

Issue 7:
September 2021



A candle in....

THE *W*INDOW
News and Views from the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames

Welcome back!

September always feels like a new start.

This new start is tinged with uncertainty.... Will the vaccine keep us safe? Will the economy recover? Will church life return to what it was – indeed do we want it to return or to change and if so, how?

What about the bigger picture? Surely our society can be better, fairer, less dependent on fossil fuels and with a greater sense of community?

This little publication will try to do justice to some of these issues, as well as to provide more local parish news, some theology and with luck some entertainment too.

Although Covid may still be the issue that occupies most brain space, there is an urgent need to consider the climate. The UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31 October – 12 November 2021.* It will look at how to limit global temperature rises to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We feel that we should explore some of the aspects of this in the coming months. In this issue Patrick Holligan starts us off by describing some events on a large scale – in the oceans. You will also find the Parish carbon footprint, a Romanian theologian, a toolkit for happiness, a breath of fresh air, Anecdotes from Africa, the importance of hugs and news from around the Parish. Oh and don't forget the quiz and the cartoon...

*If you are interested in the background to COP26 you may find this link informative: [click here](#)

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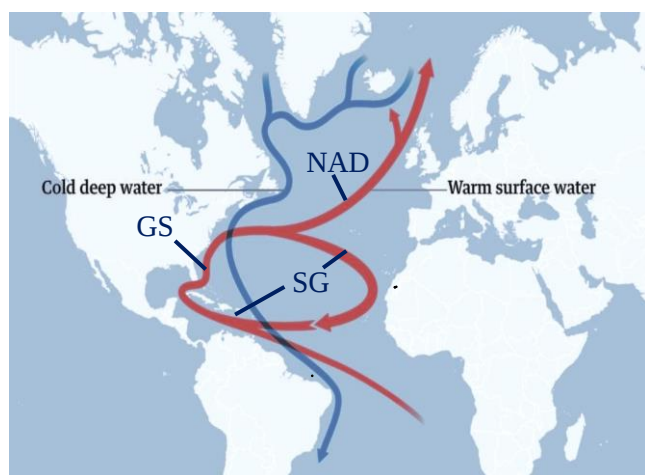
Climate change – the importance of the North Atlantic Ocean

Patrick Holligan

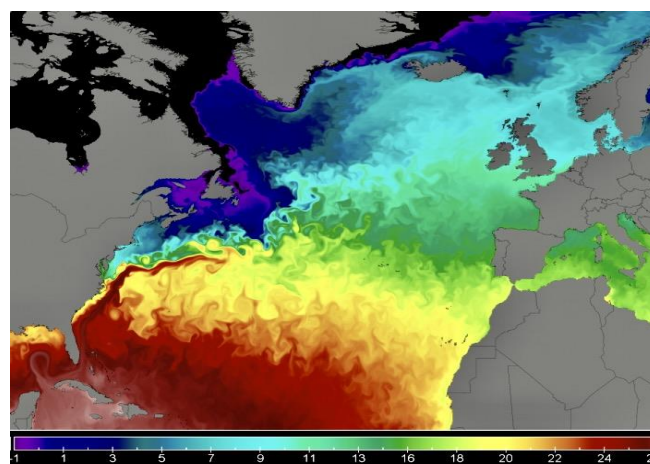
With publication of the recent IPCC Report, “**Climate Change 2021**”, you may have read or heard about the importance of the North Atlantic for the global climate system. The Summary for Policymakers reports that there is *high confidence* that the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) will weaken over the 21st century, and *medium confidence* that AMOC will not collapse before 2100. What do these conclusions mean for people living in the UK?

The concentration of the main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide (CO₂), in the earth’s atmosphere has increased from 280 parts per million (ppm) in 1780 to about 412 ppm in 2021, leading to a rise in global temperature of about 1.2°C. The oceans absorb approximately 30% of the anthropogenic CO₂ (some 50% stays in the atmosphere and the remainder is taken up on land) and more than 90% of the excess heat from greenhouse warming. For these reasons, a good knowledge of how ocean circulation affects the redistribution of both CO₂ and heat is essential for predicting how climate will continue to change in response to continuing human emissions of greenhouse gases.

The circulation system of the Atlantic Ocean is characterised by a strong surface current of warm water, the Gulf Stream, flowing northwards off the south-eastern United States, which divides to form the North Atlantic Drift extending west of Europe towards the arctic and the re-circulation arm of the N Atlantic subtropical gyre. Gradually heat is lost back to the atmosphere as the flow extends to higher latitudes, helping to make the winter in NW Europe relatively mild compared, say, to that in eastern Canada. As the surface water becomes colder, especially during winter, it also becomes denser than the layers below and sinks, resulting in a return current at a depth of about 3km back towards the tropics, and eventually the Antarctic Ocean as illustrated below. This process of ‘deep water formation’ constitutes the ‘overturning’ part of AMOC.



Circulation of the Atlantic showing the Gulf Stream (GS), North Atlantic Drift (NAD) and Sub-tropical Gyre (SG)

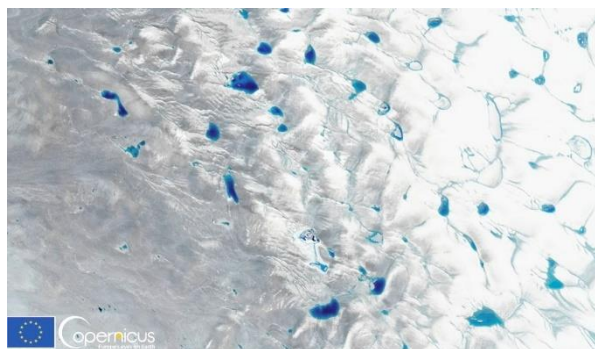


Sea surface temperature (°C) of the North Atlantic, 23 April, 2019. The NAD appears in green and pale blue colours

A complicating factor in deep water formation is salinity; the warm water flowing from the tropics is relatively salty due to surface evaporation but gradually mixes with less salty water to the north where evaporation is lower. As salinity also affects density, it is the balance between changes in temperature and salinity that determines where and how much water sinks. A decline in salinity in the N Atlantic as a result, for example, of melting of the Greenland icecap, will inhibit the overturning part of AMOC. The more buoyant freshwater effectively acts as a blanket to slow down deep-water formation and decreases the transfer of heat from low latitudes to high latitudes. Looking to the future we are left with the

question: Could weakening or collapse of AMOC cause the climate of NW Europe to become colder as the North Atlantic Drift slows down?

Surface ocean observations since the 1950s of periodic freshening of the N Atlantic suggest that this process has already started. The probable cause is enhanced surface melt and iceberg formation in Greenland which, since 2000, has led to 200-300 billion tonnes of fresh water being added to the N Atlantic each year as the global climate has become warmer. During strong melting events the air temperature rises above freezing even over the higher parts of the icecap; in August 2021, rain fell for several hours at the Greenland Summit Station (3216m) for the first time since observations were started there in 1989. As shown below, melt ponds, typically 0.5 to 5 km across, form on the surface of the ice, with the blue streaks indicating flow of water into channels (moulins) within the ice sheet.



Satellite image from showing melt ponds on Greenland, 29 July, 2021



***Dryas octopetala* in northern Scotland, June 2021**

Knowledge of changes in the circulation of the Atlantic in the relatively recent past has come from analyses of cores from the Greenland ice cap and from Atlantic Ocean sediments. Just over 12,000 years ago, as the world was emerging from the last ice age, the mean UK air temperature dropped by as much as 5°C over a decade or so, only to rise again just as quickly about 1200 years later. This cold period, known as the Younger Dryas (named after the arctic-alpine plant, *Dryas octopetala*, see above), is attributed to the sudden release of very large volumes of freshwater from the decaying North American ice cap; the northward flow of surface warm water and formation of deep water temporarily ceased in the N Atlantic while glaciers were briefly re-established over the northern half of the British Isles.

We now recognise from such studies of the past that large-scale changes in the Earth's environment typically give rise to a series (or cascade) of feedback effects on different components of the earth system. The effects can be sudden (a 'tipping point'), as happened with temperature during Younger Dryas, especially if they are self-reinforcing (a 'positive feedback'). For example, a cooling of the N Atlantic region would result in greater ice and snow cover, greater reflection of light and heat back out to space, and, as a result, further cooling. Much research today on how human activities might affect the global environment in the future is directed towards trying to understand the nature and scale of these feedback processes and the degree to which they might or might not be reversible.

Returning to AMOC, we know that the North Atlantic Drift and associated rate of deep-water formation are slowing. Over the next 100 years or so it is possible that AMOC will collapse and lead to significant, if temporary, cooling of the climate of the UK and western Europe. In one sense this could be beneficial in offsetting the current warming but human society would have difficulties in adapting to any very sudden change of temperature, as happened during the Younger Dryas. The rest of the globe will continue warming if CO₂ emissions are not controlled and so would western Europe when AMOC eventually re-establishes itself.

Changes in sea level are integral to any discussion about global warming. Thermal expansion of the ocean and melting of polar ice and of mountain glaciers have led to a rise in global sea level since 1900

of about 20cm of which approximately 3cm is attributable to changes in Greenland. By 2100 sea level is expected to increase by another 40-60cm. If the whole of the Greenland ice cap were eventually to melt, sea level would be higher than today by more than 700cm but that is another story!

Patrick Holligan was Professor of Oceanography at the National Oceanography Centre, University of Southampton

The Parish Carbon Footprint for 2020

Rob Rutherford

A recap is called for!

The Church of England has challenged us to be carbon neutral by 2030. The Candle in the Window has resolved to publish the carbon footprint of the churches every year. In the October 2020 edition we published the 2019 figures. The data only measures the gas and electricity used by the church buildings so it does not include the hidden carbon dioxide generated as a consequence of the things we buy. Nor does it include petrol used in getting to church etc.

The calculation is based on this data:

184g of Carbon Dioxide are released for each kWhr of gas energy used.

233g of Carbon Dioxide are released for each kWhr of electrical energy used.

This latter figure is that recommended by the government and represents the average for the grid rather than an area specific figure. It does not take into account any 'green supplier' we may happen to use.

Building	tonnes CO2
St Helen's Church	25.9
Parish Centre	5.0
St Michael's Church	10.7
St Nicolas' Church **	13.1
total	54.6

** based on estimated data

The total is therefore:

54.6 tonnes

This compares with 70.8 tonnes for 2019.

Of course 2020 was not typical. The churches were closed for much of the time. We still managed to use a lot of energy though.

Hot off the press: The Abingdon Carbon Cutters have organised a meeting on the theme 'Our Climate Crisis – Can COP26 deliver?' Wednesday 15th September 7.30 at the Roysse Room, Guildhall.

'The Gift of the World'

A Brief Account of an Abiding Interest

Charles Miller

In the early 1980s when I was studying theology and training for the priesthood at Nashotah House Episcopal Seminary in America, a theologian from the Church of England visited to deliver a short series of lectures on the then current 'rediscovery' of Trinitarian theology in Europe and Britain. The theologian was A. M. (Donald) Allchin who was a Residentiary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral and a member of the Anglican-Orthodox ecumenical dialogue.

When still a teenager Donald had discovered the world of Orthodoxy, and that interest resulted in a life-time of exploration of the riches of the Orthodox tradition and its relation to Anglicanism, and the formation of a wide circle of friends -- theologians lay and ordained, monks, nuns and hierarchs -- throughout the various Orthodox churches, including the Romanian Orthodox Church.

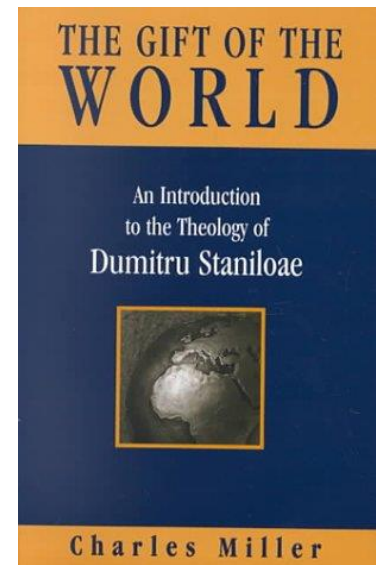
Through references in an article about spiritual life in the Romanian Orthodox Church under Communist rule Donald came across the name of Fr Dumitru Staniloae and managed to meet Fr Dumitru in the course of ecumenical meetings on the continent -- the only sort of meetings to which Fr Dumitru, the most distinguished Romanian theologian of the twentieth century, was allowed by the government to attend. Despite the awkward French which they both shared (Fr Dumitru had studied in Berlin and Paris many years before and was fluent in both languages) they became fast friends and Donald took as many opportunities as he could to meet Fr Dumitru in Bucharest and to host Fr Dumitru in England and, in particular, in Oxford.

In his lectures Fr Donald only alluded to the writings of Fr Dumitru but he hinted at the theological and ecumenical stature of the Romanian theologian by reminding us that the famous Reformed theologian Jurgen Moltmann had dedicated his current and widely-publicised book *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (1981) to his friend and mentor Fr Dumitru Staniloae.

Inexplicably, I was intrigued by this Romanian Orthodox theologian whose work was almost wholly unknown in the English-speaking world of Anglicanism. I discovered that a volume of essays had recently been translated and published in English, so I bought a copy and promptly delved into Fr Dumitru's theological world. One essay in that volume, on 'Revelation', cited the magisterial Oxford theologian Austin Farrer, and I realised that this Romanian theologian, inhabiting such a different world in so many ways, nevertheless had reached out to my own tradition to gain insight into the ways of God. I resolved to do the same in his direction. I bought *Teach Yourself Romanian* while still in the seminary and persuaded a Romanian refugee who attended the Episcopal Cathedral where I was on placement to help me on my linguistic way!

A break-through came when I moved to England in 1984. That summer I visited Canon Allchin in Canterbury where, on my leaving, he put into my hands a gift: the three volumes of Fr Dumitru's *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, first published in the 1960s. The spare time through my years in Oxford as a research student were spent reading the *Dogmatic Theology*.

A theme which had come to my attention as I read the Romanian text and other short pieces in French and English by and about Fr Dumitru was the theme of the world as *gift*. By that Fr Dumitru meant that created existence and the material world in and by which we live are meant to be means by which an affirming and transformative dialogue of love is established and pursued between God and each human being and between human beings themselves. Fr Dumitru's view can be seen as a tacit engagement (and



rebuttal) of the materialist ideology of Marxist Communism which defined world-view of 'the Iron Curtain'. But it was more than that. The theme of 'the dialogue of the gift' and its 'dialogue of love' were also critiques of the ecologically disastrous industrialization of his native Romania under Communist rule. The theme was also part of Fr Dumitru's attempt to forge what he calls 'a new asceticism' in which human labour was not just the form of Communism's definition of the human being as 'worker'; labour, the use of the world and all manner of expression arising out of creative existence, aims to up-build the dialogue of love between human beings and to provide an offering to God, the 'Giver of all good gifts' (James 1.17).

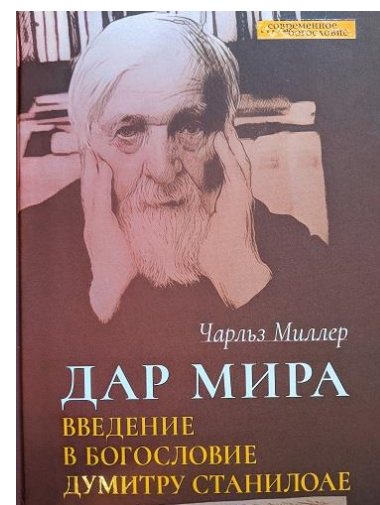
All of this intrigued and inspired me. Through the 1980s and 90s I managed to write essays and lectures which expounded the theme of the 'dialogue of the gift' and the 'dialogue of love'. What emerged in 2000 when I was teaching theology and ascetics in America was a short volume entitled *The Gift of the World. An Introduction to the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae* (T & T Clark). By the time the volume came before the public I had moved back into a pastoral cure at the Church of the Transfiguration in Manhattan. The ministry there was relentless and, alas, the time to pursue this abiding interest eluded me.

Move the clock forward to 2013, the year of my sabbatical visit to St Petersburg. Near the end of that visit I met the Academic Dean of the Orthodox Theological Academy and a young teaching colleague who, rather uniquely, was also interested in the theology of Fr Dumitru Staniloae. As we three talked the young priest suddenly declared in surprise, "So *you're* the Charles Miller who wrote *The Gift of the World*?". I could only reply, "Well, yes!". From that and other conversations with the young Fr Hilarion (some readers might remember that he visited us at St Helen's in 2014) I realized that by and large Russian Orthodox clergy and theologians knew nothing about Fr Staniloae's thought. At that point the idea of a Russian edition came to mind: for them, as for English readers already, a simple introduction to his thought and some of its key themes like the 'dialogue of the gift'. However, I felt that the study of 2000 needed a bit more, but I was not clear what more was needed. Providence, however, came to my rescue.

In the autumn of 2013 I made a short pilgrimage to Mount Athos in northern Greece -- the famous 'Holy Mountain' with its extraordinary collection of monasteries from all the churches of the Orthodox world. I spent one night at the monastery of Simonapetra and was pleased to meet the Librarian, Fr Makarios (a French hieromonk), who showed me the new library and with whom I spoke of my interest in Fr Dumitru's thought. "Do you know the thesis by.....?", he immediately asked. "No", I replied. "Well, here, I'll make a CD Rom copy for you to take away", which he promptly did. It was several years later, after my hospitalization in fact, that I finally had the mental energy to read the material Fr Makarios had given me. It was a really fine piece of work which gave me helpful new insights into Fr Dumitru's theology. So with that inspiration I fashioned yet another chapter for the proposed Russian second edition of the book.

A friend in Oxford knew the editor-in-chief of the St Andrew's Press, Moscow. When I proposed a Russian edition of my book he jumped at the chance declaring that for years he had wanted to publish something about Fr Dumitru for Russian readers. Our discussion began well before the pandemic but that brought things to a stand-still. About this time last year, though, we regained momentum, and with the support of a fine new publishing editor named Yulia, the Russian edition finally appeared in early August 2021.

I have dedicated this second edition to the Rector, staff and students of the Orthodox Theological Academy in St Petersburg with special thanks for their ecumenical hospitality over a number of years. The Russian edition of *The Gift of the World*, in Russian *Dar Mira*, is my tiny contribution to the on-going life and witness of the Russian Orthodox Church and its people. May it somehow be a blessing to them.



Back to School!

Introducing Toolkit for Happiness- TrinityLearning's Newest Project!

Nicola Williams

As schools restart and autumn approaches it feels like a good time to share news of some of TrinityLearning's regular support for schools as well as introducing our newest project, Toolkit for Happiness.



Our first job this term is to update and send out our Wellbeing Support for School Staff Newsletter. This gives details of 24-hour helpline support for those who are struggling, as well as more general help and advice for supporting and improving good mental health. TrinityLearning has produced and distributed this newsletter for many years, sending it out every September.

However, we now provide more frequent updates so that school staff can be sure all the links and advice are current. We even include details for some local online Pilates classes! If you would like to take a look, the newsletter is available on our website in our resources for Covid19 section at <https://trinitylearning.org.uk/covid-19-resources-and-information-for-children-families-and-school-staff/>, please bear in mind that some of the helplines listed are specific to education staff.

We are also preparing to relaunch our main volunteer projects this term. These are Thinking Books, where volunteers mentor primary children to learn about understanding emotions through reading and talking about specially chosen picture books, and the Kingfisher Singing group where volunteers meet in a group once a week to sing nursery rhymes and action songs at Kingfisher School. Each of these projects requires around a one to two hour commitment per week. TrinityLearning provides full training and supports volunteers through the application process and DBS checks so if you have some free time and are looking to make a difference in your local community please do email us to find out more at nic.trinitylearning@gmail.com.

TrinityLearning is constantly looking for creative ways to support school communities in the Abingdon area. We use the feedback we receive from schools to adapt and improve our offer, ensuring it remains timely and relevant. It is in response to this feedback that we have developed new projects that support schools in promoting ways to improve wellbeing. The funding we receive from local churches, and particularly the regular giving we receive from St Helen's Church, has really made this possible as many of our usual grant-based sources of funding have dried up over the last year.

Our latest project, Toolkit for Happiness, is designed to use simple strategies to promote and support children's wellbeing and good mental health. Toolkit for Happiness was in development before COVID set in but it seems very apt to be rolling it out now as the whole 'lockdown' experience has left some people feeling very anxious or low. It consists of five workshops each focusing on a different area important to wellbeing:

- Nature
- Physical activity
- Acts of kindness
- Creativity
- Relaxation and reflection.

We finished the last school year in July by sharing our new Toolkit for Happiness project with sixty year 12 pupils from Larkmead School as part of their Careers week and were blown away by their enthusiasm and commitment to the project.

Each group of around 30 Year 12 students took part in a day's training on all the workshop activities culminating in them creating photograph or video instructions for one activity. All the students entered

into the activities with enthusiasm, with many of them commenting on how the individual workshops had improved their sense of wellbeing or happiness:

“Making things was relaxing and nice.” “It felt good to be kind.”

“I enjoyed the creativity and acts of kindness workshops the most as they were the most fun and cheered me up.”

“The Acts of kindness activities helped me connect with my emotions.”

“Physical exercise was engaging and fun.”

“It was nice to get fresh air and relaxing.”

“Relaxation was very relaxing for my muscles and allowed me to zone out from the world.”



The students gave us helpful feedback throughout the day with thoughtful suggestions on how specific activities and our risk assessments could be improved. Many students are also keen to help deliver the project both in Larkmead and in local primary schools over the next school year. *“I would like to volunteer to help run the Toolkit for Happiness because I can imagine it would boost the younger students’ mental well-being and it would be nice to see them enjoying themselves and connecting with their friends.”*

Whilst we are hopeful that face-to-face mentoring activities such as Toolkit for Happiness will be able to go ahead in schools this year we are, as always, planning for all eventualities, so with that in mind we asked the students to create photograph or video instructions for one of the activities they had tried. The fantastic videos and photographs created by the students will be used to make a supporting web-based resource, which will allow the project to be further rolled out over the next school year, even if face-to-face activities are limited.

Thank you so much for all your continued support and prayers which enable this work to happen!

Nicola, Taz and Nicola

TrinityLearning is a registered charity, Charity Number 1182742.

A quote from Fr Dumitru Staniloae: (see pages 5 and 6)

‘Time is a ladder erected by God so that his creatures might rise to him, and on which God himself descends so as to help his creatures makes that ascent’.

Junior Church

Sue Pemberton on behalf of the Junior Church leadership team.

After over a year of Junior Church on Facebook, we decided to take a break over the summer but have used the Facebook group to keep in touch. Some of us also enjoyed a picnic and games in Abbey Gardens.

We're very pleased to announce that Junior Church will be starting again at St Helens in September during the 10.30 service. A slight change is that you won't see us at the beginning of the service. We know we sometimes cause a bit of congestion near the entrance area, so for now we'll start in the church centre but we'll come back into church around the Peace/Offertory hymn.

All children between the ages of about three and eight are very welcome to join us. Children can bring a grown-up if they need to, and any under threes must have a grown-up with them. We'll be exploring a Bible story and enjoying games, craft work and music.

Harvest with a little difference; come and see!

Charles Masheder

Harvest services have been a large part of each year's festivals in the various village parishes in which I have served. The concept of being thankful for all the good things we have is surely so natural and it is wonderful when people want to direct their thanks to the Creator. Farmers and others who work the land are joined by many who enjoy the fruits of their gardens.

This year at St Helen's, we are going to have another week giving out 'goodies' from our West Porch, following what we did last Christmas with the christingle bags and then again in Holy Week and Easter, hoping to encourage people to see the significance of these times. What has been so heart-warming is the way that so many people have chatted to the stewards, sometimes just generally but sometimes in depth.

We shall be at the West Porch from Monday 27th September till the end of the week. All are welcome. You may be asking what is in the bags...well come and see!

We have offers already for some of the times for stewards but if you want to help please let me know ideally on chasmash@ic24.net or 520959

On the Sunday, October 3rd, there will be the usual 10:30 service at St Helen's with a Harvest theme but there will also be a more informal short service at 3:30 particularly for those not so used to our worship; again though all are welcome! Hopefully light refreshments will be served afterwards.

Afghan refugees - a chance to help

Since 2016 St Ethelwold's House has provided accommodation for refugees and asylum-seekers, and we anticipate a huge increase in demand in the wake of the crisis in Afghanistan. Plans are afoot to raise £3,100 to top up the Host Abingdon Sanctuary Fund over the next 12 months. All of us could help by making a standing order, and/or a one-off donation to Host Abingdon, Sort Code 40-35-34 Account No 34134214, or by sending a cheque (made out to Host Abingdon) to St Ethelwold's House, 30 East St Helen St, Abingdon OX14 5EB. We need to email the treasurer at ruth.sillitoe@gmail.com so that she knows who made the donation. If anyone is thinking of organising a fundraising event (coffee morning, concert, ...), please contact Adrian at adrianrance220@gmail.com

Many thanks. Mary Anderson and Gwen Bevington

A Breath of Fresh Air

Martin Kimber

November 1989. The UK's first female Prime Minister had been in office for a decade. The Berlin Wall was being dramatically yet peacefully dismantled. In the United States, Joe Biden was the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, having been unsuccessful in his first bid to be nominated as the Democratic candidate for President the year before. (Never give up.)

As a fourteen-year-old boy, I read about these current affairs in a daily newspaper— the relatively new publication *The Independent*. I took my own daily copy because I had had the extraordinary good luck to be awarded a junior scholarship to a well-known boarding school near Windsor. In my boarding house, it was customary to take a newspaper every day. The cost was simply added to the school fees each term, along with any other expenses the boys accrued such as for stamps, ink cartridges or bow ties.

As a first year in 1989 (the equivalent of Year 9) I had the regular chore of wheeling a little trolley out early in the morning to collect a bundle of fifty-five newspapers from Alden & Blackwells, the local bookshop/newsagent. It was eerie but exciting to get up before anyone else and make my way through the streets. The enormous grand Victorian boarding houses loomed out of the autumn mist.

The house had about fifty boys, each with their own room, ranging from tiny and basic for first years, to fairly spacious in the upper sixth form. There were also a handful of live-in staff, with our housemaster occupying beautifully furnished rooms at the front of the building, and caretakers housed in a little flat at the rear of the ground floor.

In a flat at the rear of the first floor lived The Dame. She was a formidable matron figure, much loved but also feared. Her RP accent rivalled HMQ with some quite unbelievable vowel sounds. Boys commonly worked on polishing up their imitations of her turns of phrase when they thought she was out of earshot, but this could go wrong, as she could materialise unexpectedly.

I have been reminded of My Dame during the coronavirus pandemic. One of her primary obsessions was with good ventilation. I remember boys being reprimanded for not keeping their windows open at all times, even in the depths of winter. The heating bill must have been substantial, but I suppose it divided into fifty school fees. But The Dame came from a tradition and a generation that remembered the horrible transmissibility of respiratory diseases. It is indelicate to say it, but when I delivered each boy's newspaper to their room each morning as a wake-up call, there were always one or two who had ignored The Dame's instruction and had kept their window shut overnight, and their rooms notably smelled much worse!

All this reminiscing has been a circuitous way to introduce the topic of ventilating our church buildings during our services. We hope that we are in the tail end of the pandemic in this country now. But science has shown that indoor transmission of this airborne disease is much reduced by a continuous through-flow of fresh air. It took the World Health Organisation over a year to recommend what My Dame would have known all along.

Even if the weather is a little harsh and chilly at times this autumn and winter, please bear with us sidespeople as we throw the church doors wide open to keep our congregations as healthy as we can.



Mothers' Union Activities

*Elizabeth Dawson
Branch Leader.*

During August, our Mothers' Union group have been busy fund raising for our various charities whilst also enjoying some "fun" time together. At the beginning of the month, we spent a sunny afternoon doing a 5km sponsored walk around Albert Park. Whilst youngsters played on the grass and other people walked their dogs, we each walked/jogged 6 times round the park. Margaret Horton kindly came along to wave our banner and rattle a bucket and managed to catch the attention of several passers-by. She also acted as a very diligent lap counter. To date we have raised around £500 for the "Summer of Hope" Campaign. This is a national MU initiative to raise the profile of women and girls in developing countries, so that they can access education and thereby help their families and communities.



Participants in the MU sponsored walk minus Elizabeth Dawson who took the picture.

It was the vision of our foundress, Mary Sumner that the world should be a place where women's voices are heard and their rights recognised. Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, women will have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, support one another and make a difference in their own locality.

Our second activity was a cream tea in the parish centre in support of another MU initiative, AFIA (Away from It all) holidays. This scheme is open to anyone who is experiencing stress in their family life. For over 50 years MU members across Britain and Ireland have been helping to provide funding for families and individuals who desperately need a break. It may be a week in a caravan for a one parent family, a day out at the seaside or a coach trip for an older person who lives alone.



The MU cream tea to raise money for AFIA

Barbara Earl our late branch leader, was a strong supporter of this scheme, and it was her wish that we should hold a cream tea fund-raising event to support it. We had a really enjoyable afternoon and were delighted to welcome 6 diocesan member guests. Along with a raffle and a card sale, we can now donate £230 to AFIA holidays.

Faith in Africa

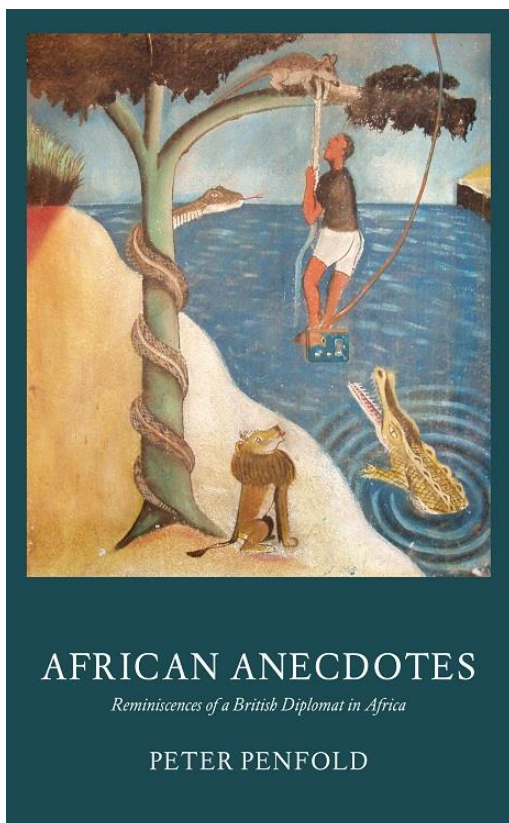
Peter Penfold

The Christian church, like Islam, has planted deep roots in Africa. I have always felt more comfortable being a Christian in Africa than in the UK. I have gained much from worshipping with my fellow Christians in a wide variety of churches in the countries in which I have served. In the predominantly Moslem north of Nigeria, our Anglican church in Kaduna was not much more than a tinned roofed hut on which the rain would pound in the rainy season and then for part of the year we would go to church clutching our dusters in order to wipe away the dust on the pews from the Harmattan, the dust wind which swept across from the Sahara.

All Saints Cathedral sat atop one of the hills of Kampala just across from the notorious state security offices where Idi Amin's government tortured thousands of poor Ugandans and in the 1970s their cries could be heard during the services. The church was always full when I attended in the mid 1980s. One fought your way out of church against the tide of congregants fighting their way in to find a seat.

The magnificent St Georges' Cathedral in Freetown Sierra Leone was mainly the home of the Krios, the first descendants of the early freed slaves who established Freetown as the capital. The very first CMS (Church Missionary Society) missionaries in Africa came to Freetown and they set the model for the Krios to follow. The liturgy of the Anglican church was strictly adhered to and even in the hot humid climate the congregations came to church in their finest clothes, the ladies in their hats and gloves and the men in their three piece striped suits, a mode of dress followed to this day.

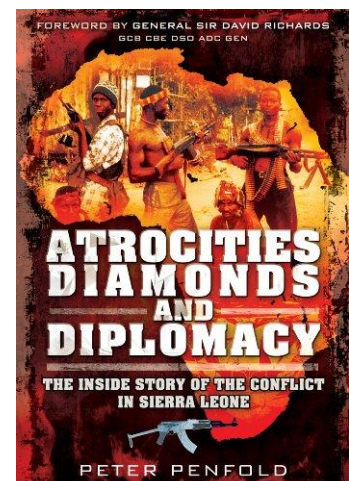
Sadly this church, like so many other religious buildings was badly damaged during the rebel invasion of Freetown in 1998. The churches and other religious institutions had played a crucial role in helping bring an end to the 11 year war in Sierra Leone. Thousands took refuge in the mosques and churches during the fighting and it was in these buildings in the eastern end of the city that some of the worst massacres took place. For example sixty six people were murdered in cold blood in the Rogbalan mosque in the suburb of Kissy and twelve people including children were gunned down in the church of the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star in Wellington.



After the peace agreement had been signed it was the religious leaders in the churches and mosques who preached reconciliation from the pulpits. Given the barbarity of the atrocities committed by the rebels this was not an easy task.

This is an extract from Peter Penfold's latest book – *African Anecdotes – Reminiscences of a British Diplomat in Africa*. (available from Amazon or the Bookstore in the Abingdon precinct)

Peter's earlier book '*Atrocities, Diamonds and Diplomacy: The Inside Story of the Conflict in Sierra Leone*' is still available.



Coming Up in Abingdon in September:

Collated by Eluned Hallas

Oxfordshire Ride & Stride 11th September

Churches across the county will be open to welcome Riders & Striders as part of the OHCT Ride&Stride Weekend. Some participants are trying to cover as many miles as possible, others to collect as many churches as possible (which is where towns such as Abingdon & Oxford can help out), others just visit one or two and stop to look around. All are welcome, and most churches have Stewards on hand to welcome and explain.

As well as enjoying themselves (we hope) the participants may also be raising money for the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Fund and for a church of their choice.

The OHCT (<https://ohct.org.uk/>) works to provide funding to help local communities repair, maintain and improve Oxfordshire's historic churches, preserving them for future generations. Over the years many of our local churches – including St H & St M - have benefitted from OHCT grants and expertise. OHCT also works to increase public understanding of these buildings via a programme of Events and Publications

Do consider supporting our intrepid Parish Riders: St H: Jeanette Thomas, Norman and Elizabeth Dawson St M: Louise Heffernan & Nicola Ng St N: Philippa Randles (with apologies to any we've missed off)

Heritage Weekend 18th-19th September

Abingdon has always taken part in the national "Heritage Open Days" festival and this year is no exception. The volunteers from the Friends of Abingdon Civic Society and the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society have been digging in the archives, searching out more about the history of the town for locals and visitors to enjoy. Events, walks, talks and property visits are free.

Start at the Market Place on Saturday to find the Information Stall and other stalls focusing on the traditional foods of the area. Move on to the Exhibition in St Nicolas' Church just across the road (open Thursday – Saturday 10am -3pm) – you will find out where food was grown and how it was distributed in the Abingdon of the past. Down at the Abbey Buildings spend some time walking around the recreation of Abbot Faritius' herb garden and talk to the beekeepers and wine makers who will be sharing the secrets of these skills the monks knew so well. (Open all day Saturday and on Sunday afternoon.)

Return to the Market Place and pick up the 'History on a Plate' trail guide so that you can explore more of the town's food history yourself, finding the Blue Plates that will be fixed up around the town highlighting buildings where food was made, served or sold. Or try another new town trail taking you around the site of the Union Workhouse, closed in 1931. The information stall will have leaflets for a range of other self-guided walks too. Make sure you take some time to go and see the Open Properties like St Ethelwold's House, the Baptist Church and Christ's Hospital Hall. Stop off at the Museum to take the Trencher Trail, or catch their live-streamed talk about Grinling Gibbons (11th and 18th Sep).

Meanwhile the Guildhall will be hosting local films, a collection of menus from the past and a talk about the brewing industry. There is also a chance to find out more about the new website featuring local families who played a part in the First World War.

On Sunday the guided walks programme includes the Boundary Walk, a tour of the new-style "edible" flowerbeds in the town's public spaces, a walk around Victorian Abingdon and the "Lost Abbey" walk.

For further details visit www.abingdonheritage.org.uk

About the Parish:

Jenny Balshaw's Wedding

This photo shows a happy Jenny Balshaw, our previous Parish Administrator, with her new husband Andrew North, at the informal reception following their wedding. The ceremony was celebrated as part of the family service at St. Andrews church West Hagbourne on 25th July, where Jenny worshipped and served as Church Warden for several years. She will be moving to Warminster shortly to start her new married life, and everyone will wish them both well.



Phil Atkinson's leaving gift:

St Helen's wardens Geoff Meen and Linda Hobbs presented a small gift to Phil Atkinson, following his retirement as caretaker of St Helen's church after 10 years of stalwart service. Giving Phil his gift, Linda thanked him for all he had done over the years, and said he will be greatly missed and difficult to replace.

A Wide Readership

In the last couple of weeks the St Nicolas' website has received two requests for further information based on an article in A Candle in the Window.

One was from an academic in the University of Western Australia researching an Abingdonian's activities in Cairo, Suez, Petra, the Hebron and Jerusalem.

The other from a family historian in Winnipeg, Canada trying to trace his family history.

Who would have thought that the Candle's light would shine so far?

St Helen's Choir in lockdown rehearsing in St Ethelwold's garden



A Birthday Blessing

Eileen Duckett

We are having a party, the twins are eight.
I have been baking all morning to celebrate the date.
Millionaires shortbread, cupcakes and jellies,
All sorts of goodies to fill up their bellies.
Their brothers will help them eat all the cake
And any other treats which we happen to make.
Grandad's brought sausages, burgers and bread
While Grampy's brought wine which he makes in his shed.
Mum's made the cake, her chocolate's the best.
Dad's doing the barbecue, our boys are well blessed.
There will be cards and presents from family and friends
And a day out on Sunday so the fun never ends.
It will be a great day enjoyed by us all.
Where have 8 years gone, they are growing so tall.
But the best thing this year for Grampy and me
Is being able to HUG them at their birthday tea.

Country Quiz

Abielle Hallas

1. There are 5 countries whose name contains all five vowels. Can you name all 5?
2. There are two sovereign countries in the world with dragons on their flags – can you name them both?
3. What is the largest country in the world that has no rivers?
4. Which country in the world has the most capital cities?
5. Which African country changed its name in 2018?
6. Which country's name means 'bearded ones'?
7. Which country has 10 letters in it, but only one vowel?
8. Which country has all its letters in reverse alphabetical order?
9. What is the only city in the world that straddles two continents
10. Which is the only country located in all four hemispheres (North and South according to the equator, and East and West according to the Prime Meridian)

For quiz answers see page 16

Useful Weblinks:

Services: for the latest news see the church websites:

<https://www.abingdon-st-helens.org.uk/>

<https://www.stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk/>

<https://www.stnicolasabingdon.org.uk/>

Page for Church of England links: services, daily readings etc

<https://www.churchofengland.org/>

FOOD BANK. The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support. **Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm.** Their main long-term needs are:

Long life milk (not soya), sugar, fruit squash, tinned meat and vegetables. They also give out a lot of washing up liquid, bleach and toilet rolls. You can also make donations by sending a cheque made out to *North Abingdon PCC Christ Church*, clearly marked 'for Food Bank'. You can also donate via the Foodbank website <https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/> or the Parish office have details if you want to donate via online banking.

Quiz Answers:

1. United States of America, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo,
2. Equatorial Guinea, Dominican Republic
3. Bhutan and Malta
4. Saudi Arabia
5. South Africa – Pretoria, Cape Town, and Bloemfontein. South Africa has different capital cities for the different functions of the state.
6. Swaziland changed its name to Eswatini
7. Barbados
8. Kyrgyzstan
9. Tonga
10. Kiribati

And finally, from Dave Walker of Cartoon Church:



Thank you to all contributors and to you, the readers.

The next issue will be published in October: ideas and contributions by the end of September to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk

We would also welcome responses to any articles published here or in previous issues.