

# Link

**May 2024**

The Magazine of the United Reformed Church  
Stratford-upon-Avon



***Worship, Witness and love for others through Jesus Christ***

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Rother Street  
Stratford-upon-Avon**

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# Thoughts for May

## Mr Motivator

What is motivation? Wikipedia defines it thus:

“Motivation is an internal state that propels individuals to engage in goal-directed behaviour”. Wikipedia carries on: “It is often understood as a force that explains why people or animals initiate, continue, or terminate a certain behaviour at a particular time. It is a complex phenomenon, and its precise definition is disputed”.

OK - have you got that? Sounds overly complicated to me. It's one of those things that is easier to explain by examples:

I am motivated to write these Thoughts for the Month because I have a deadline. My grandsons are motivated (sometimes!) to revise because they want good enough exam grades to go to university. Football players are motivated to win the game by the pre-match and half-time talks they get from their coach. A company's executive board is motivated to make a profit because they are beholden to their shareholders. I guess sportsmen/women are motivated to win either by the prestige that comes from winning and/or by the prize money. I was motivated to become a doctor because I wanted to help people.

The psychologists categorise motivation into primary or basic motives and secondary or learned motives. Examples of primary motives are common to both animals and humans: they are thought to include hunger, thirst, sex, avoidance of pain, aggression and fear. Secondary motives, usually studied in humans, include achievement, power motivation and a number of other specialised motives. Today I'm talking about secondary motives and the achievement of our Christian aims; the achievement of being a true follower and emulator of Jesus.

I entitled this piece 'Mr Motivator' – remember him? Derrick Evans MBE, a Jamaican born British fitness instructor. He came to fame in 1993 on GMTV breakfast television with his fitness sessions. He came back to fame during the Covid lockdown when he realised that home workouts had regained popularity. He motivates people to get fitter and lead a happier life. He also runs motivation sessions for businesses. He says on his website: “Remember you're capable



of achieving greatness and I'm here to support you every step of the way ....  
Together, we'll make your dreams a reality. Stay motivated, stay positive!"

On the 19th May we celebrate Pentecost: the day when God sent his Holy Spirit down to the disciples, who were at a low ebb, after the death of Jesus. As Simon Burne suggested to us recently, the disciples were probably either teenagers or men in their early twenties. Remember that they were not priests or well-educated men and women: many of them were simple fishermen. But the Holy Spirit transformed them: they truly became fishers of men! Peter stood up in public and gave a 'sermon' that anybody nowadays would be proud of. As a result of that, 3000 people in Jerusalem became Christian followers in one day. Now that's motivation for you!! Motivation by the Holy Spirit of the disciples.

But the motivation of the Holy Spirit was not just for the 12 disciples. It is for everyone – you and me, the whole Rother Street congregation. Being a Christian is sometimes hard. Sometimes it's frightening. Generally, we're not good proclaiming our faith, at loving our neighbours unreservedly, at constantly doing good deeds, at explaining the basis of our Christian faith to those around us – I guess we are scared of failure, we are scared of being scorned or laughed at. The Christian faith is not these days the flavour of the month or the year or the century!

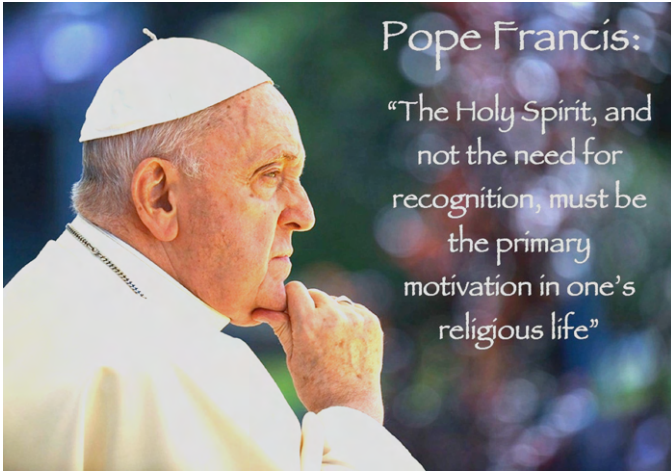
BUT, we have Mr Motivator – AKA the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is behind us, above us, beside us ALL the time. The Holy Spirit could also say: "Remember you're capable of achieving greatness and I'm here to support you every step of the way ....  
Together, we'll make your dreams a reality. Stay motivated, stay positive!"



There is no better way of running our individual lives and of running our church, than to rely on the motivation, the courage and the friendship provided by the Holy Spirit.

Let's not forget that, now and every day, as we celebrate Pentecost.

*Peter*



## Family News

We offer our sincere condolences to Phil and family on the sad loss of his daughter Karen who passed away peacefully at Myton Hospice on 18th April. She had bravely chosen not to have any treatment following her diagnosis of cancer some eighteen months ago. Please hold Phil and family in your prayers at this difficult time.

Ivy is recovering from the effects of a foot infection and it was good to see her back in Church on Sunday. We wish her a full recovery.

At our recent Annual General Meeting, Natasha Gavrilova and Brian Douglas were accepted into membership and will be formally inducted at an upcoming service.

## What's on at the Bear Pit

**Dark Side of the Ledge: 4th May at 7.30pm**



The Bear Pit welcomes back DARK SIDE OF THE LEDGE: an evening of classic Pink Floyd music performed by Warwickshire-based folk-rock favourites MEET ON THE LEDGE.

The concert will feature songs from The Dark Side of the Moon – arguably the most influential rock album of all time – along with selections from Pink Floyd’s extensive back catalogue, including Arnold Layne, Comfortably Numb, Another Brick in the Wall, Wish You Were Here, Echoes, See Emily Play, Shine On You Crazy Diamond, and many more.

The band have been regulars at the Bear Pit for many years, playing to sell-out audiences with their Pink Floyd tribute show, and also with their own unique brand of uplifting electric folk music. The show’s last appearance at the Bear Pit in April 2023 sold out in less than 48 hours, so please make sure to book early.

Tickets: £12

## Stratford One Act Play Festival: 9th to 11th May at 7.30pm

The Stratford One Act Festival is proud to be returning to the Bear Pit theatre again this year. We have three nights of great performances brought to you by groups from Stratford upon Avon and the surrounding area. Over three nights, there are nine shows ranging from modern day family comedy to period dramas. There will certainly be something for everyone in our eclectic mix and you may just come across some unexpected treats too. Do join us to find out more about your local theatre groups and to share in the joy of live performance.



**Thursday 9th May:** “Small Talk” - The Phoenix players

Interval: “Ulysses Syndrome” and “Suffer the Little Children” - Essex Players

**Friday 10th May:** “Pigeon Syndrome - Kineton Amateur Dramatic Society

Interval: “Unfinished” - Shakespeare Press and “Boyfriends and Bumfluff” - the Phoenix Players

**Saturday 11th May:** “Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde - Caramba



Interval: “Dear Cassandra” – Caramba Theatre and “Black ‘Ell” – Phoenix Players.

Tickets: £7.50

## Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny

11th May at 10.30am – 13.04pm

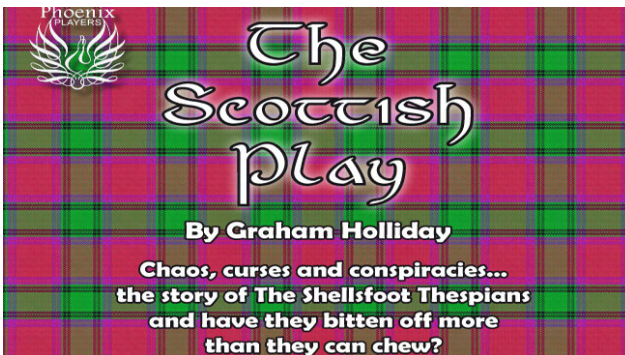


Bear Pit Community Theatre supported by Stratford Town Trust.

Finding himself in a new era, approaching retirement, Indy wrestles with fitting into a world that seems to have outgrown him. But as the tentacles of an all-too-familiar evil return in the form of an old rival, Indy must don his hat and pick up his whip once more to make sure an ancient and powerful artefact doesn't fall into the wrong hands. Cert 12A

Tickets: £5

## The Scottish Play: 15th to 18th May at 7.30pm



A Phoenix Players production. Join the Shellsfoot Thespians as they attempt to put on theatre's most celebrated, yet most cursed production. But at what cost? Michael harbours an ambition to direct 'Macbeth' and gets his chance for the

autumn slot with his local am dram group. He encounters many problems – the wrath of the society’s self-appointed chair lady, financial issues and even affairs. Will he and the cast leave the production unscathed?

Tickets: £14

## What’s Wrong with Benny Hill? : 24th May at 7.30pm



Giles Shenton Productions proudly presents the hard-hitting new comedy What’s Wrong with Benny Hill.

Benny Hill died alone in his spartan flat in 1992, he was 68. His body was undiscovered for several days. Benny was, had been and still is, one of the most successful comedians of all time. When Apollo Eleven landed on the moon in 1969, millions watched live on TV but that evening many more had tuned in to “The Benny Hill Show”. Today “The Benny Hill Show” is broadcast regularly in over a hundred countries around the world. In Britain he has effectively been “cancelled”.

“What’s Wrong With Benny Hill?” is a brand-new musical comedy that explores the life and legacy of a very peculiar and brilliant comedian. It tells the story of his life and shows why he was considered by many of his peers to be the best, an “Imperial Clown”. Benny was Charlie Chaplin’s favourite comedian. Anthony Burgess described him as “One of the great artists of our age.” He has millions of avid fans all over the world so why has he been airbrushed from British Comedy History? Why is there no statue or memorial in his hometown of Southampton?

Mark Carey, in his latest play sets out to address these questions and provide an insight into a unique and deeply private man with a very public face and tackles current issues such as cancel culture and freedom of speech.

Tickets: £15 (concessions £12)



# Three Days in March

Squeezed in between the always moving Tenebrae service on Good Friday and the joyful celebrations on Easter Day, our church was the venue for a concert in aid of Street Arts, a charity which works with homeless and vulnerable people. The charity holds workshops where they encourage people to express themselves in music and poetry. Many of you will have heard them sing at Clive's funeral service.

The fund raiser on Easter Saturday featured a group of local musicians, some of whom work with Street Arts. On this occasion they were performing songs from "The Last Waltz", a concert which has become legendary amongst fans of American rock group, The Band.

As I sat in the audience enjoying my glass of wine, whilst listening to the music I love, I reflected on what an extraordinary place our church is. To be able to move almost seamlessly from a deeply moving service through to Easter Sunday, via a rock concert made me feel proud of what we are able to achieve and the contribution we make to our local community.

As I write this we are halfway through the Knitted Bible exhibition, a further example of our small but willing band pulling together, at very short notice, to put on something extraordinary - Well-done us!

***Ann Jones***



# Children in care become adults – or they lose their home because of a new approach to care. What happens then?

In October 1972, The Children's Society was forced to close our home in Ipswich which housed seventeen children. What were we to do with them? Fortunately, many mothers decided to remove their child/ children from care, some arranged for them to be rehomed nearer to their place of residence and three children returned to their old home, a Nursery in Lowestoft.

This left our fifteen year old who had no one. When we told him of the closure, he asked why we'd 'bothered to come' - as we'd only been houseparents for just over three years.

We had decided we would foster him to give him continuity, but he didn't immediately jump at the opportunity. As children began to disappear from his life he decided, as he 'liked the baby', he'd better join our family! He took out his frustration on a lad at school who made an unfortunate comment, which resulted in an interview with the Headmaster and a suspension for two days.

How he cried when he was collected from school; he had rarely been in trouble and worked hard, although he was a big lad for his years and ended up as a County rugby player for Suffolk Colts.

Just before he was sixteen, there was a meeting with his Social Worker and it was decided that he would train as a Forester if he passed the necessary tests. In 1973, he went to Penrith College of Forestry, gained all the qualifications, came home in high spirits and got a job in the nearby forest so that he could live at home. In 1975 he applied to work as an assistant forester for The Forestry Commission in Dunwich which had a tied house. Some years later he worked as a Forester for The National Trust and in 1998 for Suffolk County Council as the Woodland Advisor.

In 2017 he won the Peter Seville award for his contribution to forestry - so proud of his success!

Childcare had been a call from God, so why did it end?

I had started this journey in my twenties (expecting it to be a career), dealt with vulnerable children, who had many emotional issues after distressing starts and I

had little experience of dealing with a house of problems, but it was surprisingly less stressful than one could imagine. Many memories of good times remain after over 50 years and all the children live in my heart.

*Carole Sampson*

## Thoughts on Life by an Older Person

1. When one door closes and another door opens, you are probably in prison.
2. To me, "drink responsibly" means don't spill it.
3. It's the start of a brand-new day, and I'm off like a herd of turtles.
4. The older I get, the earlier it gets late.
5. I remember being able to get up without making sound effects.
6. I had my patience tested. I'm negative.
7. Remember, if you lose a sock in the dryer, it comes back as a Tupperware lid that doesn't fit any of your containers.
8. If you're sitting in public and a stranger takes the seat next to you, just stare straight ahead and say, "Did you bring the money?"
9. When you ask me what I am doing today, and I say "nothing," it does not mean I am free. It means I am doing nothing.
10. I finally got eight hours of sleep. It took me three days, but whatever.
11. I run like the winded.
12. I hate it when a couple argues in public, and I missed the beginning. I don't know whose side I'm on.
13. When someone asks what I did over the weekend, I squint and ask, "Why, what did you hear?"
14. When you do squats, are your knees supposed to sound like a goat chewing on an aluminium can stuffed with celery?
15. When I ask for directions, please don't use words like "east."
16. Don't bother walking a mile in my shoes. That would be boring. Spend 30 seconds in my head. That'll freak you right out.
17. Sometimes, someone unexpected comes into your life out of nowhere, makes your heart race, and changes you forever. We call those people policemen.
- 18 My luck is like a bald man who just won a comb.

# In Memoriam: Zsuzsi.

A young girl died. She was 21. Everyone who was lucky enough to know her said that she was smiling, positive and beautiful inside and out. She was lots of fun to be with, but her life was cut short. Since she was 10 years old, she had spent most of her life in hospital. She had two heart transplants and after the second one, everyone prayed for her heart to be working and believed that Zsuzsi deserved a miracle.

A year ago, her doctors told her that her body had started to reject her new heart and because there was no possibility of having a third transplant, her life would be short, very short. Being in hospital so much, she missed lots of things: travelling to restaurants, hanging out with friends, falling in love. This time she decided to make her remaining time, the best ever. Her mum and her sister supported her, as they had always done. Zsuzsi put together a bucket list and shared it on social media. Lots of people were touched by her story and offered everything on the list that they could.

There is a young man living in the same town as Zsuzsi. He read her bucket list. He discovered that one of her wishes was to visit Rome. He knew immediately that he wanted to take Zsuzsi, her mum and her sister to Rome. He loves Italy and he has spent a lot of time there. He even speaks the language. When he told his partner about his plan, she said at once, "Let's do it!". They contacted Zsuzsi and invited her and her family for a weekend in Rome. They organised and paid for everything. Zsuzsi was over the moon and before travelling, they met several times and became real friends.



As a Christmas present, they went to Rome in December 2023 and spent three days there. It was a nice bunch of six friends: Zsuzsi, her mum, her sister, the young man, his partner and their little 3-year-old son. Their stay was full of joy, fun and laughter. After they returned, they met regularly just like old friends.

On 10th April 2024, the young man got a call from Zsuzsi's mum. Zsuzsi had passed away very suddenly. Her heart just stopped. Everyone who knew Zsuzsi was unbelievably devastated.

Did I know Zsuzsi? No, I didn't. I didn't even meet her but the young family who fulfilled one of her dreams are very close to my heart. They are my son, his partner and my little grandson. Bless you all and thanks for being such nice and caring people.

Zsuzsi, you inspired lots of people. You will never be forgotten.

**Katie Pinter**

## Street Pastors AGM

Street Pastors held their AGM last week. Just to give you a flavour of what we do we have included extracts from the Co-ordinator's and the Chairman's reports.



### **From the Chairman's report:**

Street Pastoring is:

#### **THE CHURCH IN ACTION ON THE STREET**

*"Street Pastors is about Christians rolling up their sleeves and getting involved by responding in a practical way to the problems of crime and safety, and helping folks on the streets..."*

And just to remind you, the motto is 'Listening, Caring and Helping', and that is done in a totally non-judgemental way. We don't question why people are there, what are they doing and why they don't try to improve themselves. People are treated, all equally, whatever their problems, whatever their station in life.

Another important aspect of Street Pastoring is that Prayer and Action go together. That's why we have Prayer Pastors on duty at the same time that the patrols go out.

Jesus cared for people on the streets: he healed people on the streets, he wasn't judgemental – he helped ANYONE who was in need. As Street Pastors we try to emulate Jesus. We are the presence of Jesus on the streets of Stratford. We are the

face of Jesus on the streets. That is such an important privilege.

**From the Co-ordinator's report:**

We are still small in numbers, in terms of Street Pastors, and on top of that there have been illnesses and holidays, which have impacted on the rotas. We have still, nonetheless managed to put out patrols every Friday. This is due to the continued willingness of everyone to 'pull together' and be very loyal and committed to the SP movement, for which I am very grateful! Other groups nationally may be much larger, but I think that our small group may well show more cohesion and willingness to "step up" if the need arises. People are always adaptable, trying to fit in if there is a problem with the rota and we are very grateful to Phil Mottram as well for helping out when there is a gap.

It does, of course, bring home the fact that we really need to find more Street Pastors to join us. There have been no new recruits this year. We all need to chat seriously to our Church friends and try to persuade them to at least come out one time on patrol to see what is involved and experience how rewarding and non-threatening it can be!

We have all noticed how much quieter the town has been recently – the economic downturn and the after effects of Covid have meant that people are more reluctant to go out in the evenings. Nevertheless, I am sure you all agree with me that it is still worthwhile for us to maintain our presence on Friday nights. There might not be anything "dramatic" going on, but there are still folk out there who need our help and friendship. Every patrol has dealt with someone who needs practical help or just appreciates a smile and a kindly word. We know why they are out there, but not the 'back story' of why they are out there. Most almost certainly have not had a childhood which surrounded them with love and fostered a responsible attitude and capability to cope with the ups and downs of adult life. But they are still people with feelings and needs. They just want to be recognized as a real person with feelings – not something to be passed by and ignored, or worse, despised.

So as Street Pastors, we are there to recognize people as people, to talk and listen to them. We are not there to judge, but to help where we can. We can't solve their problems: there are agencies in town to help them with that, but we can make things a little better for them at that moment.

Each patrol leader fills out a datasheet about the events of the night, which can be a pain, but as Coordinator I have to send in figures to Ascension Trust, so I do appreciate them being as accurate as possible. Here as usual - a few statistics for you: in the past year we have sent out 51 patrols, which involved over 500 hours



walking the streets, helped 98 'vulnerable' people by chatting and listening to them, and giving practical help, like warm hats, socks and gloves or sleeping bags and blankets. We have given out 73 bottles of water or hot drinks, bought 49 meals - Macdonalds often give a discount, as does Tzaziki. Our patrols have picked up 141 bottles and 329 cans, and – handed out over 2000 lollipops!! Incidentally, the bottles and cans totals are down on last year's – perhaps people are getting tidier?? (Or more likely, there are just fewer people out.)

We have spoken to many people curious about what we do and received expressions of support (often in very colourful language!) and praise from over 272 members of the public. In addition, it is good to know that the Police and door staff are also grateful for our input into the night-time economy.

All in all, I think we are still in good shape, and with God's help, we can go forward with confidence that we are making a difference to many peoples' lives in Stratford.

*Linda and Peter*

## The Knitted Bible

In March we were delighted to be one of two churches chosen to fill an unexpected gap in the schedule of the Knitted Bible, which has been touring the country, as we had planned to apply for it in 2026. Everything swung into action; we booked a van to collect it from Coventry, decided that donations would be in aid of The Shakespeare Hospice, and began an extensive publicity campaign using a wonderful poster created by Peter.

It all came together when we opened on Wednesday 10 April and for the next two weeks welcomed a stream of visitors, including 30 pupils from Stratford Primary. Everyone loved the displays and agreed that it was impossible not to smile, or indeed laugh, when viewing the wonderful scenes. The 'Lost Sheep' were an especial attraction. Thanks to everyone involved in setting up, stewarding and dismantling.

The donations we received, which will go to the Shakespeare Hospice, totalled more than £600.

*Mairi Macdonald*

# The Knitted



# Bible





# Didymus – more faith in honest doubt

*Where was Thomas on that special day,  
when Jesus stood again before the ten ?  
Off, with his unknown twin, the scriptures do not say.  
Sharing another path, as sceptics, asking how and when?  
Coming , perhaps, from some more credulous genes?  
Not keen to take a miracle on hearsay.  
'Though he had witnessed thousands fed and scenes  
of healing, minds and bodies, whole again, in every way.  
Had seen a resurrection, Lazarus brought back.  
Supported Jesus then, had shown no lack  
of courage, quite prepared to die, said, " we  
must go, fainthearted friends and risk our lives in Bethany."*

*A week has past, eleven now, wait anxiously upstairs,  
Afraid to hear the sword butts' knock, the soldiers at the door.  
Wrapped up again with all their nervous cares.  
Then Jesus, undeterred by walls, stands solid, on the floor.  
So time for Thomas to know why it was he followed  
Jesus, sees the wounds, the gaping holes, borne for all men.  
We see him staring at the floor, sweat pouring, wishing to be swallowed  
up and muttering, "My Lord; My God," his doubts forgotten,  
banished, staring at his Lord, thinks back to words he'd heard him say:  
"There is one road to God, through me, the truth, the life, the only way."*

**David Sampson**

## Church Leader's AGM report

**As you may know, the flight back home from our holiday was cancelled at short notice and we had to stay an extra 3 days in Bali. This meant that,unavoidably, we missed the AGM. This is the report I would have given:**

I think we have had a good year again, here in Rother Street, in my own opinion!  
Before I make any general comments, I would like to say some thank you's. Firstly, I

am very grateful for all the hard work that Mairi puts in as our Church Secretary. She does a sterling job of keeping me in order and on the right track. Thanks also to Ashley, our Treasurer, for keeping the finances shipshape and ensuring that we have the funds to support our mission here in the town. I would also like to thank all the Elders for running the spiritual side of the church – all of them put in a lot of hard work on our behalf. The F&F committee members have done a great job in ensuring that the building doesn't fall down around our ears! As you know we have had our Quinquennial Review recently. As I write this, we are still awaiting the final report – waiting with bated breath! We do know that we have work to do in making the building watertight as evidenced by the plaster falling off at the front of the sanctuary.

Thank you to the three Elders who have stepped down this year: Ann J, Ashley and Barbara. Over the years they have supported church activities and provided ideas admirably. We will miss you, but we are also grateful to the two Elders who have been re-elected (Ileen & Ann W) and for the three new Elders: David, Wendy and Sue. We look forward to your ordination, in due course.

I say this each year, but it bears repeating: we are a small church – but small is beautiful! (in my opinion, again). I think we do a good job of showing our Christian values to the community and also, perhaps more importantly, showing the face of Christ to those we meet, through our varied activities. We have been complimented recently by Kate Rolfe, the town mayor, for all we do for the local community.

At the Spring Synod Meeting there were several points brought out that are relevant to our church, indeed to any church. Firstly, we had a talk by the recently appointed co-ordinator for 'Leading Your Church into Growth' (LYCIG) Ashley Evans. His first point was quite telling: he said that Jesus put forward The Great Commission – it was not the Great Suggestion! The Elders will shortly be having an extraordinary meeting to discuss LYCIG and whether we want to adopt the programme. LYCIG is a national scheme, originally started in the Church of England, but which has now rolled out to many denominations. It is a formal 7 step project:

- Creating a prayerful culture
- Implementing an effective strategy
- Practising fruitful evangelism
- Developing engaging worship
- Being an inviting and welcoming church
- Creating a pathway for seekers to become disciples.
- Beginning a planned journey of growth.

Now, I think we ARE making inroads into some of these seven steps, but we have to decide whether we want to adopt the process formally. Ashley Evans suggested that growth should be hardwired into the DNA of the Church. In an era when there is decline in virtually every Christian denomination, the need for growth is something we cannot ignore.

Also at the March Synod meeting, Steve Faber, our Moderator gave a talk about Flourishing Churches (see later). Both Mairi and I, who attended the meeting, felt that Rother Street was doing quite well with many of the points that Steve made. But we must not be too complacent!

I think our relationship with The Bear Pit Theatre continues to flourish. It continues to give us opportunities to interact with our local community. It is sad that David Mears felt he needed to step down, but I don't think we could have altered his decision. We did offer to support him. Our relationship with Oasis Community Church came to an end. In some ways I found it sad that we couldn't make it work, but the main issue was that we both wanted to use the church space at the same time, and that proved to be impossible to reconcile. We wish them well in their new venue and we continue to interact with them via Stratford Churches Together.

I have made this next fact before, but it's important. There have been several reports in the last few years, pointing out that churches that grow, churches that flourish, are those that look outward and provide opportunities for mission to the local community. Those that simply look inwards are the ones that close. Yes, it's important that we have digestible and worthwhile and enjoyable services inside our church, but that is less important than our outreach to the community and those in need. Mission pulls congregations together. As it did with the disciples after Pentecost.

So, yes, we are small, yes, it's hard work, yes, we are all getting older. BUT I think we need to be confident about our future. We are doing some really good things, so let's all continue to work together and pull together in Christ's work here in Stratford.

*Peter*

## Flourishing Churches

This is a brief summary of Steve Faber's talk at Synod. These are notes, not a word-for-word report.

He made the point that we should consider our work as serving rather than



volunteering. We are a community of service.

We should **expect** growth in our churches.

Ministry is the work of every member of the congregation.

We should concentrate on people, invest in people.

Most congregations consist of people in their 70's to 90's. We need to try to reach out to people in their 20's to 60's.

We are a denomination of small churches: one third of our churches have 12 members or less.

Average Church membership in the year 2000 was 53. It fell to 31 in the 2020's.

He talked about our legal (and moral) responsibility in terms of things like Financial accounting, Health and Safety and Safeguarding. He pointed out that our obligations in these respects have **not** changed. But the bureaucracy **has** changed. Nowadays, we need to **demonstrate** safety, safeguarding and building safety. This is something of a burden, but we should consider sharing the burden with other churches. He also pointed out that we could share Pastoral responsibilities. As separate churches we should support one another. There is aid available for staff hours to support churches.

He asked a few questions of us all:

- Do we have sparks of life?
- Are we open to change?
- Do we ask others to come in to help?
- Is the Holy Spirit helping us?
- Do we support people with prayer?
- Is the Gospel important to us - do we have the imperative to share it?
- Do we need to make radical changes?

He talked about other options rather than church closure:

- Unite with another denomination.
- Unite with another URC church.
- Become a Mission Project – specific funding available for this.
- Ask for help from Synod if necessary.

At the end of his session he stressed the importance of love: love for God, love for our members and love for our community.

The discussion afterwards centred on the need for prayer – personal prayer, prayer meetings, use of the URC Prayer Handbook.

*Peter*

# Daisy Time

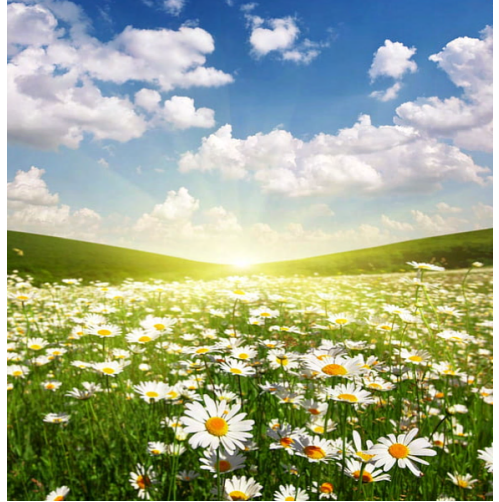
*See, the grass is full of stars,  
Fallen in their brightness;  
Hearts they have of shining gold,  
Rays of shining whiteness.*

*Buttercups have honeyed hearts,  
Bees they love the clover,  
But I love the daisies' dance  
All the meadow over.*

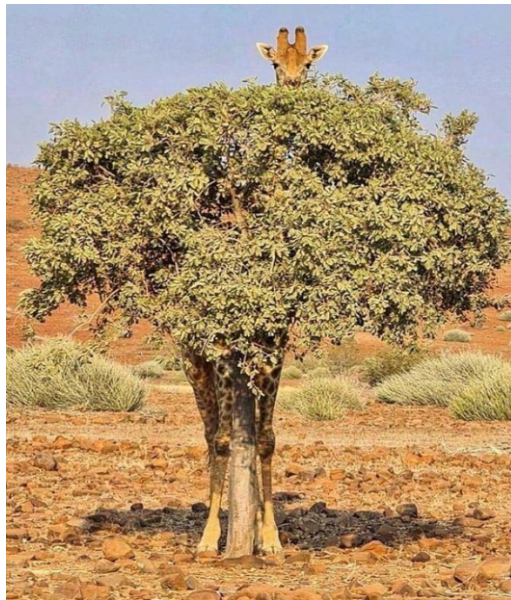
*Blow, O blow, you happy winds,  
Singing summer's praises,  
Up the field and down the field  
A-dancing with the daisies.*

by Majorie Pickhall  
From 'Poems in the Waiting Room'

**Submitted by Jill Fradley**



**George was  
convinced that  
he wouldn't be  
detected!**



# Sunday Services at 9.30am

5th May	Holy Communion	Peter Horrocks
19th May	Morning Service	Peter Horrocks
<b>19th May at 6pm - Ecumenical Service at Rother Street</b>		
2nd June	Holy Communion	Revd Colin Offor

## F&F Rota May

Please report any problems with the buildings in May to:

Iain Kelso: 01789 299698 / 07580 557163

or

Sarah Salmon: 01789295976 / 07816 565371

## Flower Rota

5th May	Jill & Rob
19th May	Ivy
2nd June	Fran

## Link

**Because of the way our Sunday services are now structured, the editors have decided that the physical copies of Link magazine will be available on the 1st Sunday of each month rather than the last Sunday of the month. The electronic version may well be available before then. When there are 5 Sundays in the month the Link will be available on that 5th Sunday.**

**The next edition of Link will be published on the 2nd June 2024.**

The deadline for submission to the next edition is Monday 27th May 2024.

Please send us your articles, pictures, humour etc.

**Editors contact details:**

**Telephone: 01789 750971 Email: peterhorrocks@doctors.net.uk**

# Stratford Churches Together Ecumenical Service



Sunday 19th May 2024

at

The United Reformed Church

Starts 6pm

**"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." - 1 Peter 3:15**

Followed by: Refreshments and Churches Together AGM

*Everyone is very welcome!*



**Aline is  
pushing back  
against  
poverty.**

**Abused, homeless and hungry, Aline was on the brink of survival in Burundi.**

But she transformed her life with a little help from Christian Aid and secured a vital income and a home for her and her children.

## Christian Aid Week 2024

Support more families like Aline's to push back against the inhumanity of poverty.

**Donate today.**

Join us this Christian Aid Week **12-18 May**  
Please donate at [CAWeek.org](http://CAWeek.org)