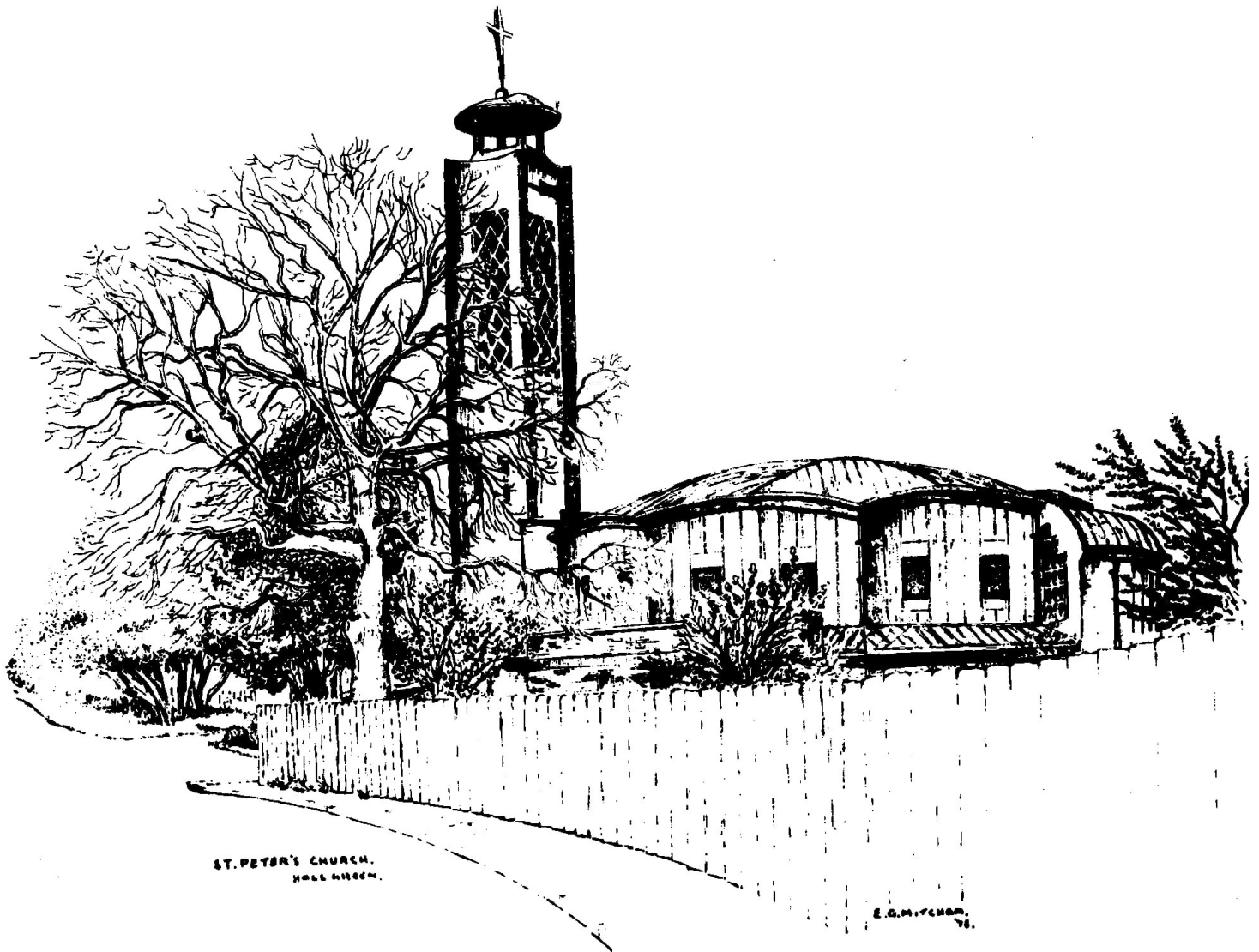


St Peter's Window



Services at St Peter's At the time of writing (early June) the church remains closed and there is no permission for public worship. Although there are plans to open the church for private prayer and times will be publicised through the usual media: Facebook and our website: stpetershallgreen.org.uk

We continue to live stream services on Thursdays at 6.30pm and Monday to Friday at noon, from home, and at 10.00am on Sundays. These are found via Facebook and through links in the website. Audio versions are available on 0121 312 9960.



A church where people don't

meet: yet a church nevertheless very much alive outside a building. We are individuals in lockdown, yet together in worship and reaching out in fellowship. There are many contradictions to our present situation and I wonder what we will be like, as a church, once this is over? You may be wondering the same. It has been lovely to hear some of the positive stories: stories of deep compassion, of generosity and caring, and holding those who are suffering most in our prayers. This edition of the Window is dedicated to the memory of four members of our St Peter's community who have died during the time of the pandemic: Patrick Holloway, Marjorie Harrison, Peter Fry and Barry Keeling. We pay tribute to them. It is also an attempt to reflect on the experience of lockdown on us as Christian people. What lessons are we learning? What is difficult and what is a blessing?

For me, the intensity of the change and the challenge of the virus have brought out the best in most, and the worst in some. On the one hand we have witnessed the sight of health care workers literally sacrificing their lives in an effort to care for their fellow human beings, of a massive increase in generosity for the supply of provisions to food banks, and of the quiet dedication of shop workers and transport workers putting themselves on the front line just because life must go on and people need them to do so. On the other, we know of criminals taking advantage of the crisis to devise scams to make a profit, of powerful leaders concerned more for their own vanity than the safety of the people, and of violent men using the cover of lockdown to ramp up the scale of domestic violence.

I have written in weekly reflections in the newsletter and in sermons about my own sense of what we are called to as Christians. In the first phase before Easter I found myself simply trying to respond as immediately as possible, to focus on what mattered

and to offer what I could as a parish priest. Then, over Holy Week and Easter I was not feeling very well and simply carried out the actions of that most sacred season with a due sense of their awesome significance and the hope of new life in the resurrection. Since then, this Eastertide and beyond, with the weather so glorious, and the garden and natural world bursting again into life, I have found more time to enjoy the great 'yes' of being in that world and in relationship with so many very special people. In this context comes a deeper sense of gratitude and hope for a world made new, but an acute sense, also, of the human sin that so bitterly mars it, and therefore the challenges of justice and righteousness to which our glorious God is calling us.

Here then are a few reflections that illustrate the rich sense of being called to respond and how we are going about it. Firstly, Helena Kelly tells us of what happened when Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade could no longer meet: 'Christian Youth Work from a Distance'. Then Johari Adjei shares her story of what it has meant to her family with the challenges of keeping safe when members are particularly vulnerable to the virus. Karen Wilson shares the story of Bushmere House is temporary accommodation provided by Birmingham City Council for homeless families, during lockdown, and the efforts of the group of visitors to be on hand to help. Sonia Walton tells us about the intensity of the work at Heartlands Hospital, and Phyll Benedikz about being forced to isolate on her own. Then Helen Glithero shines a light on her own experience of consolations and desolations after the tradition of St Ignatius of Loyola. Finally, I reflect with Nigel Harris and Pete Weir about what this means for them. In the midst of all this are four vignettes: short pieces by me in celebration of the lives of Marjorie, Peter, Barry and Patrick.

Martin



Christian Youth work from a distance.

When Officers and Leaders of the 80th got the instruction to suspend Boy's and Girls' Brigade meetings we were obviously disappointed. With no idea when we were going to be able to meet again, we started to think of different ways to engage with our members remotely.

We started off setting challenges on our Facebook page and it was lovely to see our younger members having fun taking part in tasks from afar. Our very special VE Day challenge resulted in 21 members being awarded the VE Day badge.

In order to engage with any even more of our members one of our Leaders came up with the idea of meetings via Zoom! Most of our leaders had not heard of this programme before, but with a few trial calls, as well as supporting BB nationally in setting up the safe practice guidelines, we were ready to go.

To this date we've run 18 sessions over the past 9 Thursdays. The younger members session involves show and tell, games, crafts and prayers. The older members sessions have included ice-breaker questions, quizzes and the clap for Key workers. All sessions end with The Grace, this has been a fantastic way for us to stay united in this time when we have to be apart.

We wanted to do more to reach out to all of our members. Especially the ones who hadn't been able to make our Zoom calls. After a quick whip round from the Leaders, we soon had enough money to be able to put together activity bags for each member.

The bags included, craft kits, a notebook, felt pens, glue, colouring sheets, a information card from Childline, sweets, chocolate, and seeds and compost for our sunflower growing competition. Leaders delivered these by hand and had a socially distanced chat from the pavement with members and their families wherever possible.

We've had lots of heart-warming feedback and pictures, the bags have been very well received by our members and their families.

With the news that there are to be no face to face meetings until September at the earliest we are continuing to look at different activities to do from afar. This includes treasure hunts and "Camp" activities via Zoom. We can't wait to be back to meeting with our Young People but until then we will do whatever we can to give them a chance to meet with friends and have some fun in these challenging times.

Helena Kelly

The Adjei Family at home.

The Adjeis, like many other families, have had to put various plans on hold in order to keep ourselves and others safe during this pandemic. For almost all of us, 2020 was to be a year of progress and transition. Dad was scheduled to make a phased return to the office but has instead joined his colleagues in working from home which, in a home as busy as ours, has presented different distractions and challenges from those he had anticipated. For Mum, Ato remaining at home and the changing needs of the family have meant that her planned projects have had to be slowed and postponed.

Ato had secured a place in specialist accommodation equipped with the tools to further his independence. However, with the considerations around family shielding conflicting with the needs of his Transition plan, he has had to remain at home for the time being. In spite of the inevitable frustration brought on by the lack of space and the restrictions of the lockdown, Ato is enjoying all of the extra time we are able to spend as a family. In particular, he and I have been spending more time together in the kitchen as Ato prepares more of his own meals. My own plans to move down to London in September, in advance of starting a graduate position, are also looking uncertain.

Safia and Zuben have both been fortunate in that neither had any public examinations scheduled for this period, although this extended period away from the classroom has been understandably disruptive to their usual

sense of routine and motivation. To their advantage, living with Sickle Cell has meant that they both have some experience of taking charge of their own learning. We hope that, in having shared this experience with all of their students, their schools and all schools across the country will be better equipped to support those who aren't always able to make it into the classroom.

Each week we try to have both a games night and a movie night – surprisingly, of the many arguments that we have every week, very few are about which film we're going to watch or Dad cheating at Articulate. More recently we have also been watching short films from the BFI's *Black Lives* collection which is filled with stories and interviews about all kinds of experiences of being black in Britain during the twentieth century. Of course, as a family, we are living in solidarity with members of our community who continue to demand just and human treatment in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. With three members of the family still shielding, we were frustrated not to be able to join the many friends we know took part in the demonstration in Victoria Square this week. We have, nonetheless, been encouraged by the number of our friends who have been willing to take on the difficult conversations that are necessary to dismantle racism.

So lockdown continues, full of uncertainty and the challenges posed by being cooped up together, but also blessed with the solace and cheer of 'unprecedented' quality family time, for which we give thanks.

Johari

L-R Johari, Ato and Safia



Bushmere House

We made our last visit to Bushmere House on 14th March, and of course we have not managed to do anything there since. We were lucky that Angie was able to talk to a new member of staff at Bushmere so we could leave all the toys in the kitchen for when we can go in again. However, since then, they have been in our thoughts and our WhatsApp group is still full of suggestions of what we might be able to do to help them through this difficult time.

We managed to get a count of how many children are there, in case we could get them any craft activity materials, and there were 40 children in April, with quite a few babies and toddlers. We weren't able though to deliver anything at this point because of the Coronavirus situation and because we couldn't get in touch with anyone to talk to about this.

Members of the group have kept in touch with Alice, who works at Bushmere, but she isn't always there, and not always able to reply quickly or sometimes at all, so contact is sporadic and tricky. Robina, who is in charge at Highfield Hall managed to get food from the food bank sent there, and also toys, Easter eggs and chocolate, and later on, non-perishables for them.

Bushmere House is very warm inside as the heating system is old and not particularly sensitive to temperatures, and with the hot

weather we've had during lockdown, this will have meant that at times, the rooms must have been unbearable for the families. The garden isn't anywhere that is appealing for the children to play in, and some of our group have been keen to get the garden improved, to make it more family friendly.

More recently, members of our group have been thinking about this and whether we could provide them with toys for the garden or alter it in any way so it becomes more pleasant and a place to enjoy being in. However, because the building belongs to Birmingham City Council and risk assessments are needed to be done for everything, and insurance is an issue. We aren't in a position to do anything about this at the moment, and there is a resistance to this from the Council.

It is frustrating and difficult for everyone wanting to help the Bushmere House residents, but we are hoping that with the gradual relaxation of the lockdown, we can at least just turn up and hand over things like craft activities, magazines, comics and so on, and ask the staff to put them in the communal areas for the families. We will keep trying to help, and thinking of the families, and pray that things improve for them in the short and long term.

Karen Wilson

Sonia Walton tells us something about life at Heartlands Hospital

When asked to write something for St Peter's Window about working on the so-called frontline in recent weeks I didn't really know where to begin. When I did start to think about it, much of the 12 or so weeks has been a blur.

I work with people who have end stage kidney failure and who require renal replacement therapy in the form of dialysis, so they are classed as vulnerable to infection due to a compromised immune system. Scary times when you know there is a potentially deadly infection at large in your community and in the wider world. This is a time when faith has provided unfailing comfort, and the opportunity to cast our cares upon the Lord has sustained many. Having a network of people from St Peter's to pray and to keep in touch with has provided strength, and resilience.

I consider my job a privilege and have met many amazing people in the 20 years plus since I qualified. Due to the nature of my work, I often meet families of patients as well as the patients themselves, and when you see people 3 times a week often over a number of years they can feel like extended family to us. You can imagine in times like this we feel protective towards them, but also helpless. We know that these people should really be shielding away from the outside world, but if they don't come into hospital for treatment then their fate is certain. Without dialysis they will die.

In the first days after lockdown I went into work and things didn't seem to have changed a great deal. Due to the age of the facilities there is no 2 metre gap between dialysis stations, and we have just 4 side rooms for people who need to be isolated. We have always had to use aprons and gloves, as well as a visor to shield our faces from potential blood splashes so for us the PPE was in place.

I work at the main unit but we have 3 satellite units allied to us, so as time has gone on the patients who are deemed to be fittest have been sent out to the satellite units. Those who have displayed symptoms of COVID 19 have come to us, sometimes just for their treatment as outpatients but in some cases to be admitted to the ward.

To walk around the hospital without visitors has been a strange experience. This has

highlighted just how much we rely on families and friends to provide company and support for our patients. In times of distress we have been fortunate that our Dr's have exercised their discretion in allowing limited family members into hospital to sit with their loved ones, but this is not policy and hasn't been exercised in other areas. We have to acknowledge that there is a risk to visitors, but many would risk anything to be at the bedside of their loved one. There have been many, many heartbreaking conversations which have had to happen over the telephone. There is no opportunity in this instance to offer a comforting arm, a glass of water or a tissue.

Members of our chaplaincy team have supported medical students who were allocated this incredibly difficult task. I have put in calls and sent emails to our wonderful chaplaincy team, at times when I feel their presence is needed. They have worked tirelessly, and were given all the skills to don their PPE in all areas of the hospital at any hour of the day or night very early on in March.

I have had the words of hymns come into my head at unexpected times. Thanks to all those years growing up singing in a church choir I have been provided with a way to use them as prayer in times when my own words are inadequate!! One more step along the world I go, Great is thy faithfulness, Father I place into your hands the things I cannot do, are just 3 that I have found to be invaluable. I've also had a Taize chant, which many of you will know, on a loop.... O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call answer me.

We deliver care to people of all faiths and none. There is no discrimination or filtering out of people who don't fit certain criteria. Diseases can attack for a multitude of different reasons and like the example of the good Samaritan, it is our duty to cross boundaries and break through bureaucracy to show compassion and care for all. Even when there is very real fear, there are examples shown on the news, and some known personally to us, of those who have sacrificed their own lives in service of others. May their legacy of courage, service and compassion shine far brighter, and overshadow division and darkness.

Sonia Walton

Life under lockdown

'Incredible' is an overworked word in the 21st century, but how else can we describe how the world was transformed in a few weeks during the spring of AD 2020? I still occasionally find myself wondering if I'm about to wake up from the dream, or rather nightmare...

So much news that I see, hear and read is very troubling. The many vulnerable people imprisoned alone in their flats. Those who are not working, and who, even if they currently have help from the government, don't know what will happen when that finishes, especially workers in areas of the economy which were already struggling. The ever-changing and often confusing advice (and examples) from the government. A death toll of over 40,000 in this country alone, including, from St Peter's, Marjorie Harrison and Patrick Holloway.

Ordinary life outside the home, going to church, travelling by bus or train, attending a concert, all suddenly found to be lethally dangerous. And if you're over 80 with 'underlying health issues' (most of my contemporaries seem to have at least a few of those) the feeling that the danger may continue indefinitely for us – and that we haven't got time to spare for months, let alone years, of restrictions.

Meanwhile all the great pre-Covid problems remain – the future of humanity, as the climate changes, greatest of all; international relations, including Brexit; the racism recently brought into focus by the appalling treatment of George Floyd.

There are also many things which help to make the situation more bearable, and perhaps living alone has in some ways been a preparation for it. I do miss my family very much, but modern technology does its best to fill the gaps: phone calls; Zoom quizzes etc (who, last February, had even heard of Zoom?); watching an online play together (well, simultaneously) and discussing it online; occasional surprises,

flowers or a curry ordered and delivered.

The live services from St Peter's or the Vicarage, and the knowledge that many others are sharing the experience, are doing a lot to support me spiritually at present, with the online service booklet and the emailed newsletter also playing a part in keeping our church together. Phone contact with members of the congregation, online Bible study and book group all help, though online choir practice might be a step too far!

I have learnt to appreciate my garden more than ever. And my early morning walks, listening to the birdsong normally drowned out by traffic, are a pleasure even in cold or damp weather, though taking pains to avoid anyone else I meet feels sadly uncivilised. Also, they do get the day off to a late start! There are no downsides to getting to know my neighbours better – those I usually see only making the short journey between car and front door – or to their unwearying support, with the regular phone calls to ask for my shopping list. There's always something I need, or at any rate want! Some news is truly cheering: the determination and success of a centenarian fundraiser, or the dedication, unselfishness and courage of people we are belatedly recognising as key workers.

It's good to have more time for thought, for prayer, for reading (not doing quite as well with that as I'd hoped) and to catch up with a few long-neglected tasks. And to remember friends who I'm only in touch with, as a rule, once or twice a year, and ring them. Above all, I'm more grateful than ever for my faith and the knowledge that however frightening the situation may be, we are in the hands of God, from whose love nothing can separate us.

Phyllis Benedikz

Joys and Sorrows of Lockdown

Recently I've enjoyed listening to the daily podcast 'Pray as you go': <https://pray-as-you-go.org>
It's a reflection on Scripture in the Ignatian tradition and offers words, pictures and music.

So using that tradition, some of the things that have exhausted me in lockdown are:

- witnessing the distress of relatives and staff at the hospital where I work as a chaplain as they mourn a loved family member or colleague. It's been hard to listen to their anguish of not being able to be there and to hear of people who have died unexpectedly and quickly
- seeing the empty spaces - the public areas of the hospital which are no longer bustling with visitors and patients. Seeing chairs spread out in crematoriums so people cannot sit beside one another. Witnessing the line upon line of beds at the Nightingale hospital, organised ready to receive thousands of patients but fortunately not yet needed
- feeling pared down and inadequate in my ministry - not always being able to be there to support people by touch, or presence or prayer because of fears of spreading infection
- missing many of the things that I enjoy and which energise me - seeing my family, meeting and sharing coffee and meals with friends, going to the theatre, going for a swim, going on holiday
- feeling so tired - because of the strain of lockdown and increased on call duties to cover a colleague who is sick

and alongside all this some of the things that have blessed, energised and sustained me are:

- my daily walk outside and the opportunity to feel the sun and breeze, to see the beautiful blossom and flowers, to hear the bird song and to smell the wild garlic
- conversations with family and friends by zoom and phone and through chance encounters in the streets
- the quiet roads and clear air - making my commute to work quicker and less stressful
- watching Shakespeare and Hathaway on Iplayer and reading detective novels
- eating chocolate, drinking wine, enjoying a cup of coffee
- having time to read the newspaper properly and to do a daily puzzle

and I've learned:

- I really don't like housework or doing much tidying or gardening - even if I have plenty of time to do them
- I like to be busy and useful; learning to rest at home alone is quite a challenge
- people really matter to me above everything else

How have things been for you?

Helen Glithero

Marjorie Harrison

Marjorie and Ron Harrison moved into Etwall Road in 1960, with an infant Keith, and soon were joined by baby John and joined the family of St Peter's. St Peter's remained a constant in their life of faith and social life for the next 60 years. It is a remarkable story of faithfulness. Shirley Witcomb described Marjorie like this: 'Her musical laughter in itself was a tonic.' And we all agreed that it was that infectious giggle that helped to make her such good company: in what was once Young Wives and became Wednesday Ladies, in the Day Centre (both as hostess and client) and in Mothers Union, or simply as a neighbour and friend.

For me, personally, the ways in which she could be so affirming – for she always tried to think positive – was a true blessing. For example, once she had finally moved into Stratford Court (a good move, though it did have its challenges) she would tell me to keep writing my pieces for the Window, and she would read them to friends. Or she would call me and ask us to bring communion as soon as we could.

Her family told us that she loved music and drama and was, in some senses, a frustrated actress! Her colourful and demonstrative presence was a delightful counterpoint and complement to Ron's steady, compassionate, meticulous attention to detail. (He was Parish Treasurer for about 20 years.)

In latter years the text of Scripture that she would often use to describe her response to the challenges of aging, of Ron's ill health and of having to leave their lovely home and garden, was from Philippians 4.13: *'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.'* Our thoughts and prayers remain with Keith and John and their families.

Martin



Patrick Holloway

Patrick Holloway died in Warwick Hospital on April 4th. He had been paralysed, with some movement in his arms and hands, after a fall down the stairs at home a few years ago. Latterly he has been resident at Helen Ley House at Leamington Spa, where he had a lovely room, some first class care and the opportunity to develop his love of art by painting and drawing. Kay and I visited him there last February half term and he was in remarkably good spirits, given his disabilities and frustrations, and enjoying seeing family and friends, including young grandchildren. Patrick's family did not want a funeral service for him and want to come to St Peter's in a few months time for a service of thanksgiving and memorial for his life, when all friends and family can gather.

Patrick was born in Billesley and had a career as a senior officer in the Merchant Navy. He had, therefore, seen the world and remained a man of wide interests and a keen love of people and interest in them. He was a thinker and a man of faith: the shrine of St Mary at Walsingham in Norfolk was a place of pilgrimage for him. At St Peter's he has led the team of Junior Church leaders for several years, and delighted in that opportunity to be with children and to share and hear their stories and to introduce them to the Christian faith of which we are a part.

We shall all miss him and our thoughts and prayers are with Gill and all the family. At the time of his death Nigel Harris described him as: 'A man of wide experiences and many accomplishments, but also of humility, graciousness and the most extraordinary courage'. Indeed.

Martin



Barry Keeling



Friends at St Peter's will always think of Barry and Barbara Keeling together. At his funeral service on 19 May I said that my lasting image of them both was of Barry one step behind Barbara. Not because he was dragging his feet, you understand, but because he was ready to support her and, when she got just a little too engaged in a long conversation, gently to encourage her on. He and Barbara ran the bookstall at church fairs and jumble sales, and together supported charities such as shoe boxes for Eastern Europe and other causes.

Barry was a design engineer by profession, but his greatest love was to be supporting Barbara and the family – daughters Alison and Helen and their families. So holidays were a particular feature of their family life, trips to Europe in the days when European holidays were not so usual for families. The family speak warmly of his loving, kind and gentle nature. When Barry and his older brother Dennis were very young they were evacuated to Burton on Trent in 1940 (Barry was 5). Who would take the two of them on? Mr and Mrs Ecclestone, a childless couple, came to the rescue and made a very special country childhood for the boys; something they never forgot. For Barry it began his special love for the countryside, and no doubt prompted their move to Wootton Wawen in 1994 from Highfield Road, Hall Green. They never gave up on regular worship at St Peter's, but also enjoyed supporting the local church and village life in their new home.

He was a man of principle, too. Attending church faithfully and happily he never received communion, saying that he had too many doubts fully to commit. However, on the last occasion I took communion to Barbara at Ardenlea Court he did not hesitate to receive with her. I found this very moving and an indication that he could accept the imperfection of his faith and honour the devotion which Barbara had confidently shown for many years.

Alison and Helen are keen that we should all have an opportunity of giving thanks for his life at St Peter's, and we will do so as soon as we can, laying their ashes to rest together in our churchyard.

Martin

Peter Fry

Peter Fry died in his sleep at home, quite suddenly, on April 20th. Sylvia described their 53 years of marriage as a happy one and spoke of his great pride in and love for his sons Mike and Nick, and their wives Judy and Larissa, and grandchildren James, Penny, Sam and Joe. Peter was brought up in 146 Colebourne Road and attended Moseley Grammar School after his primary education at the little school at St Cadoc's – what is now our annexe, 'The Hut'. After National Service in the RAF he joined the world of banking. After their marriage in 1966 he and Sylvia made their home once again in Colebourne Road. So that house was his home for 70 of his 80 years.

Peter enjoyed rugby, both playing and watching and keenly supported his sons' Saturdays playing rugby as he also supported them in their Scouting, and then when they joined the choir at St Peter's, loving the traditional singing of Evensong. (We had the Book of Common Prayer for his funeral on 18 May). Tradition and history were important for Peter. The Frys had been in Hall Green or close by for many years and he followed his father into the Masonic world, taking on significant roles and visiting lodges around the country. He and Sylvia have both travelled widely and Peter's favourite destination was a certain hotel in Interlaken in Switzerland, where family occasions were celebrated.

He was a man of great loyalty, and love for his family in particular. He had a mischievous sense of humour, compassion and generosity for those in need. Recently he has been a great support to Sylvia in her work with the Carers' Group at St Peter's, and in her international charitable and educational work, from Balsall Heath to Gambia. We shall have an opportunity of joining with friends and family at a thanksgiving service at St Peter's once the restrictions are lifted. Our prayers and thoughts continue to be with Sylvia and all the family.

Martin

Covid Chronicles - A Revolution?

Writing in early May Nigel Harris described the sense that amidst the horrors of Covid-19 there was, early on, a real hope that it had brought about profound changes:

'For the first month or so of 'lockdown' I had high hopes that such consequences would be profound indeed. Paradoxically, perhaps, people spoke widely of a renewed sense of community and interconnectedness, of a new awareness that we really are 'all in it together'. They seemed also in many cases to be enjoying and benefiting from time away from the relentless, individualistic treadmill of twenty-first-century Western society, taking the opportunity to think about it and to question its priorities. Along with this came increased reflection on the consequences for humanity of disdaining and exploiting the environment: the (relatively) emission-free air seemed fresher, the birds more audible, and the results of such practices as the destruction of animal habitats and the obscene overuse of antibiotics in intensive meat-farming suddenly more real and

alarming. Then we had the – to me – almost miraculous sight of senior Tory politicians not only declaring that 'society' does after all exist, but also supporting this assertion with interventionist economic measures that envisaged a significant role for the state and sought to harness its unique ability to smooth out (at least some) inequalities and promote (at least some aspects of) social justice. In short, it seemed to me that the desperately misguided and anti-Christian set of attitudes that we refer to in this country under the (of course unfair) moniker of 'Thatcherism' might finally be coming to an end. I've always felt that there is some truth in the theory that paradigm shifts tend to occur in modern societies roughly every 30-45 years, so the timing also seemed to fit.'

He then went on to express a fear that that kind of optimism was not so easy to maintain, as expressions of individualism came to the fore. But what might be the consequences for the Christian Church? He said this:

'A conclusion I would certainly want to draw

from all this is that, especially when current restrictions have been eased, the Church really is likely to be faced with new and rather exciting opportunities. Sometimes, ideologically, we seem to be uncomfortably isolated and working against the grain of many societal trends. What the current crisis might be revealing, though, is that actually, deep down, people agree with us more than either they or we generally think they do. The last few weeks leave me still hopeful that, beneath people's damaging (and often ingrained) layers of materialism, relentless ambition and workaholism, there genuinely is a greater readiness to engage with, and indeed commit to, the values of Christ's kingdom than I have generally recognized.'

So he concludes that.

'One of the Church's many problems is that, by definition, it invites people to come to it, and to do so at a specific time in the week that many people find uncomfortable. There are good reasons for this, and these reasons will continue to be valid. But we can't any longer be like, say, terrestrial TV channels in the 90s – dependent on people coming together and experiencing what we have to offer at a time and in a way of our own choosing. Denizens of the Netflix world want to do things differently, and on their own terms. So, yes, we must 'live stream' (if we can), but also keep services available online for some time after they have happened - so that they might be freely 'consumed' in ways to which people are accustomed and which are comfortably compatible with their existing lifestyles.'

And this is precisely the challenge for us now: that we are aware of how people can connect to the worship and life of the Church through electronic media, as well as face to face in a public building. If, for example, you take a look at the figures of those who 'view' our worship on line you will find that Sunday and Festival services are seen by this number of devices (perhaps often two people watching each device?):

Pentecost Sunday: 188 views, 2 shares, 70 comments

Easter 7: 167 views, 1 share, 44 comments

Ascension Day: 115 views, 8 comments

Easter Sunday: 366 views, 4 shares and 86 comments, and '849 people reached'.

If you look at the faithful daily prayers at midday for mental health led by Adam North, you will find that there are, typically: over 30 people viewing, sometimes over 50.

Now we need to be careful we don't over estimate the impact from such figures. For if you view a post for only a few seconds it is recorded. However, there can be no doubt that such posts make many more connections than our average in church act of worship. From now on, therefore, broadcasting our services will be the norm and not the exception. It is, as I sometimes say, the Parable of the Sower made real: we are sowing seeds with God's blessing and we do not know which will bear fruit. Such is the generosity of the Good News.

Pete Weir was also given to respond to some questions I posed in a newsletter a few weeks ago. Here were the questions:

1. What happens to our sense of time? Our experience will be something like that of those who are refugees in detention.
2. Who is in control? Are we going God's way or are we so fragmented that no-one seems to be in charge? (I find it difficult to identify just how to lead at a time like this).
3. What helps us in such a time when the virus threatens all of us to prepare for our own death? Have we made arrangements and instructions?
4. The Early Church began in homes. Does this give us grounds for hope?
5. How is it like being a people in exodus, and what will it be like to return, to the same ways, or profoundly changed?
6. How can we express the presence of Christ when we can't break bread together. (I have changed the breaking bread prayer this Sunday to reflect this.)
7. What mental health issues will be made more severe or created by this time? Pray, please, for the Holy Spirit to guide us in all these matters.

Pete gives some really thoughtful responses. Let me give you a sense of some of those:

1. *'Teachers are creatures of routine. We have set up a new routine and I used that to create a zone in which I can deal with the implications of lockdown and the things that are missed....*

For those without activity and/or company to speed the days by, it must be such a different experience. I think the mixture of the routine and the awareness of our blessings, plus a bit of mental focus, means that (even allowing for aspects of life I miss and the breaking of the rhythms of the year) I cannot compare myself to prisoners or refugees. I understand for those in different situations the comparison is more valid'.

2. *'I have been able to focus on each day - each day of relaxation has been nice so long as you don't focus on its remarkable similarity to last one (which may well change if the relaxation can be maintained). Work has driven time as described above. Glimpses of normality (e.g. we opened up on Easter Monday and I went into school - the only time so far) fracture that. The services on a Sunday morning are the exception to what I am about to write...*

The great irony is that the primary driver for this is economic. We treat economic systems as if they were the force of nature that cannot be changed and by whom we should be shaped. To serve the economy, we need to put the virus in its place and get it to just let us get on with it. The message is that the virus will impact on the economy as day will follow night. It will be ordinary people who will be made to suffer to protect the injustices of the economic system from the effects of the virus. As Mishal Husain challenged Raab with this week: the bosses will work at home while their workers take the risk. The way we operate as a society, we say, may need to change: why should the same economic rules apply? The Church has a role in pointing out that we do not have to run things this way.' And Pete goes on to say that sermons during lockdown have already given us material to reflect on so that the church is 'ready to grab the agenda once the hare of normal time leaves the traps.'

3. *'I openly admit to being unnerved when it became blindingly obvious that 'underlying health conditions' were not the be-all of this. However, I am in the fortunate position of being*

with my family, exercising regularly and being in or around cars less'.

4. *'Yes. The fundamental miracle of a few witnesses building the Church is undeniable historical fact. It seems to me they must have spent time in their homes discussing scripture to find the bits which were most relevant to their times: we should do the same and also with writers since the end of the first century (of which I am very ignorant). Could there be a suggested reading list for lockdown? The early church developed a narrative: we need to talk through what that narrative is now...*

We therefore need to make sure we talk about the nature of God. How do we respond to the claim that if God exists, he/she is a parent who leaves their kids in the middle of the traffic? Do we still insist that God is so loving that he had to kill someone to forgive us? Or do we actually start to really consider what a crucified God means in a suffering world, so we can then really start to talk about an Easter hope? People still believe that we believe in a man with a big beard who does not really like sex very much and looks after his own if we ask nicely. However, on the flip side, if our society thinks it is normal to ignore God, is it also blind and arrogant? We need to meet the challenge mixed with an invitation of this article by David Mitchell (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/15/living-without-shared-religion-neil-macgregor-living-with-gods-radio-4>). I think Luke 13 1-5 is an interesting place to start: nasty stuff happens, we cause a lot of it and it is random. Mitchell articulates a view that society is a better place in many ways despite rather than because of the Church: the Church is nicer because of playing catch up. The Church needs to explain and model how by people being more Christ-like we will create the kind of world people such as he would want to see, so society catches up with us! At St Peter's, sermons (not all but many) articulate this so well; the question is how to amplify this and to do so in the Covid-context. I believe people will want to join us in our work if they knew the we focus on 'justice and peace' and may well then join us in our worship.'

5. *'I struggle with the Exodus as a metaphor and I find it unhelpful as a way forward for the Church in these circumstances. The Church should be getting ready to shape what is to come, not just turn up and judge the lay of the land when we get there. We may be on a spiritual journey but whatever the new normal will be, it is being shaped here and now and we*

are in the middle of it.

6. 'This must be the longest I have been since I was in my early 20s without receiving Communion. It is part of my experience that is confined outside my present zone, which covers it up with gratitude for the worship we do have. We need to connect and I think I have outlined some ways we can do that if we can break any tech issues down.'

7. On mental health: 'It is a big question, but we will not really know for some time. We do not know how reflecting on this time may help people in the future. However, what I do know is that talking, caring and giving people purpose are damn good ways to try and prevent it. So are Facebook services, thanks!'

Thank you Pete. I am so glad I asked the questions! Because our responses together as a church will continue to shape who we are, what God wants us to do and with whom he gives us as companions on the road. We travel on, and I will welcome any responses you, reader, want to make to this.

Martin



Thanks go to Martin, Kay and Adam for their continuing Ministry

