

# Halesworth and Bramfield URC



**Coronavirus Email only Edition 24**

**April 2022**

## What we believe

*We believe that in obedience to Christ's command, we must proclaim the Gospel to the world in the power and at the direction of the Holy Spirit.*

*We are called out of darkness to live as children of light, reflecting God's glory all around.*

*We recognise that as a Church, the bride of Christ, we are commanded to love and encourage one another and ensure that no root of bitterness divides us.*

*We acknowledge our absolute dependence on Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father made us, Jesus has redeemed us and the Spirit sustains and provides all we need on our pilgrimage.*

*We acknowledge our commitment to the Bible, as the authoritative word of God able to teach us, guide us and inspire us as we discover God's perfect will for our lives.*

This is the Twenty-fifth e-mail instead of our usual magazine (production and printing suspended for the immediate future) I'm trying to put together pages that give up to date Church news and uplifting contributions. So if you have any news or contributions

please e-mail

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Blessings Alan

**COPY FOR MAY MAGAZINE BY 22nd April**

**Our Vision:  
"To know Jesus Christ;  
to make Him known."**

Dear Friends,

As with the whole community, and indeed the whole of Europe, we are shocked by the news of the situation in Ukraine. Whilst the direct impact on us here in the UK may seem modest, the call to support those suffering is crucial. And the potential to get out of hand creates fear and uncertainty. This is a situation in which churches need to be at the heart of the community.

Like (I suspect) most churches, we have found ourselves called deeply into prayer:

- \* for Ukraine,
- \* for Russian conscripts who were told they were going on exercises or that they would be welcomed in Ukraine
- \* for bereaved families
- \* for those injured
- \* for all trying to facilitate relief & help
- \* for refugees
- \* for our own country and others, that we may welcome refugees as Christ would
- \* for those seeking peace

And that is not an exhaustive list.

These sorts of prayers come up at worship services, prayer meetings, elders' meetings and other gatherings.

Perhaps most significantly of all, we are praying for Jesus to be exalted above the nations. I have been drawn often to Psalm 46. In particular, that the Lord will be exalted – is Mr Putin trying to usurp God in this respect, specifically in relation to Ukraine? Also, that God is the one who can/will make wars cease to the ends of the earth. And we are so familiar with "Be still and know that I am God" but may not remember that it comes against the backdrop of war and confusion, 'the nations are in uproar...'

We also need to pray for the Church in Ukraine. It was poignant to note, in an update I recently had from a Pastor in Ukraine, that his key emphasis was to prioritise spreading the Gospel, in Ukraine – and indeed in Russia. The Ukrainian churches have a special responsibility to bring what might be the only Good News available, to people in such a desperate plight.

And being practical: We have offered space in the Lowestoft church building to a local man (whose wife is Ukrainian and has family out there) who is trying to arrange sending of urgent medical supplies. Many of us are sending money via various charities or through the cash collections in church. We could also be seeking God and asking ourselves, what is our role in supporting & welcoming refugees from Ukraine?

At the time of writing, of course, we have no idea what the up-to-date situation may be when this article reaches you. But we'll need to keep praying.

Blessings



Jon

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."

**Psalms 46:10**



Dear friends

Please continue to hold John Royce in prayer, as his various health 'ups & downs' have continued. Also, Pat Snell, who is still having ongoing medical investigations.

Paul and Kathryn Bones need our ongoing prayers. Please also continue to pray for Chris & Julie Dunn, Sheila Brown, Michael Gilbert, Peter Furze, Nyomen Chipperfield, Andy Nichols, Christine Dominic and others the Lord puts on your hearts.

We still need to keep praying for Edgar Sewter school and for the many families we have links with, through Messy Church, toddler groups, HURC Too and our direct involvement in the school. Thank God for the successful introduction of 'Open the Book' via Zoom, going into the school.

Please pray for Janet Saunders, following John's death. Also, sons Martin & Andy, daughters-in-law Jane & Julie, grandchildren Adam & Holly.

Blessings

Jon

## Children and Families



### Toddlers

The Toddler groups have been meeting in the building every Tuesday at 9am and 11am. The adults enjoy chatting and a cuppa, while keeping an eye on or chasing around their little ones who have a great choice of toys to play with.

### HURC Too - Sunday morning upstairs at 11am

As we continue to learn about the life of Jesus, we had fun working in teams to make beds for Jairus' daughter. This is the winning bed.



## Family Breakfast



We had a really great time at our first breakfast after 2 years. 50 people came along to eat, chat, play and make sheep!



## On what we could learn from the Rule of St. Benedict

A few days ago a headline from one of my news feeds, appearing in my emails, particularly caught my attention: it said “Digital Nun dies”. Possibly to my shame I had never heard of this lady and soon found myself following links to find out more. So I learnt from Wikipedia that Catherine Driana Enid Wybourne, professed as Sister Catherine Wybourne OSB, was a British Benedictine nun and prioress of Howton Grove Priory, Hereford. She was also a well-known commentator in the British media, with an internet presence as the Digital Nun. And according to one obituary writer, Dr Pete Phillips, Premier’s head of digital theology “@DigitalNun was a hands-on digital prophet and one of the best people on the internet”, paying tribute to the banker-turned-nun who loved Jesus and gadgets. Further I learnt from ICN (Independent Catholic News) that she was “loved by tens of thousands of followers on Twitter as ‘Digitalnun’ with her insightful, often funny reflections on current events, prayer and the monastic life”.

The thread I followed, however, was “Benedictine”, delighted to discover that characters I loved in various historical novels had real-life successors today.



### Chronicles of Brother Cadfael, by Ellis Peters

There are 20 of these, most of which were turned into much-loved BBC dramas starring Derek Jacobi. Set during the civil war between King Stephen and his cousin Matilda, Brother Cadfael himself has a colourful back-story

(which we learn bit by bit through the 20 novels), entering the Benedictine monastery at Shrewsbury in late middle life. Skilled in the medicine of the day, learnt during his life in the crusades, his skills are lent to the community by his monastery, as an early forensic scientist, we might say.

## The Hawk and the Dove series by Penelope Wilcock



There are 9 of these, set in 14<sup>th</sup> century Yorkshire St Alcuin’s abbey, a Benedictine house. Here the life of the abbey and its community of monks, serious about their calling but as flawed and human as we are, are central to the novels rather than one individual. Nevertheless I became very invested in all the characters and their spiritual journeys lived out in a period of 10 to 15 years. I finished the last one in January and am sad to say goodbye

St Benedict wrote his “Rule” mid 6<sup>th</sup> century in the light of his own considerable experience and insight. There are 73 “chapters” which we would probably call paragraphs, as it is quite short and can be read through in an hour. Chapter 73 is an epilogue; it declares that the Rule is not offered as an ideal of perfection, but merely as a means towards godliness, intended chiefly for beginners in the spiritual life. It is a kind way of life, leading to loving and supportive communities, its disciplines, wisely followed, prevent factions, grudges and feuds, forgiveness is paramount.

Saint Benedict’s model for the monastic life was the family with the abbot as father and all the monks as brothers. Priesthood was not initially an important part of Benedictine monasticism – monks used the services of their local priest. Because of this, almost all the Rule is applicable to communities of women under the authority of an abbess. This appeal to multiple groups would later make the Rule of Saint Benedict an integral set of guidelines for the development of the Christian faith.

From Sister Catherine’s own website:

“Along with practical details about the organization of the monastery, there is much spiritual teaching of a plain, Christocentric kind. The monk

(or any Christian\*) is a disciple, always alert to the word of God: he must therefore be humble and attentive, ready to greet Christ in the stranger or serve him in the old, the young, the sick — anyone he may meet. Purity of heart, as the monastic tradition understands it, prepares us for a closer union with God. The whole point of monastic life (*and I would add here Church life\**) is to prepare us for that union and lead us to it. That is why Benedict speaks of searching for God in the school of the Lord's service.

Today the Rule of St Benedict is followed by thousands of people as monks, nuns and oblates (people who try to live according to the Rule insofar as their circumstances allow, not in monasteries but "in the world") and there is growing interest in what St Benedict has to teach those who would not describe themselves as particularly religious but who desire to live in a more human and humane way.

Little by little the Rule seems to make saints of some very unpromising material. In our older brethren we often see what grace, generously co-operated with, can achieve.

\* *My additions and italics*

*Val Jennings*

For Sign of the Fish



# SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS IN APRIL

9th Allan Moreira 45

20th Sue Smith 55

# happy birthday





Gathered worship *continues* (Sundays 11am). Lowestoft are also back in the building for Tuesday lunchtime worship, and we can usually join by Zoom. Our Friday prayers are now both gathered & Zoom, usually with coffee after. **Alpha** continues on Zoom, Monday afternoons. **Lent Bible Studies** continue in person @ Lowestoft or on Zoom, for a further 2 Monday mornings. Then there are special Easter events.

Here is what is coming:

- Fri 1 April**            9.45am **Prayer Meeting** Gathered & Zoom
- Sat 2 April**            Family breakfast – book with Jo Moreira
- Sun 3 April**            11.00 Gathered worship **& on Zoom**  
(Rev Jon Sermon - *includes Communion & Elders' Ordination & Inductions*)
- Mon 4 April**            10.30 **Lent Bible Study @ Lowestoft & on Zoom**  
2.30pm **Alpha Course– Zoom only**
- Tue 5 April**            10-12 coffee drop in **Lowestoft**  
12.30 pm lunchtime worship **Lowestoft & Zoom**  
**6.30pm Elders' meeting gathered & Zoom**
- Wed 6 April**            **11am John Saunders' funeral,**  
**Waveney Crematorium.**  
2.30pm Churches Together meeting **on Zoom**
- Fri 8 April**            9.45am **Prayer Meeting** Gathered & Zoom.  
Also, we will be at Edgar Sewter School for work-  
shops on the meaning of Easter. **Please pray!**



- Sun 10 April**            **PALM SUNDAY** Gathered worship **& on Zoom**  
(Jo Moreira)
- Mon 11 April**            10.30 **Lent Bible Study @ Lowestoft & on Zoom**  
2.30pm **Alpha Course– Zoom only**
- Tue 12 April**            10-12 coffee drop in **Lowestoft**  
12.30 pm lunchtime worship **Lowestoft & Zoom**
- Thurs 14 April**            7.30pm Maundy Thursday Communion  
(Peter Wagg)
- Fri 15 April**            **GOOD FRIDAY** Walk of Witness (10.30 start at  
St Edmunds RC) & Joint Churches' Worship at the  
URC after.
- Sun 17 April**            **EASTER** Gathered worship **& on Zoom** (Rev Jon  
Sermon - *includes Communion*)
- Fri 22 April**            9.45am **Prayer Meeting** Zoom Only
- Sun 24 April**            Gathered worship (**no Zoom**) (Peter Wagg)
- Mon 25 April**            **2.30pm Alpha Course– Zoom only**
- Tue 26 April**            10-12 coffee drop in **Lowestoft**  
12.30 pm lunchtime worship **Lowestoft & Zoom**
- Fri 29 April**            9.45am **Prayer Meeting** Gathered & Zoom

# Children and Family activities. 2022

## Messy Church

5th April  
(Easter / Christmas Celebration!)

3rd May

17th May

7th June

21st June

5th July

19th July

## All Age Services

10th April

(No HURC Too on Easter Day 16th)

April ?

8th May

12th June

10th July

14th August? TBC in line with

HBC

Holiday Bible Club

9th -12th August ?

## Breakfasts

2nd April

? June tbc



**TO TAKE AND ORGANISE BOOKINGS  
OF THE CHURCH BUILDING**

**REQUESTS MAY COME VIA  
TELEPHONE : E-MAIL : THE WEBSITE**

**This is an official position in the  
Church  
Training will be offered**





I attach an article written by Eastern Synod's Lindsey Brown – Mission & Training Officer, Lindsey is a member of the Eastern Synod Faith in Action Forum – of which I am a member.

Ann Barton

Secretary – Faith in Action Forum

07898 73230

### **February 2022 CENTRAL FUND UPDATE from the Revd Paul Neshangwe**

*Background (Lindsey): Eastern Synod has a long-time partnership with the Presbytery of Zimbabwe. We have good friends there involved in trying to make the Presbytery self-sufficient. They have roughly the same number of ministers as us, but much, much larger congregations. These congregations, however, can rarely afford to pay their minister's stipend, and so in recent years the Presbytery has established a Central Fund to try and support the churches to a) pay their ministers and b) support the mission of the church. They have established a number of businesses (farms: cattle, agriculture and chickens) in order to support the Fund. Inevitably these things need seed-funding to get them established, and for development and some damage-limitation when things go wrong. This is the most recent report to Synod from Revd Paul Neshangwe whose extraordinary commitment and energy has established and drives this Fund: as you will see he has identified the 3 current areas that currently need prayer and financial support. This article is intended to keep you updated on the work and concerns of our partners in Zimbabwe, and to keep them in your prayers. If your church was also interested in raising funds, you will see that they are all quite large sums: churches could work together to support a project, or have their own target to reach to contribute to a particular area.*

### **Introduction**

The Covid19 pandemic has given us some tough experiences. Some of the experiences involve losing some of the traditional methods of raising income for the church through the giving of tithes and offerings as people gather for worship in our church buildings. It has provided a tough practical test on how much we care for one another and the mission of God when lockdown restrictions prevent us from getting together. The Central Fund has been a critical tool in the hands of the Presbytery of Zimbabwe in the endeavour to fight the harsh effects of the pandemic on the livelihood of families of Ministers and Evangelists, as well as the ability of some of our congregations to stay current in paying their bills. Through our Central Fund, there has been a good way of pooling together of our resources to ensure that all our Ministers and Evangelists get paid the minimum stipend that is stipulated by the Presbytery.

### **Central Fund Payments**

In April and May 2020, our Presbytery carried out a survey to see how our congregations were managing financially in the wake of the Covid19 pandemic. The survey revealed that many of our congregations had lost their income because we were not able to meet for worship due to lockdown restrictions. We knew that this would worsen an already bad situation were some of our congregations had been unable to pay their minister's stipend even before the onset of the pandemic.

Presbytery took a tough decision to assist by paying stipends of Ministers and Evangelists whose congregations committed to work with Presbytery and other congregations through an agreed formula that has worked from July 2020 up to date. At this stage we have 27 Ministers, the Presbytery Secretary and 34 Evangelists who are all getting their stipend each month with the support of our Central Fund.

For the Ministers, each participating congregation pays 50% of the Stipend due to its Minister every month and for the Evangelists, each congregation pays 27% of the stipend. The Presbytery then contributes the other 50% for the Ministers and 73% for the Evangelists. The Evangelists' stipend is half of that of the Ministers and the Presbytery takes such a large

percentage of the burden because our Evangelists are mainly working with new worshipping communities as we aspire to grow by planting new churches. *(The Evangelists work at preaching stations or new plants that don't have formal church status: we might think of them in the UK as pioneers. They often have large congregations and / or mission fields.)*

In terms of our pressing needs, this remains a critical one because each month the Presbytery has to raise US\$4200 in 2022 in order to pay those under the Central Fund. Our plan had been to raise money in the whole of 2020 and implement the Central Fund system at the beginning of 2021, but the pandemic took away the luxury of first building a healthy deposit before implementation. What this has meant is that we are running the Central Fund on a hand to mouth basis. We are hoping that through support from Partners as well as improving of income from our businesses we will come out of that scenario by the middle of this year.

*à 1<sup>st</sup> partner funding /prayer request: any amount contributed towards this will help us get some breathing space to build a good balance, that will see us move from the hand-to-mouth scenario sooner. This will enable our businesses to become stable and it will ensure that our Central Fund remains viable and sustainable.*

## **Current Business ventures**

### **a) Vimridge Farm**

We continue to do greenhouse-based tomato production and other related horticulture producing beetroot, cucumber, onion as well as choumoellier. We also have two fishponds for the production of tilapia. We complement all this with breeding 'roadrunner' chickens as well.



Our open-field farming is also growing at Vimridge. This is largely because of the drip irrigation equipment that we got through donations invested from the Norfolk and Waveney Area Partnership congregations in the Eastern Synod.

We now have an agreement with a seed company called Seed-Co. They will develop Demonstration Plots at Vimridge so that they can have Field Days when they showcase how well plants from their seed turn out. They will provide seed and agronomy skills while we grow and sell the produce for our own profits.

An area of investment priority for now is in the expansion of our operations at Vimridge. We have just completed excavating a dam that will hold water that used to simply wash away to a nearby river or evaporate. Over the last few years there have been new settlements around Vimridge such that water was now blocked from flowing out of the farm and it was causing serious waterlogging on the farm. Now we are able to harvest all this water and put it to good use.

We are intending to plant canola seed in the winter of this year on 10 hectares of our land. A cooking oil company called ZimGold has agreed to enter into a contract with us where they will supply inputs and buy all our produce upon harvesting. We will need to provide the labour and do the land preparation ourselves. The land preparation for the 10 hectares will cost us something in the region of US\$7500. This figure depends on how soon we get to do the work because it fluctuates as prices of fuel fluctuate. We intend to use overhead irrigation equipment that is movable. This means that we can lay pipes and water crops over a hectare at a time.

→ 2<sup>nd</sup> partner funding / prayer request: if there are congregations who prefer that their funds be invested in the agriculture business for ongoing profits, rather than spend on paying stipends right away this is the area most in need. Preparing 10 hectares of land = US\$7500. 1 hectare of irrigation equipment = US\$1300.

→ 3<sup>rd</sup> partner funding / prayer request: a truck to transport our inputs and produce. As you can see in one of the pictures above we sometimes use the back seat of my personal vehicle to transport produce. We need a one and a half tonne truck to transport material. We have been advised that this would cost at least US\$8000.

#### **b) Gloag Ranch**

We have over 2500 hectares of land. We are currently leasing the bulk of the farm to a neighbouring farmer such that we are only left with 630 hectares shared between our Presbytery Business and Investment Unit and the schools. Of that remaining land we are entering into Partnership with two companies in order to have Dairy farming as well as produce soya beans and canola seed for production of cooking oil.

It is our view that we will have companies that are committed to large scale investment for work on at least 200 hectares to develop Gloag with us, while we work with church Partners to develop Vimridge for medium scale farming.

#### Answers

Luke 1 : 1 - 4 and 24 : 13 – 48

Come in Doctor Luke! Welcome to our home. I understand that you want to hear about the things that Jesus accomplished, from those of us who knew him in the flesh? In truth, brother, there is so much to tell you: I simply don't know that we would have time enough for me to tell it all. Now, I know this seems strange, almost as though I am starting at the end! But I must first tell you about the third day after Jesus had been crucified.

I can still remember the anguish and fear that we were feeling. My wife and I were not part of "The Twelve", but we were close with them all and after that dreadful Friday, when all our hopes died, we decided to stay in Jerusalem for a while. We meant to serve his poor mother and to support each other in our loss. The third day after his death arrived. My wife and I felt that there was nothing more we could do, so we decided to return to Emmaus and try to rebuild our lives. As we were collecting our things together, we heard that some of the women had been to the tomb and had returned with the story that Jesus' body wasn't there! This was very unsettling and there was much "coming and going", with Peter and John confirming that the tomb was indeed empty and Mary saying that she had actually seen Jesus alive! We almost changed our minds about leaving, however, we suspected these developments were attempts by the Temple authorities to trap Jesus' followers, so we left as planned.

We were confused, disappointed and frightened, as well as being angry with God. Our minds teemed with questions, which we expressed as we walked along. Why did God forsake Jesus? How could He allow such a wicked thing to happen to him? And what about the things Jesus promised? We had been truly convinced that he was a prophet. Some of our members were of the opinion that he was more than a mere man, that he was The Son of the Most-High God! This was not easy to understand, even though the things Jesus had done were far beyond anything we could explain. We had seen amazing healings and totally changed lives. We had experienced his knowledge of things that no-one could account for and the stilling of a Galilean storm, in the manner of a father admonishing a naughty child. We continued to walk along, asking

question after question, neither of us either expecting an answer, or even listening to the other's words. It seemed that we just needed to speak out our exasperation, in a never-ending stream. In this way, we miserably travelled the road to our home in Emmaus.

After some time, a young man came walking from the direction of Jerusalem. He fell into step with us and asked what we were discussing. My wife stopped in her track and dissolved into fits of bitter sobs. I embraced her, both to comfort her and to hide my own tears, which I could not control. From deep within our embrace of shared misery, I asked the stranger where he had been for the previous few days? Surely no-one in Jerusalem could have been unaware of Jesus' crucifixion? I think that my anger spilled out in my question, but the young man didn't seem to notice. He replied with a question: "Why are you surprised by the events of this Passover? Don't you remember what God said to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, that although Satan would 'bruise the heel' of the woman's offspring, that same offspring would 'crush Satan's head.'" He continued by reminding us of God's promise to Abraham, that all the nations of the world would be blessed by his descendent. God had said this at a time when Abraham had no children at all (with no likelihood of this ever changing as both Abraham and his wife were too old to conceive a child.) Nevertheless, God had enabled Sarah to become pregnant in her old age and Abraham's descendents were now too numerous to number. The young stranger continued, quoting scripture after scripture from Moses and the prophets. These writings all speak of God's Anointed One, who would come to rescue his people. The young man then asked us what we thought the Passover was all about? He said that the same scriptures spoke both of the victory of the Messiah, as well as the death he would suffer. His death would be the complete and final settlement of all our unpaid debts to God. He quoted Isaiah's detailed description of "The Suffering Servant" and reminded us of David's psalm that begins: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" explaining to us how this psalm clearly describes a man being crucified. We remembered with sharp grief, that Jesus had spoken out this psalm in his own agony on that cross. As the stranger talked, it was as though doors were being opened in our heads. Our hearts were burning with excitement. The questions we had been asking were not only answered, but the whole landscape of our

history and scripture was opening up before us.

We suddenly realized that it was getting dark and we were back at our home in Emmaus. The young man started to bid us farewell, but we urged him to stay with us until the morrow. My wife quickly laid out some bread and wine.

It was then, when he blessed the bread and gave it to us, I caught sight of the scars on his wrists. With sudden realisation we both looked at him, incredulously recognizing the very man we were grieving for! Immediately he vanished from our sight. We sat there, shocked and amazed, with our hearts still on fire. I don't think I can explain to you how I felt. We had walked and talked with Jesus without recognizing him! But we remembered all our questions being answered and understanding bubbling up inside us. We were very different people from the hopeless wretches we had been a few hours earlier. Although there was no explaining it, the difference was undeniable.

Even though it was now dark, we HAD to return to the brethren in Jerusalem and tell them. When we arrived there, they were also "buzzing" with excitement. Jesus had been amongst them also! Forgive me brother, even now my heart is beating fast at the memory of it all for, at that moment, Jesus was again standing among us. There were some folk in the room, who thought that this might be an apparition, a ghost, so Jesus asked for some fish and (grinning broadly) ate it in front of the "doubters" That's what Jesus is like, always considerate and willing to help people understand. As he imparted further revelations, it was like a veil was being lifted from all of our eyes.

Of course, you know that after 6 weeks, Jesus returned to the Father in Heaven...but that wasn't the end! Far from it! When the Feast of Weeks arrived, there was yet another day of unimaginable beginnings! I must tell you about it!.....

*Lorraine*

