

THE REVIEW

EASTER - APRIL 2021



*CHRIST CRUCIFIED - 17th Century painting by Diego Velázquez
held by the Museo del Prado in Madrid, Spain.*

**WADDINGTON STREET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH,
DURHAM CITY DH1 4BG**

Church Website: www.durhamurc.org.uk



Dear Friends,

Christians are people of the empty tomb, the clear sky, and the open book. The events of all the comings and goings of Holy Week—the palms of procession, the tension of Thursday, the forlorn forgotten Christ on the Cross—all build up to the triumphant celebration of Sunday. Easter in the Gospels reads like the end, the denouement—the climax of the story of Jesus Christ.

But in reality, the story had just begun. The Book of Acts tells us what happened next, followed by Paul and his letters, and then the other epistle writers—including John the Elder. And the grand narrative of Emmanuel (God with us) continued throughout history, continues in us, and will continue into the future: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never win.”

The empty tomb sets the scene for our own stories of faith. But just as the very first in our faith did not dwell there but launched the message of Jesus from there, so too the events of Easter are our launching pad. We lift off, because of the empty tomb, into a clear sky.

There’s not a cloud in this sky because no matter whatever hardship, humiliation, suffering or even death awaits us, we place our hope in the Lord Jesus who has conquered death and is King of kings. Living practically as a Christian is to not let anything—not even defeat and death—drag us down; as we live according to the message of Jesus, as people of the open book.

Talking of books, I have a treasured bookmark with a design including the words ‘The Possibilities are Endless’. It was part of the vocations publication given to me when I was exploring the calling to ministry. All of us have our own callings—whether to occupation, family, or other interests—and all of us are called by God to follow Jesus through these callings, resourced by the Holy Spirit.

This means for all of us that the book of our lives, and the book of God’s interaction with us and within us, is wide open because “the Spirit of God blows wherever (s)he wishes.” It also means that the pages of the Good Book, the Bible itself, are open to us to apply to our own stories. As we work out how to weave the stories of old into the context of our lives that are new every morning, we’re to rely on the great faithfulness of God in guiding us to write the next chapters.

We see from the Bible many examples of how *not* to live: cautionary tales of people rescued from their mistakes (their sin) by the grace of God. We also read of Jesus who came to set humanity on the way to life in all its fulness and who, because of this message, was put to death by those he came to save—only to rise again, to begin afresh the ongoing saga of God with us.

So, Christians are indeed people inspired by the ancient story of God in Jesus; we are people living confident lives of hope; and we are living for a purpose broader and greater than ourselves. We are people of the empty tomb, the clear sky, and the open book!

Regards,

Marcus



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY AND CHURCH NEWS

Ministerial Services – Revd. Marcus Hargis is contactable in the following ways:-

Phone: 0776 949 2629 and 0191 366 4930 (messages can be left on either).

Email: marcushargis@outlook.com For routine pastoral matters, please first approach your Elder.

Time of Sunday Services – 10.45 a.m.

COPY DATE FOR THE MAY REVIEW IS – SUNDAY 18th APRIL 2021.

Please be aware when submitting articles that our Church Magazine goes on the website and is available for anyone anywhere in the world to read.

DATES OF CHURCH SERVICES AT WADDINGTON STREET

There will be no services at Waddington Street until further notice.

Details when available will be posted on the church website and by email.



CONGRATULATIONS ...

from Waddington Street members and friends go to
Kath and Sandy Ogilvie
who will celebrate their Golden Wedding in April.
We wish them many more happy years together.



Fundraising update ...

£800 has been given to each of our chosen Charities, St. Cuthbert's Hospice and Christian Aid, after our Christmas fundraising efforts.
Thanks to everyone who helped achieve this despite lockdown.

AN IRISH BLESSING ...

May there always be work for your hands to do;

May your purse always hold a coin or two;

May the sun always shine on your window pane;

May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain;

May the hand of a friend always be near you;

May God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.

And may you be in heaven a half hour before the devil knows you're dead.





Notes from Elders' Meeting on Wednesday 3rd March 2021
(held on ZOOM on line)

1. Doris Jackson (Chair) opened with Romans 8 at verse 35 and prayer.
2. The meeting received apologies from Ruth Cranfield and Richard Phua. The minutes of the last meeting on 3 February 2021 were agreed and signed.
3. Matters Arising from the last minutes on 3 February 2021 –
 A – Fundraising – £800 has been given to each of our chosen Charities, St. Cuthbert's Hospice and Christian Aid, after our Christmas fundraising efforts. Our church family cannot wait for the time we can have real meals together allowing us to fundraise and have fellowship together. Janet raised John and Hillian's idea of sharing recipes dear to them with background history to share and raise funds. Everyone praised the work and effort that had gone into the blog and felt that they should continue with this through The Review magazine. Janet agreed to approach John and Hillian.
4. District reports were given and prayers offered.
5. Correspondence –
 A) Commitment for Life- Paperwork received reminding us that we are a Commitment for Life church with individuals supporting work in Bangladesh. Kath agreed to check if anyone was interested in continuing support for this as we now support through the Christian Aid banner.
 B) Yvonne advised the meeting that Marcus had been accepted to represent us at the General Assembly of the URC on 9-12 July 2021. Marcus confirmed that he had received paperwork.
6. Appointment of Replacement representative at Church Group Meetings.
 Janet Thornborrow offered to take over Ian Graham's place at the Church Group meetings. The meeting also agreed to each Elder taking the role for 12 months so that the Eldership could gain knowledge and experience of other Church representatives and the working of the Church Group.
7. Ordination of New Elders –
 A date needs to be arranged that suits Marcus, Janet, Richard and Val for their Ordination/ Induction to Eldership.
8. DBS certificates – Further to all Elders being cleared for safeguarding purposes it was agreed that Sandy, Janet Sarsfield and David Thornborrow send their details to Marcus for processing. All other Elders were cleared in 2019.
9. ECO Congregation – Marcus advised that a group had been formed with himself, Sue and Fred Robinson and Helen Cockburn. The group ideas are to be put to the congregation via The Review magazine.
10. Opening of the Church for worship – Discussions took place about timings, conditions, for and against us opening for worship soon. Caution was agreed. Rules state we cannot meet family yet or inside buildings. Meeting agreed to review at Elders in May and advise Les for pulpit supply. Marcus preferred to return when he has had his second vaccination. Communication to go to all church attendees explaining decision.
11. Group Ministry – Letter from Moderator. – meeting discussed a letter advising that the 0.5 help for Marcus would not be forthcoming. We felt let down for Marcus and it was agreed to reply to the Moderator. Sandy agreed to draft a response which would also be issued to church attendees with a copy of the Moderator's letter.
12. A.O.B. – Synod Elders next coffee morning to be held on ZOOM on 23 March at 10 a.m.
13. Next meeting (ZOOM) on Wednesday 7 April 2021 at 7 p.m.
14. The meeting closed with the saying of the Grace.

(Yvonne Melville)



EDITOR'S LETTER

DEAR READERS,

During lockdown Les and I were often cheered by the kindness of friends and neighbours, so I thought I would share with you this poem from "Thinking of you" compiled by Phil Mason of Norheimsund Books and used with his kind permission.

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS ...

Maybe you remember the opening words of a popular song: 'When you've got friends and neighbours the world seems a happier place'. How true that is. A true friend is one who knows all about us but loves us just the same. So let's thank God for all our friends and all they mean to us.

'I thank you God sincerely for the friends I have today ...
And all that they have done for me to help me on the way ...
I thank you that I met them in good fellowship and cheer ...
And at a time of need and stress they always have been near ...
The friends who have inspired me to make another gain ...
However loud the thunder or discouraging the rain ...
I thank you for my faithful friends in places near and far ...
Whose kindly deeds have made my days as fruitful as they are ...
Whose happy songs have done so much to make my dreams come true ...
And who, by their example, God, have drawn me close to You.'



This advice, from Evergreen Quarterly Magazine, seems particularly relevant at present:

"Count your blessings instead of your crosses.	Count your gains instead of your losses.
Count your joys instead of your woes.	Count your friends instead of your foes.
Count your courage instead of your fears.	Count your laughs instead of your tears.
Count your full years instead of your lean.	Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.
Count your health instead of your wealth.	Count on God instead of yourself."

Finally, something to hopefully make you smile!

"Making a Man" (Also from Evergreen Quarterly Magazine.)



One day a group of scientists got together and decided that man had come a long way and no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell God that they were done with Him. The scientist walked up to God and said 'God, we've decided that we no longer need You. We're now to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't You go off to some other universe?'

God listened very patiently and kindly to the man. After the scientist was done talking, God said, 'Very well, how about this? Let's say we have a man-making contest.'

To which the scientist rubbed his hands and said, 'Okay, great!'

God added, 'Now we're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam.' And He leaned down and scooped up some dirt.

The scientist said, 'Sure, no problem.', and bent down also to grab himself a handful of dirt.

God looked at him and said, 'No, no. You go and get your own dirt.'

My thanks to anyone who has contributed to this month's Review and, please, keep on sending your articles in to me - it is very much appreciated.

Lucille Thomson

The next issue of The Review will be published on **Sunday 2nd May 2021**.
Contributions please to Lucille Thomson at church or BY POST or **Tel. 0191-3861052**
or e-mail **lesthomson@talktalk.net** – no later than **NOON on Sunday 18th April 2021**.

CRABBY OLD MAN

When an old man died in the geriatric ward of a nursing home in Nebraska, nurses going through his meagre possessions found this poem. Copies were made and distributed to every nurse in the home.

“What do you see nurses? What do you see? What are you thinking when you’re looking at me? A crabby old man not very wise, uncertain of habit with faraway eyes? Who dribbles his food and makes no reply, when you say in a loud voice, “I do wish you’d try!” Who seems not to notice the things that you do, and forever is losing a sock or shoe? Who resisting or not lets you do as you will, with bathing and feeding the long day to fill. Is that what you’re thinking? Is that what you see? Then open your eyes, nurse, you’re not looking at me.

I’ll tell you who I am as I sit here so still, as I do at your bidding, as I eat at your will – a young boy of sixteen with wings on his feet. I’m a small child of ten with a father and mother, brothers and sisters who love one another. Dreaming that soon now a lover he’ll meet. A groom soon at twenty my heart gives a leap, remembering the vows that I promised to keep. At twenty-five, now I have young of my own, who need me to guide, and a secure happy home. A man of thirty, my young now grown fast, bound to each other with ties that should last. At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone, but my woman’s beside me to see I don’t mourn. At fifty, once more, babies play round my knee, again, we know children my loved one and me. Dark days are upon me my wife is now dead. I look at the future, shudder with dread. For my young are all rearing young of their own and I think of the years and the love that I’ve known. I’m now an old man and nature is cruel. Tis jest to make old age look like a fool. The body, it crumbles, grace and vigour depart. There is now a stone where I once had a heart. But inside this old carcass a young guy still dwells and now and again my battered heart swells. I remember the joys, I remember the pain, and I’m loving and living life over again. I think of the years, all too few, gone too fast. Your eyes, people open and see – not a crabby old man ... look closer ... see ME!”

A NURSE’S REPLY

“What do we see, you ask, what do we see? Yes, we are thinking when looking at thee! We may seem to be hard when we hurry and fuss, but there’s many of you and too few of us. We would like for more time to sit by you and talk - to bath you and feed you and help you to walk – to hear of your lives, and the things you have done – your childhood, your partner, your daughter, your son. But time is against us, there’s too much to do – patients too many and nurses too few. We grieve when we see you so sad and alone, with nobody near you, no friends of your own. We feel all your pain and know of your fear – that nobody cares now your end is so near. But nurses are people with feelings as well and when we’re together you’ll often hear tell, of the dearest old Gran in the very end bed and the lovely old Dad and the things that he said. We speak with compassion and love, and feel sad when we think of your lives and the joy that you’ve had. When the time has arrived for you to depart, you leave us behind with an ache in the heart. When you sleep the long sleep, no more worry or care, there are other old people, and we must be there. So please understand if we hurry and fuss – there are many of you and too few of us.” [written by Nurse Liz Hogben]





An Elder Ponders the Past (and Future) ...

Many years ago, when the United Reformed Church had District Councils, I attended a meeting of the Teesside District Council (forgive me if I begin to sound like Methuselah here). I remember little of the meeting as a whole, but a single incident remains embedded in my consciousness. The subject under discussion was Christian unity, and we had as our guest a Methodist minister. When he was asked the question “When will we see unity among the churches?” his reply was “when we meet at the foot of the Cross.”

I have often reflected on his reply, as I found it very direct and appropriate. The “Cross” carries such a huge weight of authority for Christians the world over that it is the obvious rallying point for us all. Meeting at the “foot” of it reminds us that our pretensions of denominational significance are overshadowed by it. But “meeting” is the term which most sparks my interest here. What does it mean to “meet” effectively?

Turning to another example of Christian identity, the sharing of the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper, I am struck by the freedom and informality of conversation between Jesus and his disciples that are exhibited in various artists’ depictions of the Last Supper. Meeting for them meant talking as much as eating and drinking. Likewise meeting at the foot of the Cross must mean opening up in conversation to one another and sharing opinions if it is to serve any useful purpose. And this goes for us at local level within the church as it does more widely across the churches.

Turning to the question posed to us previously by our minister Marcus – “Why, in God’s name, are we here?” – I feel sure that we all need to enter into a big conversation together if we are to come to a common view on where God is seeking to lead us in the future. We all need to address the supplementary questions raised in his previous article...

Called to be God’s people/how are we communicating our love of God?

Transformed by the Gospel/what do we do that gives us energy?

Making a difference in today’s world/where are we seeing beneficial changes?

I have done a bit of head scratching on these myself. Have you had your say on them yet?

Ron Todd

Mary’s grief at the death of her son

*Mary, how you grieved at the foot of the cross.
It was only natural at a mother’s great loss.
The child that you bore and raised to a man,
Had yet to reveal His heavenly Father’s plan.
When the heavens grew dark when Jesus died,
You could not hold back the tears though you tried.
They took Him down from the cross and took Him away,
And you knew you would never forget that day.
When the tomb lay open and inside was bare,
People wondered what miracle had taken place there.
After three days He had risen from the dead.
What questions and fears swirled inside your head?
But the Lord God had kept His word and raised His Son,
And around the world God’s true work was begun.*



(L. Thomson)

3... 2... 1... John

PART TWO: THE MAN WITH A LOAD OF MISCHIEF

“Another letter! How I wish I could sort them out with a visit,” said the Elder to himself. What had started with the error of a few had turned into an exodus of many from the truth. “It’s not like I’m saying anything new, just what Jesus said—love one another. So what do they do? Twist it to suit themselves. And the worst thing: the people listen to these deceivers...”

John, we surmise, could have received word—maybe from Demetrius (see previous issue)—that the rogue community originally from the core Johannine community was now much further away from them in practice as well as distance. This time the Elder wrote not to an individual but to a church there—the ‘elect lady and her children’ most likely referring to a community and their leader. Maybe these were the last still to be following the orthodoxy of the Elder, because they are praised for their ‘walking in the truth’. Yet, Diotrephes had a hold on them also and he was leading them astray.

From the text itself, we know that the issue concerned love in practice. I do not think that the rogue community established as a Christian church were actively unloving. Still, there was something in how they lived their lives that led John the Elder to remind them of what Jesus had said: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”¹

The letter also introduces the theme of truth, with the writer commending the church “whom I love in the truth—as does everyone else who knows the truth” (v1). John is happy to find some of the children (church members) “living according to the truth” (v4) but he warns against anyone who “does not teach the truth about Christ” (v10). As my sources suggest², from what the Elder writes we’re able to piece together the challenges faced by the orthodox Johannine community. There was clearly an issue over truth. But what is truth?

Our way of thinking sees truth as fact: the search for truth is regarded as a rational, intellectual endeavour. However, the Johannine understanding is that truth is found in relationship—in the person of Jesus, revealing the Father and illuminated by the Spirit. Truth is communal, just as the Trinity is a relational, and those ‘in the truth’ are those who are in communion with God and with each other. Truth, therefore, is connection—and from this we can deduce that the problem was with those who disconnected themselves off from others. This is indeed a worrying trend in today’s world, where it is all too easy to ‘cancel’, unfriend, or block those we don’t want to hear from.

The deceptive teaching that John is warning against had the result of fracturing connections: “Anyone who wanders away from [orthodox] teaching has no relationship with God. But anyone who remains in the teaching of Christ has a relationship with both the Father and the Son.” (v9) Here John equates truth with connection. The First Letter of John, which we shall come to, goes into more detail as (I surmise) John comes to learn more about the rogue community and their practices.

¹ John 13: 34-35 NRSV

² My sources for scholarship and background material are: Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2020; C. Clifton Black, “The First, Second, and Third Letters of John” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. XII, Abingdon Press, 1998; and Robert M. Price, *The Sitz-im-Leben of Third John: A New Reconstruction*, *EvQ* 61(1989): 114,19. Accessed online on 20/1/21 from https://www.robertmprice.mindvendor.com/art_thirdjohn.htm. What I have written, however, represent my own views unless stated otherwise.

But 2 John has a further point to make before we move on.

In 3 John, which I think was the first to have been written, the Elder commends the practice of hospitality. However, in 2 John the Elder discourages generous hospitality: “If anyone comes to your meeting and does not teach the truth about Christ, don’t invite that person into your home or give any kind of encouragement. Anyone who encourages such people becomes a partner in their evil work” (vv10,11). It sounds a bit like a tit-for-tat exchange: the problem party starts by refusing hospitality and so John responds in kind by urging his people to refuse hospitality to them. The content of 3rd John does not make sense if written after 1st and 2nd John (why tell someone to exercise caution and then latterly give encouragement to throw caution to the wind, even as difficulties continue). But the comment quoted above fits into the scenario of a deteriorating situation where hospitality has perhaps been abused and so therefore must be offered more cautiously. For this reason, I have reversed the traditional order of the three letters.

However, I don’t want this article to only read like a dry academic essay. There’s a lot which is directly relevant to human dynamics at work today. John’s series of letters speak to our situation and I am aiming to tease out the points from times past that link up with times present. The reminder to love in practice is as needed now as it ever has been, as is the notion of truth as connection. Media, journalism, broadcasting—whether BBC or ITV, Daily Mail or the Guardian—is combative, confrontational, controlling even. Into the mix come individuals with the same traits. Diotrephes can be seen in well-known figures today who like to put themselves first (3 John 1: 9), winning at any cost to truth (understood in both senses as facts and relationships). As John the Elder says, this character Diotrephes is belligerent: wanting nothing to do with the established community, cutting off all ties even with those of his own who reached out to others. This dynamic of disconnection is seen increasingly in people of all political persuasions today.

What is the response? The Elder, in 2 John, reminds readers of the truth of connection and of love; and we too need reminding that peoples’ greatest achievements come from working together for the benefit of all. But the letter does no good—the virus of disconnection is spreading and is as contagious as Covid. John has to intervene again, reminding the rogue community of where they come from, or rather from whom they originate. In the next article in the series, we consider the 1st Letter of John and what it says to us today. *[Marcus] [Below – Jesus with children]*



Passiontide 2021

Passiontide is the name given to the last two weeks of Lent. Traditionally these two weeks tell the final traumatic story of Jesus's life; the events of which are observed in a variety of different ways. For some of our synod churches, these actions and remembrances will unlikely be observed as elders for the second year respond to the ongoing global pandemic and follow 'the law of love,' by keeping their church doors closed. However, the church is fortunate to have abundant resources available to accompany us on this two-week drama at home. Out of the deep sorrow and mourning of these two weeks has come some of the most stunning choral music, art, literature and poetry ever composed, painted and written. Here are two resources, an image and a hymn which I suggest we might reflect upon at home as we think again of the harrowing and painful events of the last two weeks of Lent.

(1) An Image

Good Friday 2020.



During Lent last year, an art image appeared on social media. The image was painted by the Polish Jesuit philosopher and artist Vyacheslav Okun. It's called 'Good Friday 2020.'

At the centre of the picture is the almost naked body of Jesus, the Covid Christ, his arm hanging limply. He has a ventilator attached to his face. On the far left of the picture is an oxygen bottle, while medical sensors are attached to his torso. Five health professionals cradle Jesus, all clothed in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Perhaps a more complex question - where is God in the image? Perhaps in the waiting room, coping with the unbearable not-knowing and not-being-allowed to see his son face to face?

To me this image is a picture of every one of us in the midst of this cruel global pandemic. The body of Jesus might be seen in those who have died and those who are suffering, particularly the most vulnerable in society – in terms of income, housing, age, race, disability, mental health and job security, who have taken the greatest hit medically and/or economically. Then there are those in the image who are intensely active, doctors and medical staff, key workers, trying to save lives and who have been at the forefront of the response to the virus. Then there are those who are waiting, not seen in the image, powerless, not knowing what to hope for, overwhelmed by the whole thing. Where is God to be found in this image? He is to be found in each context; in each person. Only together can we understand and get a true picture of God.

Okun's painting reminds me that in the simple words of Matthew 25: 31-46 we find Christ, with the hungry, thirsty, naked, stranger, sick and prisoner. The church fulfils its calling to be a blessing to all people primarily not by seeking to withdraw people in the fashion of saving their souls but by joining in practical efforts to overcome isolation and hardship to provide healing as has happened in many church communities during this last 12 months. It is in such practical gestures that the church can expect to see the face of Christ.

(2) Hymn:**"It is a thing most wonderful, almost too wonderful to be"**

Words: W Walsham How (1823 –1897) Music: Herongate

Rejoice and Sing: Hymn No 503

*"It is a thing most wonderful
almost too wonderful to be
that God's own Son should come from heaven
and die to save a child like me."*

This was and still is my favourite Sunday School hymn. It was written as a poem in 1872 by Bishop William Walsham How (1823-1897) and sung to the tune Herongate, an Essex folk song arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams. William Walsham How, a solicitor's son, became a Suffragan Bishop for East London as Bishop of Bedford, and in 1888 he became the first Bishop of Wakefield, a new diocese in the industrial heartlands. His untiring work among the people of the docks and the slums earned him the title of "the poor man's bishop." But he liked best his description as "the children's bishop."

Bishop How was the author and editor of several collections of hymns, sermons and children's stories, many of them published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), and he wrote at least sixty hymns, another popular one being "For all the Saints who from their labours rest." His hymns have outlived his other literary works and his poetry and today he is considered one of the most effective Victorian hymn writers.

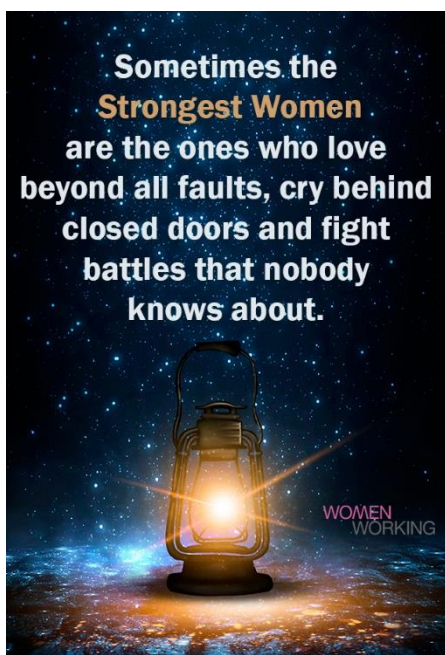
'It is a thing most wonderful' was written by How, while he was Rector of Whittington in Shropshire – then in the Welsh Diocese of St Asaph but now in the Diocese of Lichfield – but it was not published until 1872. The first version was five verses in length, but within 15 years he had added two more verses to the original.

Through this hymn, How is trying to reveal the love of God by looking at the Cross through the eyes of a child.

Revd Ray Anglesea

Extracts taken from the URC Northern Synod weekly e-newsletter. 19th March 2021

(Two cartoons from Bethel URC Newsletter)



A Walk Along The Waskerley Way

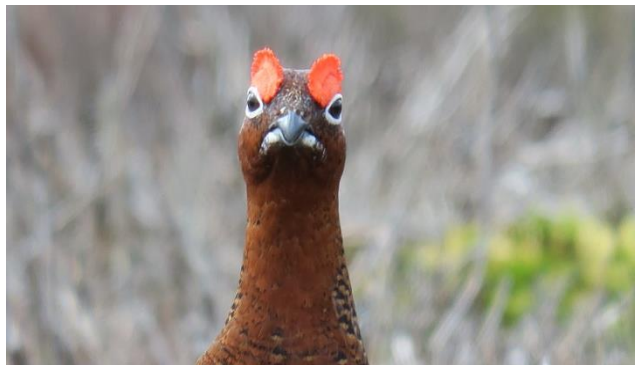


With time to spare and decent weather forecast, Jan and I decided to do a variation of some other walks we have done in the Waskerley area. We parked the car at the picnic area at Waskerley and set off to do a circuit of Smiddy Shaw reservoir. As we passed a house near the car park, we noticed a family relaxing after doing some gardening. We crossed over the main road to the entrance to Smiddy Shaw and found an official notice asking people to avoid the facility, so that was plan A abandoned.

We headed South to join the Waskerley Way on the old railway line and set off Westwards. After about a half mile I stopped to try and get a photo of The Cheviot and I realised that at some point I had dropped or laid down my hat. I resolved to look for it on our return. It was a cold wind, and we took advantage of the shelter of the Frosterley Cut to get out of the wind and have lunch in the sunshine. After a short time, I heard strange sounds and noticed that we were being spied on by a male grouse. At first, he stayed in the heather but gradually got closer, making grumbling noises and bobbing his head up and down.



I am guessing that this grouse was letting us know that we were in his territory and were not welcome, but we were bigger than him, so after a sideways glance and a vicious glare, he decided to retreat to continue his protest from a greater distance.



We continued towards Parkhead and took a farm track down to Waskerley Reservoir, where we saw some wild geese on the water. In the distance, about a mile away, there was some moor-burning taking place, creating a lot of smoke.



It was starting to get colder, and the short spells of sunshine had been replaced by thicker cloud and a little drizzle, so we took a last look back at the reservoir and headed back to the car. I had long since abandoned any hope of finding my hat, but Jan reckoned it would have been found and left in a prominent position. She was right, as we got nearer to the car park, there was my hat, placed on top of a sign at the side of the path.

This walk was much shorter than we had planned, due to the Covid Keep Out signs at Smiddy Shaw, but we were tired out and welcomed taking off walking boots and rucksacks at the car.



Angus Robson.

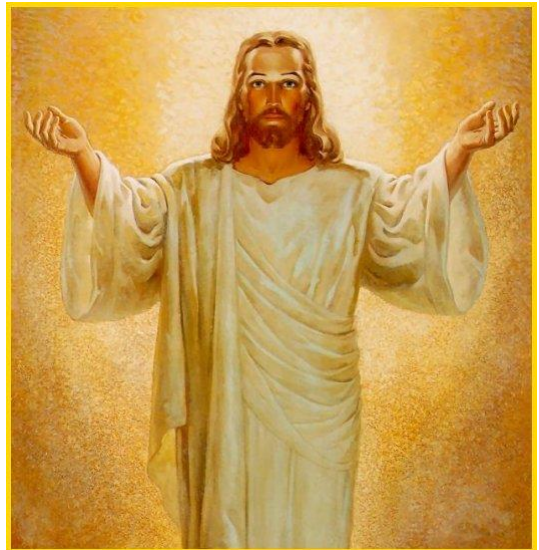
In My Father's House

In my Father's house, are many rooms so bright,
In my Father's house, where there shall be no night,
In my Father's house, tears shall be wiped away,
All sin and fear forgotten, in eternal day.

In my Father's house, I shall prepare a place,
For those I have redeemed, by trusting in my grace.
There is no other way to get there, but by me,
This is why I came, to die on Calvary.

Have you been forgiven, and had your slate wiped clean,
Whatever you have done, whatever you have been?
I will take you in, I died to set you free,
If only you'll repent, and put your trust in me.

I am coming back to take you to that place,
I'll receive you then, and you shall see my face,
We shall never part, in that land beyond compare,
Oh why miss out, my friend, on my glory that is there.



[From "**Great & Precious Promises**" by Dorothy Anderson]
[Used by kind permission of the author.] [Inspired by John 14:2]

Blessed Once Again ...

Thank you, Lord, for the strength which you give to us and which enables us to worship you each day. Leaving oppression behind, your light guided us through the seas and oceans towards a new horizon, and your love led us into a new family. Thank you. On this Easter festival, we are blessed once again to celebrate the conquest of death as a victory over the pains and wounds of injustice. Kneeling at your feet, Lord, we seek your forgiveness and your blessing. Amen

Jean François is from Cameroon. He lives in Rochdale and is a member of the Metropolitan Church in Manchester. Translation from French to English by Philip Jones.

Prayers for Easter, compiled by the Windermere Centre.

Maths Puns - Jokes for the mathematically inclined:

1. Why was the fraction apprehensive about marrying the decimal?
Because he would have to convert.
2. Why do plants hate maths? *It gives them square roots.*
3. Why did the student get upset when his teacher called him average? *It was a mean thing to say!*
4. Why was the maths book depressed? *It had a lot of problems.*
5. Why is the obtuse triangle always so frustrated? *Because it is never right.*
6. Why can you never trust a maths teacher holding graphing paper?
He must be plotting something.
7. Why was the equal sign so humble?
Because she knew she wasn't greater than or less than anyone else.
8. Did you hear the one about the statistician? *Probably.*
9. What do you call students who love maths? *Algebros.*
10. I'll do algebra, I'll do trig. I'll even do statistics. *But graphing is where I draw the line!*
11. Why are parallel lines so tragic if they have so much in common? *It's a shame they'll never meet.*
12. How do you stay warm in any room? *Just huddle in the corner, where it's always 90 degrees.*
13. Why is six afraid of seven? *Because seven eight ("ate") nine!*
14. Why does nobody talk to a circle? *Because there is no point.*



I've started a new exercise program. I do twenty sit-ups every morning. That may not sound like a lot but you can only hit that SNOOZE button on the clock so many times...

I'm great at multi tasking.
I can waste time, be unproductive and procrastinate all at once.

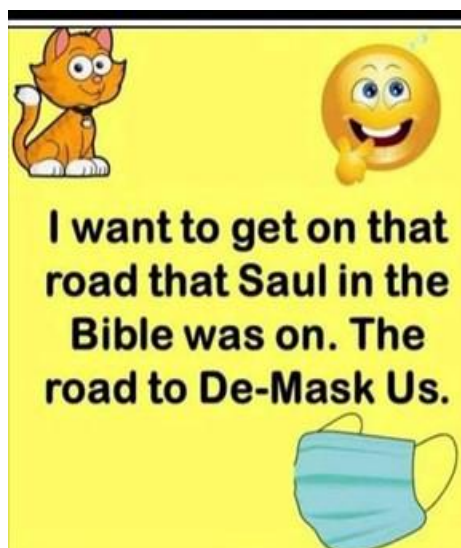
Who is the coolest doctor in the hospital? The hip consultant.

My wife and I now chew three cloves of raw garlic each day.
I doubt that it cures the virus but people are definitely keeping their distance.

What is the name of the first electricity detective? Sherlock Ohms!

Three weeks ago I sent my hearing aid in for repair ... I've heard nothing since.

From the Christ Church, Lumley Parish magazine via Ian Watt



“Cultivate your forgiveness with your friends, with your family, with strangers, and with yourself. Remind yourself that every person you encounter carries a sorrow and a struggle. Recognize that we all share a fundamental humanity.”
Desmond Tutu.

[Our thanks to Bethel URC Newsletter for all the items on this page.]



BARABBAS

The dungeon was so dark and cold, My heart was so depressed,
 I'd stirred an uprising of men, Plus murdered in my zest.
 And then I heard the dungeon door, Being flung and opened wide,
 And soldiers dragged me from my cell, To a screaming crowd outside.

My heart was pounding with great fear, A cross awaited me,
 The penalty for what I'd done, Was death upon a tree.
 Then suddenly I was released, I can't believe it yet,
 A man called Jesus took my place, I broke into a sweat.

They say that He was innocent, Of crimes He hadn't done,
 Just waiting to be crucified, For saying He was God's Son.
 But there was I, a murderer, As sinful as could be,
 Because this Jesus took my place, He died, He died for me.

He died to take my punishment, He died to make me free,
 He died that I might be with Him, For all eternity.
 Then three days later he arose, My freedom to complete,
 And now He sits at God's right hand, The perfect mercy seat.

"So if the Son shall make you free, You shall be free indeed".
 Your Saviour, Shepherd, King and Friend,
 My friend, He's all you need.

[From "Captured by love" – A collection of Poems by Dorothy Anderson for tearfund.]
[Used by kind permission of the Author.]



ONLY PASSING THROUGH

I had come to the City to see it that day. Just as a tourist along the way,
 I joined the people thronging the street. The air was heavy with unbearable heat.
 The mood was angry amongst this crowd, They were surly and shouting and very proud.
 Crucify, crucify, they shouted again, As Jesus, the victim, stumbled in pain.
 Then somebody forced me to carry His Cross, The soul was exhausted, at such a loss.
 I wondered and wondered, what had He done? Or, was it for claiming to be God's Son?
 He stumbled and stumbled along the road, Glad to be eased from this gruesome load,
 His face was bleeding, His back was raw, Surely this all was against the law.
 Then we suddenly came to that rugged hill, Got terrible feeling and horrible chill.
 Roughly, the Cross was taken away, For Jesus, who said "**I am the Way**".
 Bleeding and bruised He was nailed to the tree, Three hours He suffered for you and for me.
 His body lay buried inside the tomb, Bearing our sin, our guilt, and our gloom.
 But then this glorious news came through, **That Christ has risen for me and for you,**
 For all who will repent and believe, Their sins are forgiven – new life they receive.

[From "Captured by love" – A collection of Poems by Dorothy Anderson for tearfund.]

