

The Rector would appreciate it if anyone knowing of illness or any other trouble in the Parish would notify him as soon as possible so that he or a member of the Church can call without delay.

Rector's Surgery: If you have an enquiry about baptism, marriage or another service, or if there is something else you would like to discuss with Napo John, please make an appointment, through the Church Office (8462 1373), to come and see him during Surgery hours - Monday mornings (except Bank Holidays) 10.30 am – 12 noon and Tuesday evenings, 7 – 9 pm.

SEPTEMBER 2020

Summer 2020, a summer like no other, is coming to an end. I sit in my study, see leaves falling off the trees and I keep wondering how autumn will unfold. In a way, things are now a little more predictable, but so much remains unpredictable. There is much that can turn us towards negativity but there are signs of hope too. The situation in some ways looks the same today as it was at the start of the pandemic but it is different too. The infection rates then suddenly started to rise and the lockdown was the answer. Today the infection rates are on the rise again, but life is trying desperately to be normal. In spring we were taking church bookings for summer 2020 in anticipation that life would be back to normal, but the reality turned out to be very different. Now I am busy preparing for the autumn and winter in anticipation that all may be fine, but at the same time I have this nagging doubt that all will really be well. I see young parents and even some grandparents busy buying school supplies in hopefulness, yet I notice an unease on their faces too.

Whatever the circumstances, one thing should be certain and that is, as a Parish Church we must keep praying for the wellbeing of our communities as well as prepare to be there for our people in their moments of need. On my prayer list, children who are returning to their schools come first. Would you join with me to pray for them? While talking about our youth, hats off to their parents and carers for being jacks-of-all-trades during the last difficult months. All parents and carers are my stars and are everyday in my prayers. Would you hold them dear to your heart too? I guess teachers have their own worries and anxieties and we must pray for them for strength and wisdom.

On the economic front we have officially entered the deepest recession on record. The worries for job losses are depressingly high

and my heart goes out to all who are faced with an uncertain future. But I have faith in our nation's creative nature and somewhere in my heart of hearts I believe all will be well with us before too long and these hard times too shall pass.

On the church front, the Sunday services are going well, thanks to all who have been helping to make it happen. I am thankful to you who attend the services for your understanding and your cooperation. I am also delighted to write that St. Mary's Annual Parochial Church Meeting will definitely take place on 14th October. The churches are asked to make arrangements for the meetings to be held electronically. I am pleased to say your church is well prepared for your electronic participation.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to the PCC members who are stepping down; they have been there with the Ministry Team to give a lead during the pandemic. May my God reward them for the good they have done for their church and community. As we thank God for them, would you please pray if the Lord is calling you to serve on the PCC, Deanery Synod or in any other capacity? Your church needs your skills today more than ever before.

Let me now take us back to what I said at the start of this article - the present situation and uncertainties related to it: Indeed, there are signs of hope but the hardships are with us too. Would it surprise anyone if in such times people turn to the Church for help? Perhaps you would say, 'Why turn to the Church when we have a functioning government?' Friend let us not forget the fact that by the time the year ends our government would have spent, I guess £300 + billions, an amount that was not budgeted. Throughout history, the church of Christ has risen to the occasion and done marvellous things. I can give hundreds of examples from the world church history but our own history is full of examples of individual Christians and churches rising up for their communities in challenging times. Florence Nightingale rose to meet the health needs of the needy in desperate times. Angela Burdett-Coutts, the richest woman at the time in this country and a Christian, rose to support the poor and was hailed 'the queen of the poor' in our great city. In the 1800s when education was the luxury of the rich, did not the church start the Sunday School movement so the children of the less well-off could learn to read and write? The list is very long and I feel myself getting carried away, but let me stop dwelling on the past and beg us to look to the future. I know prayer can move the mountains and I thank God there are very many who pray day and night for the good of this land and her people. But, my brothers and sisters, we need to be ready for times which could be uncertain and difficult. Would you stand by the needy in such

times? Would you please have your creative hat on and suggest to me how our church should prepare for a future that does not look very predictable.

Please stay safe and stay blessed.

Always yours

Napo



CHURCH CLEANERS

'What did you do in Lockdown?' is the opening gambit these days. Well, I cleared out cupboards, spring cleaned, baked and gardened, just like everyone else!

What I also did was think, 'Well, I don't have to think about Church Cleaning!' During lockdown the spiders had a field day, swinging from the rafters, playing around the altar, fastening up the font with their delicate little webs and generally enjoying themselves!

Then, along came Yvonne and Jim, who cleared them away from everywhere and spoilt their games! What would we do without Yvonne and Jim? They are both true superheroes - thank you both very much!

Then Brenda put out an appeal and now we have six new volunteers, Cathy, Keighley, Sarah, Jo, Dom and Elysia, who are all busy keeping those spiders at bay and making our beautiful Church look, well, beautiful! Together with our loyal regular team we are managing to keep things going! Long may it last!

Don't let it put you off volunteering! Don't forget, 'Many hands make light work'.

Thank you all very much.

Carolyn Tooley

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

The Annual Parish Meeting will now be held on **Wednesday 14th October at 7.30pm** in the Church.

We will be electing two Churchwardens and new PCC members: Lucy Carroll and Cathy Price resigned during the year due to moving away and family circumstances. We are extremely grateful to them for their service and input into our deliberations. We will also be electing three members of the PCC who will represent St Mary's on the Deanery Synod: Mark Willoughby, Yvonne Pickford and Mary Whytock have served their statutory term.

If you would like to stand for election please sign your name on the list in the church porch. Proposers and Seconders are needed. Please consider standing for PCC. It is important that you make every effort to attend the APCM, listen to what has been done by many on your behalf. This is your chance to show your support and an opportunity to voice your opinion.

It is intended to have copies of the Agenda and Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting available to members of the Church by 1st September.

They will be at the back of the church or a copy will be sent if required (telephone Mary Whytock 020 8289 9217 mary.whytock@ntlworld.com). **Remember it is only members of our Electoral Roll who can vote at this meeting.** Copies of the 2019 Accounts will also be available at the back of the Church.

Mary Whytock
Secretary to the Parochial Church Council

A Note from the Editor

As the lockdown rules and guidelines seem to change almost daily, your editor has completely lost the plot as regards which category and size of gathering is now allowed.

Please could the organisers of any activity – e.g. coffee morning, lunch club, toddler group, prayer group, etc. – let me know as soon as it is given the green light to resume, so that it can be included in the diary pages once more, whenever that may be.

Many thanks.

Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families



This time last year I was able to report on our cream tea out at the BR6 restaurant in Orpington. How I miss our social events and the opportunity to meet in fellowship and friendship. I do hope you feel as I do, that we are at last being allowed a little more freedom. Freedom to visit friends and family and have them visit us. It may still be in a 'bubble' or meeting outside, but just having human contact, for some, lifts the spirit.

Last month we celebrated Mary Sumner Day on the 9th August and we can certainly gain confidence if we follow in her footsteps. I am sure you remember that after she had called that first meeting of her friends and neighbours, she was so afraid, she was unable to lead the meeting and her husband had to help, by asking the ladies to return a week later. It took her a while to overcome her fear but once she did, look what the result was!

This organisation, Mothers' Union, despite the devastation this pandemic has caused, is still going, thanks in the main to Bev Jullien, our CEO and her Senior Leadership Team, who continue to work long hours and take on extra tasks to enable us to benefit from, and help others to benefit from, the work which Mary Sumner began that time in the sitting room of the vicarage.

As Christians, we know that all this help and support comes from the love of God and this put me in mind of the modern hymn, which asks you to: Put your hand in the hand of the man who stilled the water, put your hand in the hand of the man who calmed the sea. Take a look at yourself, and you can look at others differently, put your hand in the hand of the man from Galilee. There are other verses, but if we can follow these guidelines, I feel sure we will all feel safe and uplifted.

I am also reminded that worship is.... celebrating the presence and power of God's Spirit. Let us then celebrate and give thanks that life is moving on, but let us not forget to keep praying for Bev and her team and all in our worldwide membership, together with all in our provinces,

dioceses, deaneries and branches who have suffered and all whose life has been changed forever.

Mothers' Union are delighted to be offering members a selection of webinars based around a number of themes including digital media, fundraising and capturing and reporting on the difference that we make. The webinars will be led by staff and guests and will offer members the opportunity to find out more information and upskill themselves in the subject field.

A full list of available webinars for the August - November period can be found on line at www.mothersunion.org/mothers-union-member-webinars. All webinars take place via zoom. Once you have registered you will receive a code to join the webinar; this is exclusive to you, your email and your device and so cannot be forwarded on to anyone else. There are 100 spaces on each webinar. If you have any queries please contact communications@mothersunion.org.

Mothers' Union look forward to you joining with us for this exciting new initiative.

You are not defined by algorithm or real exam results. God loves you with an everlasting love. He has made you uniquely and gifted you specifically. You do not need to prove your worth. Your value is priceless to him.

”

RT REV SIMON BURTON-JONES

Bishop of Tonbridge



Too Small to Matter

'And the head cannot say to the feet 'I don't need you.'

1 Corinthians 12 v 21. NIV

St Paul is encouraging the early Church, this time in Corinth, and trying to explain that the 'Church' is much like the human body. He is talking about unity and diversity in the Body of Christ but gives a wonderfully detailed description of various organs and parts of the human frame and how each part, however large or seemingly insignificant, relies and depends on the other parts. Together they become a fully functioning body and even the smallest component is equal in importance.

How often we have considered ourselves to be small and insignificant and of little importance? We look at the contributions of others and wonder if we could ever really make a difference!?

In 1852, in America, Harriet Beecher Stowe felt a bit like that. She had been born, in 1811, into a well-known religious family. She lived in a society where the use of slave labour was the norm. However, as a Christian, she was outraged when the laws regarding fugitive slaves were tightened. She was particularly frustrated because, as a middle-aged woman, she felt powerless to do anything about this. She felt so strongly, she decided that she would at least have a try. She would write! So, in 1852, she wrote an anti-slavery novel that she entitled *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This book appealed to all ages and all parts of society and exposed some of the cruelties and deprivations suffered by slaves. This book was widely read and re-published. It had a profound effect on its readers and was considered to be a major influence in the way the American public began to reposition their ideas on African American slavery. In fact, it has been suggested that this small book laid the groundwork for the American Civil War in 1865.

As children, many of my generation read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a classic piece of literature. Like the small - but oh so important - 'foot' that St Paul talked about in 1 Corinthians 12, Harriet Beecher Stowe, a middle-aged and seemingly unimportant woman, actually played a vital part in the 'bigger picture'!

'Heavenly Father, please forgive us for the times that we forget that we are unique and precious in your sight. Help us, by the power of your Holy Spirit dwelling within us, to believe that each of us has talents and gifts that are valuable to your Body..... and to be willing and ready to play our part in the building of Your Kingdom here on Earth.'

Amen.

Avril Ashford

**ST. MARY'S CHURCH DIARY
SEPTEMBER 2020**

Morning Prayers take place daily at 9.10am Monday to Thursday throughout the year (except Bank Holidays).

Thursday 3rd 10.30am Holy Communion BCP

TRINITY 13

Sunday 6th 8.00am Holy Communion BCP
10.30am Morning Praise
Thursday 10th 10.30am Holy Communion CW

TRINITY 14

Sunday 13th 8.00am Holy Communion BCP
9.15am Fresh Start
10.30am Parish Communion CW
Thursday 17th 10.30am Holy Communion BCP

TRINITY 15

Sunday 20th 8.00am Holy Communion BCP
10.30am Morning Praise
Thursday 24th 10.30am Holy Communion CW

TRINITY 16

Sunday 27th 8.00am Holy Communion BCP
10.30am Parish Communion CW

You can find our live-streamed and recorded services on St Mary's YouTube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCo7KNHYf0iKm95VXyQdFg6g>



A RECENT BAPTISM IN THE PARISH

Ilse Tickner

A RECENT FUNERAL IN THE PARISH

William Arthur Garner



God of love and compassion, we live in the shelter of your love, we settle in your beautiful shadow. We trust that the earth and all that is in it, is always in your loving embrace. You sustain us in times of dreadful disease. You cover us with your great and mighty wings; you defend us when we are weak and afraid. In faith, we will put aside our fear; we will look out for others in daytime and darkness. We will not give in to hopelessness or despair; even if we fall ill, your love will support us. Amen.

HAYES MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

As we move into September there's some feeling of hope that life is slowly improving in terms of gradual relaxation in what we are, or are not, permitted to do post-lockdown. Churches, including St. Mary's, are able to reintroduce greater participation in elements of church services. Napo has confirmed that our Annual Service will definitely be able to be held in October, especially given its spiritual nature focusing on remembrance for the nine members who have passed on since last year. This will be particularly poignant for members this year as Covid-19 restrictions have not allowed us to be present to represent HMF in person at all respective memorial services when held.

As for our usual monthly meetings, we have now received written confirmation that the OCS will be unavailable until at least the end of the year for groups of our size, average attendance 60-plus, so no meetings are possible in November and December.

Our Committee still plans to meet privately in September, observing whatever rules then still remain in place, or have perhaps been reintroduced, when we hope to firm up our plans for 2021, including a full programme of monthly coach outings, Covid-safe in cooperation with our regular coach operator. We hope too that our walkers will again be setting forth each month to explore the local countryside before sitting down together for a well-earned pub lunch after about five miles. We continue to hope that the OCS will become available for our use from February to resume monthly meetings with the exciting speakers on stand-by to visit us.

The programme still will have something of a jewel to launch our restart in January: Our annual lunch is scheduled to happen in the stylish Regan's above the New Inn in Station Approach. A good turn-out is expected as our members have always experienced good food, service and surroundings and this will be the first occasion for many to meet up in convivial fellowship.

Meanwhile we continue to keep in touch with our members through regular newsletters. In the absence of our usual planned activities, we continue with our additional mid-month Coronavirus Extra Newsletter to keep in touch with our members. Feedback about the Extra includes words such as "informative", "entertaining" and "much appreciated". So far we have included write-ups on the activities we have had to cancel but, now we have come to the end of last year's programme, there is nothing to cover. So, in the latest Extra, we have included some more articles of general interest for our members. We had a challenging article by a Hospital Chaplain on her experiences during

the height of the Covid-19 crisis, providing “Oxygen and Hope” to patients of any faith – or none. Then one about the beautiful actress Hedy Lamarr who, during WWII, showed she also had the brains to support the US war effort with a scientific patent and improvements in aerodynamics – perhaps demonstrating the agility we need now to help us cope with Covid-19. For a bit of lighter relief, we had an article on the silly ways people have been wearing facemasks plus the usual quizzes.

We also like to use photos to remind our members of how things used to be but, more particularly, how we hope they will be again in the not too distant future.



*Outing, Feb 2020,
RAF Museum, Hendon*

*Meeting, March 2020
Inns of Hayes Talk*



Meanwhile our motto remains 'Alert, Agile, Optimistic'. More in October.

Allan Evison, Hon HMF Secretary
020 8402 7416; secretary@hayesmensfellowship.org

BIG NEWS ON HOT DOGS

The daily news paints a picture of our world but it is often not a pretty picture and certainly not a true representation of the state of God's creation. Most 'big stories' involve tragedy or criticisms of politicians or royalty or the police or anyone else considered to be 'fair game'. I woke last week to hear that a man had tried to break the world record for eating the largest number of hot dogs at one sitting. He ate about 75 but failed to beat the world record set in America by a man who ate 84 to my recollection! I found this news disgusting and nauseating in a world where so many have little or no food to eat. It isn't just gluttony; it is a step beyond where food is used for what some people call a bit of fun. The same evening there was a TV programme on visiting exclusive world hotels, considered the playgrounds of the very rich, where UK chefs were eating exotic food which was probably astronomically expensive.

We are in a pandemic. One woman in Africa caught Covid-19 and tried to walk ten miles to a clinic with her young children but was so ill that she died before she got there. The hospital would have been unable to admit her because of the huge queues of infected patients. Many people in our world die of starvation and nobody offers them a hot dog or two. Our western world and the 'developing world' have a rapidly widening gap between the excessively rich and the really poor. Because of man's greed, Jesus said that we would always have the poor with us. So where do we sit as Christians amidst all of this?

The Bible says that what God requires of us is to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with him through life, loving our neighbours as ourselves. We should try to live simply so that others may simply live, remembering those in our society who for various reasons are at rock bottom.

There is a path in life which many foolishly aspire to follow. The first step is to become rich, the second step is to become famous, the third step is to acquire power. But none of this brings complete satisfaction because the final step is to be remembered and have a place in history. But even that doesn't last and history is often soon forgotten. I am reminded of Shelley's great poem 'Ozymandias of Egypt' which describes a colossal ruin in the desert of a powerful king with a pedestal inscription: 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' Nothing beside remains except the colossal wreck in the sands.

Walking humbly with our God is the only way to a happy and satisfying life. Do I want to be the greatest hot dog eater? No. Do I want to be famous and powerful? No. Do I want to be a good disciple, better

than I am now? Yes. Do I want to be the greatest disciple in the world? No! If I thought that, I would have failed before I started. The greatest disciple in the world probably doesn't exist. Thankfully, we can live with all our failures knowing that, in the end, when we come before God, he will look at us as his perfect children being free from our sin through the blood of his Son Jesus Christ.

Paul had no worldly ambitions once he had met Christ. He had learned in all circumstances of life to be content, whether rich or poor, healthy or unwell, lonely or surrounded by friends. This is only possible when we walk through life's twists and turns holding the hand of our Saviour.

David Langford

မင်္ဂလာပါ

(Mingalarbar – a greeting in Myanmar which roughly translates as “Auspiciousness”.)

Three years ago, I was just finishing up my contract teaching English to high school students in Thailand and preparing to move back home to Hayes. Since I wasn't going to be back in Asia again any time soon, there was one more place I wanted to tick off my bucket list before making the journey: Myanmar.

I spent four weeks hitting the tourist hotspots until my visa ran out, and then made the long journey home. Within two weeks of being in the UK I was on the internet searching for teaching jobs in Myanmar, and five months later I was back on this side of the world.

For six weeks I lived in Yangon where I was introduced to the other teachers I would be working with. We had a week of training at the main branch of the school from various motivational speakers before I was finally able to leave the hustle and bustle of the city and travel into the mountains to one of the school's regional branches.

I now live in a place called Taunggyi (pronounced “Town G”). It's the capital of Shan State in northern Myanmar. Taunggyi means “big mountain” and the city is built on a cliff in the Shan mountains.

Forty-five minutes' drive down the mountain is Inle Lake, perhaps one of Myanmar's most famous tourist attractions. I visit about

once a month. The drive down the mountain reminds me of skiing as motorbikes slalom between each other to the bottom. The scenery on the drive is beautiful and the lake itself is stunning. It's very relaxing sitting on a boat and watching the pagodas go by.

You can watch the local people fishing from their boats, and there are a number of different workshops on stilts in the lake that you can visit and watch them making their traditional crafts. These include weaving, cigar-making, lotus silk spinning, and silversmiths, as well as some people from the Kayan tribe which are sometimes known as the "long-neck ladies". There are only a few of the older women in the tribe who still wear the traditional rings around their necks. Nowadays the younger women wear rings that can clip on and off, and it's mostly for tourists.

The thing Taunggyi is most famous for is the fire balloon festival called Tazaungdaing which happens every year in November. Local people work in teams for anything from three months to the entire year to make an enormous hot air balloon from paper. There are three types of these giant balloons: animals, lanterns, and fire balloons. The animals are released in the daytime and it's not so crowded, so there's much more space to flee when they fall down in a fiery wreckage.



You can watch enormous brightly coloured birds and elephants floating over the mountain tops into the distance. The lanterns are covered in thousands of candles and have more candles hanging down from the base to make a design, often of Buddha or other figures from local tradition. The fire balloons don't have any candles on them, instead they are ornately painted, and have hundreds of fireworks strapped to the bottom. These balloons are filled with fire and sent up into the air while thousands of people cram into the field below and the surrounding beer tents to watch the action.

The balloons are given a score by judges, but I have no idea how you find out the score or if people are even interested in the competition results. It seemed that if the balloon managed to go up and stay up that would be a cause for singing, dancing and waving of flags regardless of its standing in the competition. Obviously enormous balloons made of paper covered in candles and shooting fireworks amidst a crowd several thousand strong is something of a recipe for disaster. A few of the balloons catch fire and come crashing back into the crowd in an explosion of rockets. I've been to every single day of the festival; the atmosphere is incredible and the balloons are spectacular, but I always stay well away from the balloons in case they fall down. I did dive under a table once when one balloon started firing its rockets off before it had got high enough and fireworks were shooting straight in my direction.

Fortunately, the day to day life isn't quite as exciting. I work at an international school so the facilities are all very modern and the students are fluent in English. Many even speak English better than Burmese as a lot of the students are from different tribes, so they speak the language of their tribe at home and don't have much opportunity to speak Burmese. This makes me feel a bit better about my own dismal attempts to learn the language. I join the grade 3 class for their Myanmar lessons but mostly I'm quite lost. It's even harder now that we've moved to online classes for COVID-19 because I can't just take a peek at what my 8-year-old classmates are writing. I think it is a lot harder to learn than Thai was. Or maybe I'm just getting old.

Things are a lot quieter now since the country shut down for Coronavirus. Although there aren't that many official cases here, they're still taking precautions; the borders are closed and schools have yet to open. I think the healthcare system would struggle to cope with a full-blown outbreak so it's better that they try to keep the numbers down. Normally I would be taking advantage of every holiday and long weekend to explore another part of the country, and having been stuck at home since March I'm starting to get itchy feet. I guess I'll have to wait until this pandemic is over before I find out where my travels will take me next.



Taunggyi

Me, second left, with the other foreign teachers at the International School.



Christabel Wickert

Items for the October magazine by 16th September please. Copy to the Editor – see below.

October magazines will be ready for distribution on 26th Sept.

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