never explicitly stated or dealt with. It also misses the point that he is acting as a kind of narrator or observer or lens of a series of immensely complex historical and cultural

events. Kingsolver wants to present these events 'up close' as it were so that they are understandable and believable and this would not be possible if too much attention had to be paid to the personality of the narrator/protagonist. Frida Khalo, a well-known painter of portraits and self portraits, is brilliantly portrayed in the novel as an explosive force with extravagant hair styles, bright clothes and breastfuls of jewellery; Shepherd notes that she always needs to be loved, however badly she has behaved and exploited people - being unaware that a single day's celebratory party costs Shepherd (a cook at this point) a week's work in the kitchen!

Trotsky is inevitably a major player in Shepherd's life. Through Shepherd's eyes, we see that despite many attempts on his life Trotsky remains positive and sunny, enjoying feeding the chickens, planting and tending cactuses and taking pleasure in small things - despite working day and night on countless articles and letters. The description of his murder is graphic indeed. One knows that Trotsky was killed by a blow from a shortened pick-axe, but how did the murderer gain entry when the house was a fortress with armed guards around and above on the roof? For after so many failed attempts at assassination, "they don't come the same way again" as Trotsky and his entourage repeatedly tell each other. The answer is that the assassin counted on Trotsky's inherent politeness and kindness in agreeing to go inside together to look at an article by the visitor although he, Trotsky, already knew it was mundane and of poor quality. The murderer had gained Trotsky's trust by inveigling himself with long-standing friends and giving everyone much needed lifts in his elegant Buick; "Where did he get such money? We didn't think to ask," says Shepherd!

Trotsky's death is pivotal for Shepherd. He feels guilty and returns alone to the US without friends and family. He buys an old car, drives willy-nilly and ends up in a small American town where he settles down to write his long-intended pot boiler novels about the Aztecs. These are very successful but the McCarthyites have been on his trail for some time (for having lived in Mexico and being gay) and his future looks bleak. He returns to Mexico and - sadly - the Lacuna!

As ever, Kingsolver writes in a brilliant and interesting way with colourful characters and events. A must read!

Historical note: it should be noted that during the thirties Trotsky was living in Mexico as he was persona non grata in nearly every other country. This was because the US, like many other countries at this time, was keen to keep Stalin 'on side' in case of war against Germany. Few countries wanted to alienate both the Soviet Union and the US and therefore Trotsky had to be kept at arm's length!

Marion Ditchfield

TWO SHORT POEMS FOR THE SPRING OF 2021

I would normally write something of my own for **News and Views** but as we all know too well, the times are not normal and so I find myself with nothing to say that I choose to offer for your scrutiny or entertainment. However, our rich literature comes to the rescue and so I offer instead two poems, one by Coleridge and the other by our present Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage. With respect to the latter, I would say that this poem alone validates his official appointment. As for the Coleridge one, it would have been a good choice to learn by heart at school because of its very steady rhythm. Alas, I believe that children are no longer taught poems to learn or read aloud at school; it seems such a useful way of giving a child self-confidence. Coleridge's friend Wordsworth came to mind when delivering daffodils to members of our congregation in the Suburb. It also comes to mind because I am watching "The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin" on BBC4 and Leonard Rossiter has to stride along Coleridge Close, Tennyson Avenue and Wordsworth Drive before reaching the station that takes him to work at Su[n]shine De[s]serts!

Verity Smith

THE KNIGHT'S TOMB

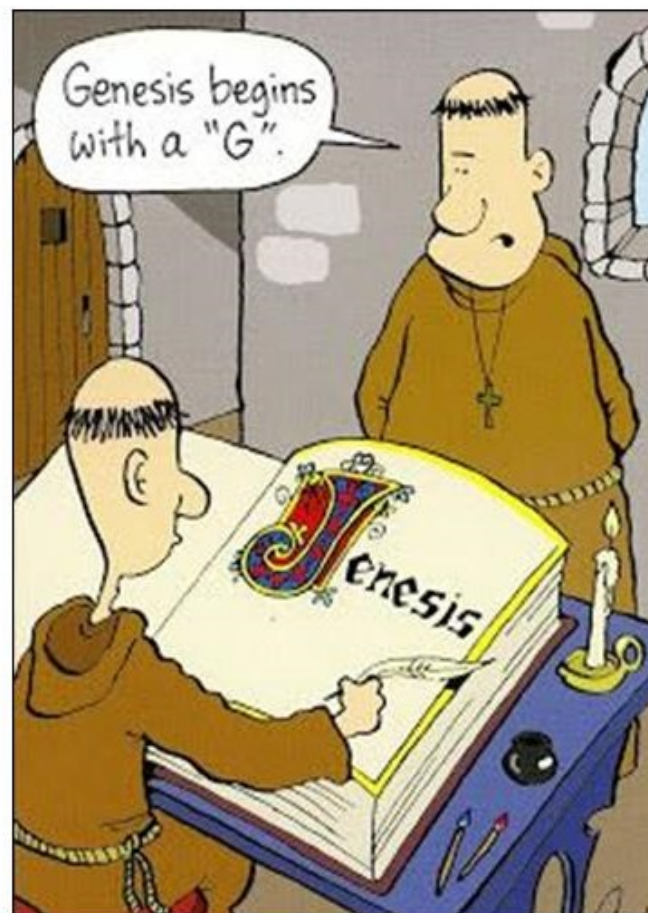
Where is the grave of Sir Arthur O'Kellyn?
Where may the grave of that good man be? –
By the side of a spring, on the breast of Helvellyn
Under the twigs of a young birch tree!
The oak that in summer was sweet to the ear,
And rustled its leaves in the fall of the year,
And whistled and roared in the winter alone,
Is gone, - and the birch in its stead is grown.-
The Knight's bones are dust,
And his good sword but rust;-
His soul is with the saints, I trust.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

I KICKED A MUSHROOM

And then I felt bad.
And not just some cute toadstool or gnome's bed
But a fruiting body of brain-coloured disks
As wide as a manhole-cover or bin lid,
A raft of silky caps basted in light rain
Stemming from one root as thick as a wrist,
Anchored in deep earth, like a rope on a beach.
One jab with a spade would have done the job,
Then a pitchfork to hoik it over the hedge,
But I struck in the boot and then walked away
With its white meat caught in my tongue and lace.
All night it lies on the lawn inside out,
Its tripes and corals turned to the stars,
Gills in the air, showing the gods what I am.

Simon Armitage (The Unaccompanied, 2017)



Subjects or Citizens? A Personal View: Part III

Long, long ago, it was a favourite question in history tutorials of whether freedom and democracy can ever be 'given' to a people or whether - if they are to be properly valued and prized - they have to be 'won', usually by war or civil strife, by some sort of sacrifice (some would argue by blood sacrifice). It is an extreme position but one can see where the argument is coming from and its bearing on the citizenship/subject debate. To the extent that these things can be defined, a citizen is a citizen 'as of right' (in effect, a right by victory or 'conquest'), a subject is a citizen only in so far as the system in which he lives allows him to be.

Ordinary people have never entered the English constitution 'as of right' in this way. There has never been anything equivalent to the American idea of the 'Representation of the People, by the People, for the People' or the French idea of 'Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité' for all citizenry. As previous articles in News and Views have argued, the English Civil War was never a war about popular representation - about entering the system 'as of right' - but a conflict to settle the different interests between two groups of people from broadly the same social class; the emerging demands of the lower classes for representation were consciously excluded in the settlement between the two sides. As the historian Christopher Hill notes, between 1640 and 1660 there had been two revolutions, of which only one was successful - the triumph of Parliament and the propertied classes against the political and economic constraints of the old feudal order. The other revolution - the demands for greater participation in society by the unpropertied - had been a complete failure.

Since then, popular representation has only been achieved by a process of constantly trying to persuade Parliament and the 'powers that be' to enlarge the franchise, a process that was only really successful towards the end of 19th century and into the 20th century. It is a tribute to all those who fought for representation - the early trade unionists (ie the 'combinationists'), the Chartists, the Suffragettes, the Methodists, the Labour movement - for their tenacity and endurance - and to Parliament for being equally tenacious in being able to withstand these demands for so long. Which is a reminder that Parliament was never intended to be an instrument of popular representation but rather the governing body of those with enough wealth and power to get themselves 'elected'. It was a reflection of the Restoration template which transferred absolute power from the monarchy to Parliament and symbolic, legitimising power from Parliament to the monarchy. That template has remained with us, more or less intact, ever since.

There is of course no guarantee that civil strife of itself results in citizenship and a mature democracy. A quick survey of the last hundred years or so shows it just as likely as not to end up in some kind of autocracy or dictatorship, complete with pliant subjects. On the other hand, it can be argued that while it is no guarantee, it might still be some kind of 'sine qua non'. Without it, there is no collective myth or symbol around which to build the idea and (and perhaps more importantly) the feeling of citizenship as opposed to simply being a subject with rights and privileges given as the gift of and held at the pleasure of the 'powers that be'. There is no sense of 'ownership', of having created and being in one's own show and not in somebody else's.

In this respect, Britain is in a rather curious position. In many ways the Civil War and, in particular, the settlement achieved at the Restoration, set a template or palimpsest for subsequent social and political development. That doesn't mean that English society has not changed since then - it obviously has - but certain very fundamental aspects have remained much the same, often at a psychological level - ie a Parliament unfettered by any written or embedded constitution (and which has a certain historical contempt for genuine democracy), a class and educational system which confers enormous power and privileges on a vanishingly small proportion of the population. And, of course, a morbid fear of any kind of popular disorder, a fear which takes us right back to the Civil War and its fear of the mob (the word was coined then) and which can still be seen in the ongoing battle of the 'powers that be' to further curtail England's existing (somewhat modest) rights of assembly and public protest. To which can be added the monarchy of course - the institution that nearly disappeared but which returned as the price of social harmony and is still very much with us.

Few developed countries can point to such a long undisturbed social, political and economic system. Indeed, a quick survey of our major European neighbours - France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Russia - shows all of them to have suffered some kind of major civil upheaval in the last century and a half. Even the world's oldest republic - the United States - fought its war of independence and had its civil war long, long after the settlements of 1660 and 1688. Only the UK has managed to live with an Ancien Regime (more or less) intact for such an extraordinarily long period of time.

From which it can be reasonably argued that this shows how secure and stable that template was - a template which enabled England to become a political and technological superpower with an empire on which the sun never set and which was the envy of the world. All of which is perfectly true. The problems only arise when one poses the question 'whose template'? To which the answer has to be a template that was constructed by

the 'powers that be' to suit the 'powers that be' and which had one of its defining features the absence of any popular participation by, or interest in, the bulk of its population. That lack of participation did not matter so much as long as there were countries to colonise, millions of people to rule and vast fortunes to be made. Popular energies that might have posed problems at home could be safely diverted overseas where any democratic impulse was quickly diluted by the need to administer and give orders to a subject population. The problems arose when that empire disappeared and the country was thrown back on its own resources. It was then that basic structures became apparent. The old original template became more and more obvious. Problems that one thought had long since gone away were still there - they had never gone away. It was then that some kind of collective myth would have been a great advantage. For without an empire and without some kind of collective myth how do a people define their national identity?

The danger is that they do it with reference to some kind of external 'enemy' or antagonist. Indeed, it is possible that this is one of the reasons why events such as the Battle of Britain and Dunkirk have become so important to us over the years - perhaps more so now than even after the war itself! For they are among the few events which have enabled ordinary people to define themselves to themselves, to see themselves as 'citizens' and not as 'subjects'. Unfortunately, they only allow a definition in terms of someone else, a definition in terms of an external 'enemy' - Germany? the EU? Culture wars? Perhaps all of these? At the same time, without a collective myth, it is difficult to hold a union together - differences between nationalities and regions which until recently might have been considered relatively minor, become more and more important - 'At least I'm a Scottish', 'at least I'm Welsh', 'at least I'm English' - the pressure for independence becomes ever greater - something which the recent push to wave the flag at every opportunity (another 'too late in the day' attempt to find a collective symbol?) is unlikely to alter.

Conclusion?

These articles began with a look at our love affair with the monarchy and the associated Ancien Regime that went with it (defined as its House of Lords, its hereditary peerages, its elaborately entitled and elaborately landed aristocracy, its public schools, private schools and Oxbridge Colleges, its Sandhurst, Henley Regatta, Cheltenham, Ascot, Wimbledon, Badminton, Lords, the Guards, Bisley, MI6, etc etc.) Bearing in mind that the popularity of the monarchy has varied wildly over the years, it can still be argued that it does at least provide some kind of collective myth or symbol around which we can all unite. It certainly seems to serve that purpose for many in the

population - perhaps a majority. Coronations, anniversaries, royal births, etc have all provided memorable opportunities for collective national experiences, as did the death of Diana in 1997. And surely that is better than having a head of state who owes his or her position to corruption or some kind of coup. Which is obviously the case. But it still provides no basis for citizenship - if only because (by definition) a sovereign requires subjects not citizens. But also because it has nothing in common with the vast majority of people it rules (and never has done).

In fact, both monarch and Ancien Regime exist in deliberate contradistinction to the populace and not as a reflection or embodiment of them. It is to this that they owe their 'magic' or 'numinosity', their fascination. This is why, for example, the limited, bicycle-toting, monarchy of some European and Scandinavian countries would make absolutely no sense in a British context. For if they became 'just like us', they would have no magic at all. As a result, our collective myth is a kind of dream world or soap opera. It is something we 'need' and like any pleasant enough dream world it makes us feel safe and secure. In the absence of our own show - ie a show we have created ourselves, a show which we have produced and directed ourselves - we can only watch a show that has been put on for us. Which means - strangely enough - that our central unifying institution has nothing to do with us at all.

It is much the same with our associated Ancien Regime. We are more than happy to tolerate this huge and vastly overprivileged world because we need it in the same sort of way that we need the monarchy - we need its contradistinctive magic. We need the fascination of something we envy but can never be, hence we become a nation glued to *Downton Abbey*, the Crown, *Upstairs Downstairs*, *To the Manor Born*, *Brideshead Revisited*, *Bridgerton* - and so on. Again, it might be objected that there is nothing wrong with this if that is what we want and enjoy. Which is obviously true. It certainly seems to immunise us against the kind of extremist ideologies which plague so many other parts of the world.

The only problem with undisturbed Ancien Regimes is that, over time, our minds also become part of that Ancien Regime and we inevitably become prey to a certain smugness - and blindness: 'England without the monarchy - unthinkable!', without embedded privileges and inequality - unthinkable!, without grammar schools - unthinkable!, without public schools - unthinkable!, and beyond a certain point any kind of fundamental change becomes 'unthinkable', including the kind of changes that any country needs to make if it is to avoid becoming a simple backwater among the nations.

John Ditchfield

JOHN BIRCH'S COMPETITION

Competition No 34: Who Designed What?

1. Supermarine Swift
2. Mini Skirt
3. Mini Car
4. Anglepoise Lamp
5. Concorde
6. K2 Telephone Box
7. Polypropylene Chair
8. Penguin Book
9. London Underground Map
10. Routemaster Bus



Answers to Competition No 33: Unique Locations in the UK

1. *On an island in the Somerset Levels*
2. *On Cooper's Hill in Gloucestershire*
3. *People from the Neolithic Period (C2000BC)*
4. *Menai Straits (separating North Wales and Anglesey)*
5. *Edge Hill, Liverpool*
6. *Naden and Greenboth Reservoirs, Yorkshire*
7. *Wakefield*
8. *Hardraw Force, Lake District*
9. *Middlesborough*
10. *Cadbury*

We look forward to your answers - send them either by email to birch1821@gmail.com or by post to J Birch, 26 Holden Road, London N12 8HT



WORDSEARCH: PENTECOST

W	H	I	T	S	U	N	D	A	Y	M	T	H	P	T
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ALL-TOGETHER AMAZED ASTONISHMENT
 EVERY-NATION FIFTIETH-DAY FILLED
 FLAMES HIS-OWN-LANGUAGE JERUSALEM
 LISTEN NOISE OTHER-TONGUES
 PERPLEXED PETER REST SAW SEVENTH-
 SUNDAY SKY SPIRIT STRONG-WIND TAKE-
 NOTE THE-HOLY-SPIRIT TONGUES-OF-
 FIRE WHIT-SUNDAY

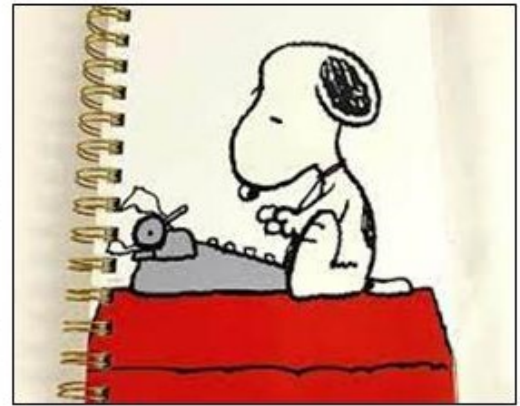


(Put the remaining 13 letters together to find how many people were added to the believers.)

Answer: Three thousand

DIARY

The church is open again and services will continue to be live streamed via Facebook Following a Risk Assessment, the Trustees of the Church have implemented Health & Safety protocols in line with Government and Denominational advice, and following the Steps and suggested dates in Covid 19 Response – Spring 2021.



Please observe two metre social distancing.

Sanitise your hands on entry & exit.

Wear a mask.

After the service please promptly exit the church and talk outside.

Guidance will be updated as new advice becomes available.

All services taken by Revd Dr Ian Tutton unless indicated.

Monday 10.30am to 11.30am Studying together in Church

Christian Meditation - Meditators meet here. For further information, contact: Georgia at gmrtutton@aol.com

MAY

2 11.00am Family Communion Service

9 11.00am Family Service

9 - 15 Christian Aid Week

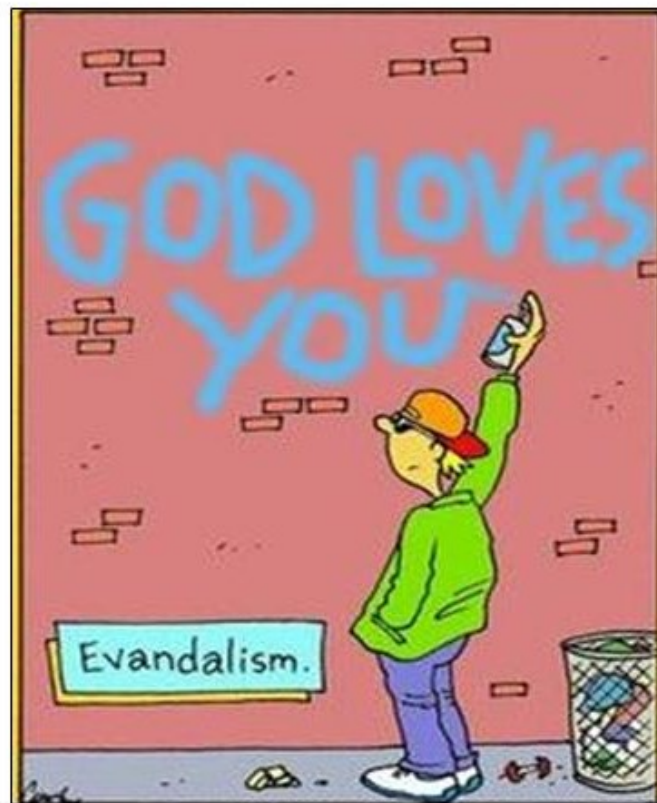
16 11.00am Family Service

18 7.30pm Elders Court

23 11.00am Pentecost Family Service including Believer's Baptism. Followed by picnic lunch outside the church

28 1.00pm Organ Recital by Mark Underwood in the Free Church.
No lunch

30 11.00am Family Service



NEWS AND VIEWS



PRODUCTION
DISTRIBUTION
EDITORIAL PANEL
TYPESETTER
EDITOR

John Ditchfield
Jill Purdie and others
Joan Holton and Marion Ditchfield
John Ditchfield
Marion Ditchfield

The June edition of News and Views will be published on Sunday 6th June. Articles should therefore be delivered to the editor, Joan Holton or the typesetter, John Ditchfield, (john_ditchfield@hotmail.com) by Sunday May 16th.

We welcome articles, as well as reviews of books, films, plays etc. from members and friends. These will not always represent the views of the editorial panel or of the Church. Publication is at the discretion of the Editors.

Remember - we are on line at www.hgsfreechurch.org.uk where you will find past issues of News and Views.

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