

perspectives

Issue 49 - Winter 2020

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Dear Friends,

Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat, please put a penny in the old man's hat!

I will not be the first person to be reflecting upon Christmas and money this year! Talk of Scrooge and consumerism always seems to be continually in the sights of Christmases past, but today of course we are in a very different world! People's health and finances will be much more to the fore in public debate and in our own personal thoughts and prayers for those in need. The pandemic has caused massive strains upon our world now and all the forecasts are that it will have consequences for many years to come.

How then can we celebrate when there is so much uncertainty and unexpected hardship for many people? The first real Christmas past, of course, started in poverty and under a seemingly oppressive regime of refugees and a very inhospitable welcome (no room!). I am all for looking at the real meaning of Christmas, the spiritual message as it were of God who is with us in Jesus. He is our Saviour! The setting for this Christmas is now, as then, poverty and instability.

Let no one be in any doubt that our God has faced difficulties and trials and in so doing demonstrates that he is truly with us. My hope and prayer is that modesty, restraint and generosity to those who struggle will mark our seasonal activities as a Christian family. When these aspirations are prioritised, then it seems to me that we can say "Have a blessed Christmas and new year"!

As you will see in my article in the magazine (page 8) I shall be saying farewell as your Vicar in Tonbridge and heading to a parish in Sheffield. I will have rich memories of good times, wisdom and God's love, given to me in this community. It has been so amazing. Thank you for your readership and support of our Church and community magazine, it has been a personal blessing to me! Thank you.

Yours in Christ,

The Rev'd Canon Mark Brown
Vicar of Tonbridge

If you have any comments or questions, would like to make any contribution to the next edition of Perspectives or would like to receive this magazine on a quarterly basis please contact the editorial team via:

saintphilips@tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk
or Perspectives Editorial Team,
The Coach House, Church Street,
Tonbridge, TN9 1HD
tel.no: 01732 770962 extension 24



St Peter & St Paul · St Philip · St Andrew · St Saviour

The Perspectives logo found on the front cover represents the four churches worshipping and working together.



Paul White

Paul is a member of St Peter & St Paul and has recently become Church Warden. He tells us about his life & his faith

Tell us a little a bit about yourself

I'm 53 and together with my wife Ellerby, we've lived in Tonbridge with our 2 sons, Elliot and Riley since 2006. The boys are now 17 and 15 and they are at school locally. I used to work in London for a bank as a consultant advising on bank regulation. Now I'm a stay-at-home Dad.

How have you been involved in our Church life?

One of the first things I was involved in back in 2006/7 was helping from time to time in the crèche at St Peter & St Paul on Sundays. That moved on to volunteering as a leader for the SOS* age group, which I did for about 10 years.

For the past 2 years, I've been the chair of our Mission Action Group**. I've also been privileged to have been part of a parish visit to Kondo.

Could you tell us about your journey through faith?

As a child, it was church on Sundays and I went to a faith school, so there was a lot of exposure to organised religion, right up to leaving school. Looking back now, I think that very little of what I heard then was expressed in a way that I found accessible and I think that's part of the reason why I drifted away from the church for a number of years.

It was Ellerby who brought me back. As a couple, we struggled for many years with infertility, but Ellerby

had started to pray. She told me about her prayers, and they were answered with the births of our children.

How do you feel that your faith will help you in taking on the role of warden?

I think there are two things to mention here:

Firstly, let's remember that a church isn't the building, it's the people and the relationships between those people. It's reassuring to experience how the relationships that we have with one another have been used to help maintain our nurture, our fellowship and benefit our community. I've got to know many people across the parish over the years and I've seen their involvement in the activities of our church. With this in mind, I see myself as part of a much larger group that helps support our clergy to preach the Gospel.

Secondly, I firmly believe in the power of prayer. The challenges that will emerge over the coming year will be met with a prayerful response.

Finally, can you tell us about your interests?

I'm a sports fan and I think that YouTube is brilliant in that you are able to look back at highlights packages of a whole variety of sports and find matches that are really interesting.

Thank you for your time

* **SOS** is a group for young people in school years 6-9, currently meeting on Sundays at 4pm on Zoom – there are more details available on the webpage: tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk/Groups/338659/Youth.aspx

****Mission Action Group** - for more details visit tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk/Groups/296529/Our_Work_in.aspx



Families Eating And Sharing Together looks ahead

In recent months Families Eating And Sharing Together has adapted. Alongside providing family meals, FEAST FRESH is also providing bags of food. Demand has picked up substantially.

FEAST operated as an emergency food bank for 23 weeks, delivering over 600 food parcels to more than 100 households with the help of 23 volunteers who stacked, packed, delivered and cleaned – some from the Methodist church, the Parish church and St Stephen's and others with no church connections.

FEAST is now serving in a different way. The food bank closed at the end of August and people were referred to Sustain (North Tonbridge Baptist church) or Nourish (Tunbridge Wells and South Tonbridge).

We invited them to a shopping slot at a new community larder, which started, under the FEAST FRESH banner, with a team from St Stephens, at St Eanswythe's in Priory Road in mid-July on Saturday mornings. They had 12 customers in the first week and recently, in excess of 30.

We now have a larder in North Tonbridge, which began at the end of August on Wednesday mornings at the Methodist church (first week, 8 customers, recently 25+).

Our supplier, FareShare, charge a minimal fee per tray of fresh food of supermarket surpluses and we ask for a voluntary donation of £2 from customers who are invited to fill a large shopping bag with fresh meat, dairy products, fruit and vegetables.

We supply some non-perishables alongside the fresh produce, so we are glad of donations from time to time and are thrilled that this year's harvest gifts will be donated to FEAST.

The larders offer fresh food (the food banks provide the non-perishables) in a happy and safe environment. Customers and volunteers have time to share experiences, listen and serve. We still get emails from families suffering from reduced income

because of the pandemic. Customers are relieved and grateful that inexpensive good food is available just around the corner. We regularly receive messages like 'thank you to you and your team for everything you have done for me and my family' and 'we could not have survived the week without this, thank you'.

The FEAST charity brings together surplus and donated food, and committed volunteers, to offer healthy and nutritious food for people who need it most.



**The future:
your community
needs you!**

There is a pressing need for more volunteers to help in serving and distributing food.

Please see feast.org.uk/fresh

We anticipate that community larders will be needed for some time, we need to ensure the service is sustainable, spread the workload and potentially open more larders. Do please contact me if you, or

someone you know, might help on a Wednesday or a Saturday morning or with transporting food between sites.

Otherwise, please pray for helpers to come forward, for support and comfort for our customers, for good conversations and for the love of Christ to be shared.

Felicity Layton



Emily is released!

Our Children & Young People's Worker Emily Speed is now also a singer in the music industry! Emily is part of the Emmanuel Worship team who are releasing an album.

What sort of music is it?

This is a home-grown Worship album entitled *The Realisation* as in each song there is a moment where you encounter or 'realise' something amazing about God and our relationship with Him.

Who wrote it? Tell us a bit about the process.

The Emmanuel Worship team comes out of Emmanuel Church Croydon under Stuart Burke, the Music & Worship Coordinator. Some songs were written by individuals on the team, some were written by the Songwriting Lifegroup, but a lot of what was written came out of times of Worship.

For example, "I let You In" started from a few lines I was praying during a conference about being freed



from anxiety. Stu was in the next room also writing what would become the verse to the same song.

Where, when and how can we get hold of it?

You can buy the CD or stream it from all major music sites.

What are your future plans?

There will be some lyric videos coming out as well as some interviews with those involved. The songs will also be available on CCLI so you can use them

in Church as well. Head to the Emmanuel Worship social media accounts to keep up to date with future plans.

Good luck Emily & Emmanuel Worship!



Art in a Time of Uncertainty



artspring
gallery

Over the last few months of uncertainty, the ArtSpring Gallery has been working hard to keep bringing art to Tonbridge. On the days when galleries and shops were closed, social media became a vital thread for many artists. There was a desire for cheerful and uplifting work throughout lockdown and moving their art online to reach a wider audience has been important for ArtSpring Gallery.

During October the art collective showcased the ArtEscape exhibition of art inspired by lockdown. Conscious that many artists had been working away quietly behind closed doors, with little opportunity to share their creations, the gallery invited Kent artists to participate in an open exhibition of work created during lockdown. The gallery received over 100 entries and the result was an engaging show featuring a wide variety of work from 30 selected artists.

Many of ArtSpring's own artists created works that allowed them to express their feelings about the pandemic, or to express things they value, such as the tranquility of nature. Some had more time in their studios; others had to work in a different way, having no access to the places where they normally make work. Time was plentiful, but the usual sources of inspiration such as galleries and travel to favourite places were lacking. Colour, nature and local landscapes were common themes.

10% of all sales proceeds were donated to the YoungMindsUK Charity which offers Coronavirus advice and mental health support to children and young adults.

In the run up to Christmas ArtSpring will continue to showcase the unique work of local artists including paintings, prints, photography, ceramics, glass and jewellery as well as Christmas decorations.

New to the gallery are paintings by new member Katie Whitbread reveling in observations of natural landscapes and ceramics by guest artist Anne Wagstaff from Dodhurst Ceramic Studio.

Come along and discover all the wonderful things on display in your local gallery.

Visit the @artspringgallery Facebook page or the www.artspringgallery.co.uk website for more information and opening times.

Hildegard Pax



My Perspectives on the Community of Tonbridge

After nearly 13 ½ years of sharing in the life of Tonbridge, I offer just a few of the things that have blessed and enriched my personal and family life here. The Church family obviously holds a special place in my heart, but the Church is in my view always bigger than its faithful many!

So, to athletics! Many of our family are members and active supporters of Tonbridge Athletic club. We have enjoyed supporting their work and feel so proud to have been linked with one of the best clubs in the country. The work of Mark Hookway and Pete Mason is, in my view, unsurpassed in its amazing ability to have networked with hundreds of young people and adults. We have a few medals displayed in our home, but of greater value are the memories of mutual support and full vicarage gardens for their summer BBQs.

So, to music! I will stay in touch with members of my audio club which is based in Kent but it is a small indication of the rich tapestry of musical life I have enjoyed through the Philharmonic, the Music Club and our own Church lunchtime concerts. Such a wonderful gift to celebrate.

So, to dogs! Whilst a dog walk is often an isolated experience, there are many members of this early morning community that I will miss so much. They have been so helpful to me with the easy and supportive reflections on life, bringing a tonic to a hard-pressed Vicar's mind which often juggles many plates out of the public gaze. You know who you are - thank you! Bentley and Bella send their greetings and Tucker and Kilty, wherever they might



be, too. The 16 or so dogs Allie and I have fostered all have happy homes around the country, taking a part of Tonbridge on their paws with them as they go!

So, to the future! Everyone's past shapes their future, so you have done that for me and my family, thank you. It will probably come as no surprise that my prayer for the people and town of Tonbridge is that they find in Christ the Risen Son of God a friend, a Saviour and the one who can enrich all the aspects of one's life.

With deep gratitude for all I have received from the Town and her people,

Mark Brown



Fellowship in Japan

A reminder of the importance
of being together,
from our mission partners in Japan



Aspects of Japanese culture sometimes emphasise separation. Husbands working far from home, only seeing their families occasionally at weekends. Many young people (“Hikikomori”) stop attending school, shut in their rooms for months on end.

Our family of five leads a very sociable church in a rural part of northern Japan. Most churches eat lunch together every Sunday and the congregation relaxes together well into the afternoon chatting together and drinking coffee. Isn't church all about encouraging one another, reading the bible together and praying for one another?

Our church shares the good news about Jesus in sociable settings, opening as a café twice weekly where people come and rest, learn English, play games or feel relaxed enough to use the space in any way they like: some regulars receiving prayer, some studying the bible with us and some simply coming to relax and make friends.

Compared to many, we've been lightly affected by Covid-19 with only 18 cases in our county, but the virus challenged our church. Supporting Christians and reaching out with the gospel often involves meeting people face to face. As a church leadership team we sometimes struggled to agree on measures to guard against the virus. Older members of the congregation needed a lot of help learning to use Zoom.



Here are some positives we learnt during these times:

- **In changing times we are reminded of what never changes.**
Often, we find our identity in what we do. I certainly felt this when I couldn't do the normal work of the church. As Christians, the God who made the universe sent His only Son to die for us because He loves us. He loved us before we were born, He hears our prayers and He's looking forward to spending eternity with us. That's where our identity lies.
- **There are opportunities in technology.**
Unable to meet face to face, we all learned how to use Zoom and get going properly with email to keep in touch. People who wouldn't normally come to our weekly prayer meeting now attend on Zoom. Are there other opportunities to use Zoom going forward to bless the church? Is God using this time to challenge us to engage more with technology?
- **We are reminded of how wonderful fellowship is.**
Many Christians find it hard to meet because of persecution. We had a taste of this when Covid restrictions arrived. God made us to be together and Jesus prayed that we would be one like the Trinity is one. Now restrictions are beginning to be lifted, let's not waste the opportunities we have to support one another, to pray for one another, to visit one another – opportunities to be God's people together.

There are many reasons to feel discouraged during these strange times, but I hope we can also take encouragement from what God might be teaching us through all this.

*Mark Gelsthorpe,
Hanamaki, Japan*

IT'S OUR HIGH STREET

John Schluter reflects on trends,
bad luck and good spirits



The mayhem of the coronavirus pandemic has left a pall of economic gloom, and many premature obituaries declaring the death of the High Street, being displaced by the internet and e-commerce.

These past months have been some of the hardest in decades for our shop-keepers (with some notable exceptions). The online behemoths' rising power was already eroding demand even before the pandemic, and undoubtedly Covid-19 accelerated that trend. But there are other encouraging economic signs for what seems to be a beleaguered High Street.

Many of us are more aware and perhaps uncomfortable with the rise of the online juggernauts. As their economic power increases, there is concern about their future use. Their remoteness from the local economy and whether they make a proportional contribution to the national Exchequer raise questions in many minds.

There appears to be a changing perception of shopping. From the pre-Covid rush of consumerism - buying for the sake of buying - there seems to be a more circumspect approach, a more conscious consumption. The emergence during lockdown of a natural world, unshackled from the noise and pollution of traffic, a sky which seemed bluer for the lack of overhead planes, the time afforded by an enforced lock-down to go out for a walk - all these have made us just a little more aware of the wonder of creation, and the challenges of the sustainability of our world and environment.

Buying local

That has led to an increased interest in the sustainability of purchases, including buying "local". A recent Kent survey by *Produced in Kent* showed that £1.00 spent in a small local shop generates £1.76 income in the local community, compared to £1.00 spent in a major chain-store generating only about £0.35, though the larger shops did a great job

during the initial lockdown in keeping us supplied, and they create many employment opportunities.

"working
within the
circular
economy"

We are even learning more about working within the circular economy. Charity shops in our High Street seem to have benefited from our home sorting and clearing during lockdown, and what can be better than finding a treasure of modest cost that benefits a good cause!

The local council has worked hard to make the town centre and the High Street a pleasant environment, and it was encouraging during the summer to see growing numbers venturing out again. The Council has taken welcome action to mitigate the impact of the business rates on the shops who serve our community. A reduction in the cost of town centre parking would also be welcome - our parking wardens are sometimes too efficient for our comfort!

Relationship and Community

What is remarkable is our shopkeepers' resilience: their cheerful welcome, despite the challenges, is a reminder that a good part of the "shopping experience" is about relationship and community. Writing as a member of the Parish Church, this resonates deeply. After all, aren't relationships what the church is about? First and foremost our relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the source of real security and significance in our lives, and, growing from that, our relationships with all in our broader community.



CHRISTMAS CAROL QUIZ!

MUSIC: Use the cryptic clues to solve these; the figures give you the number of letters in each word. Example: Hushed midnight (6,5) = SILENT NIGHT

1. Vocalising girl (5,7)
2. List to the celestial messengers (4,3,6,6,4)
3. Percussionist lad (3,6,7,3)
4. Quadruped with nasal glow (7,3,3,5,8)
5. One observed a marine trio (1,3,5,5)
6. This royal trio includes us? (2,5,5)
7. Fervent hope for yuletide happiness (2,4,3,1,5,9)
8. Arrival time 2400 hours, cloudless skies (2,4,4,3,8,5)

ANAGRAMS: Unscramble the anagrams to reveal Christmas songs and characters

9. RANGME
10. TINYAVIT
11. HEMETBLEH
12. SHEDPRESH
13. EULLOGY (4,3)
14. SEEMLOTTI
15. BRINGAGALLEE (5,7)



Pam Calvert
2020

Answers below



A HOST OF CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

Look out for little angels around the town in December!

Angel Gabriel in the Bible brought a special message to Mary, telling her she was to have a baby, a very special baby. This baby brought light and hope into the world that first Christmas. This year since April many wonderful people have been knitting these beautiful angels. In fact they have knitted around **400** of them! We hope that they bring light and hope into your Christmas this year with a special greeting from us all at Tonbridge Parish Church. Look out around town for these special angels and please take a photo of any you find for Facebook and tag us @TonParishChurch. And can you find 6 single knitted angels, hiding on Perspective pages?

Quiz Answers: MUSIC 1. Carol singing 2. Hark the herald angels sing 3. The little drummer boy 4. Rudolph the red nosed reindeer 5. I saw three ships 6. We Three Kings 7. We wish you a merry Christmas 8. It came upon the midnight clear ANAGRAMS 9. Manger 10. Nativity 11. Bethlehem 12. Shepherds 13. Yule log 14. Mistletoe 15. Angel Gabriel

Building Resilience

It began with a *Message of Courage* on Facebook on 16th March 2020 just as the country went into the first lockdown. Since then the *Daily Reflections* on the Parish Facebook page have provided hope, reassurance and comfort to many. "The reflections each morning have been a real must for me to start the day", said Sandra Wakefield. "Sometimes they have been a comfort, sometimes a challenge, but always thought provoking and rooted in the word of God".

We are living in challenging times with the coronavirus and it is more important than ever that we find simple, daily habits to build our resilience - mentally, physically and spiritually. That's why our Parish Leaders have worked determinedly to help make God a part of our routine with daily prayers, reflections, Bible studies and online worship. Many parishioners like Ted Simpkins, have been grateful for the enriching additions to their spiritual routines: "These days my morning prayer is always rounded off by the daily reflection which my wife and I always listen to together. The evenings were a bit of a challenge until I discovered the *Compline*, a lovely balance of prayer and scripture, just right for me".



The reflection series, *How to grow as a Christian*, inspired me to ditch the long to-do list and focus on the people in my heart and my relationship with God. This meant keeping my family happy and healthy during lockdown and using my daily run also as a time to pray. The keynote from the reflections concluded that "the main thing is to get off the starting blocks and this will happen because God has said so". That is a good and motivating reminder for us all when challenges come our way.

Kerry Reichenmiller

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Our Services

From August to November we've had regular services each Sunday in all our churches, and we look forward to being back in church when Covid-19 restrictions permit.

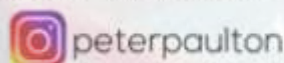
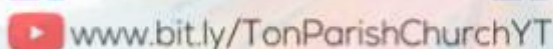
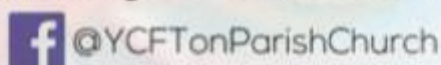
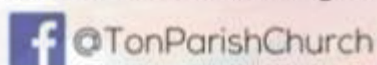
Services continue on YouTube on Sundays at 10am and 6.30pm, and also a 10am Wednesday reflection.

Christmas services are on back page & p.14

Please see our website or contact the Parish Office for further details

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Youth, Children & Families:

Sunday Club (ages 4-11), SOS (11-14), GRUB and Refresh (14-18) meet on ZOOM see website or our Facebook page @ycfTonParishChurch

Church and Community:

Coffee Lounge, Coffee Break, Open House, Teddies, Tiny Acorns, Men and Women's Ministry, Craft Workshops, Home Groups and prayer gatherings: many are on ZOOM - see website for contacts and for news of re-opening

Comfort
and Joy



Comfort and Joy is the Church of **England's Christmas campaign 2020.**

Journey through the Christmas season with the services and daily **readings. Find God's comfort and, whatever your circumstances, be surprised by God's joy...**

For an app with daily inspiration, a daily email, and exciting downloads including a countdown, go to www.churchofengland.org/ComfortAndJoy

New Year

New Alpha course online

Join us to explore the big questions of life.

Alpha

More details of dates, times and details of how to join: see

www.tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk

Step

INTO THE UNKNOWN

THIS CHRISTMAS EVE

All ages welcome
3pm & 5pm St Peter & St Paul



**Traditional carols and modern twists
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**Head to our website for updates and
BOOKING DETAILS**
Elsa & Olaf costumes welcome!

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www.genealogy-researcher.co.uk

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- ▲ We understand your wishes and we're here to help
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- ▲ We always provide itemised estimates
- ▲ We operate our own mortuary and private chapel of rest
- ▲ We're proud members of SAIF and BIFD
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At the time of writing, we are having fun with the full timetable taking place via zoom online!

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Comfort and Joy

**Sunday 20th Dec: Carol Services 3pm, 5pm, 7pm
St Peter & St Paul**

**Christmas Eve: Into the Unknown 3pm, 5pm (see inside)
Midnight Holy Communion 11.30pm
St Peter & St Paul**

**Christmas Day: Christmas Morning service 10am on
YouTube TonParishChurchYT**

**Holy Communion 8.30am & 10am
St Saviour**

**Family Service 8.30am & 10am
St Peter & St Paul**



Comfort and Joy

*See inside for details of the Comfort
and Joy campaign!*



In Church? On Youtube? Go to our website or ring the Parish Office
for the latest update: www.tonbridgeparishchurch.org.uk
01732 770962 ext 24



St Peter & St Paul • St Philip • St Andrew • St Saviour