

# Christward

The magazine of



March – April 2022

## **~ From the Editor's Desk ~**

I suppose that any Editor of a magazine spends time trying to find material which is a bit out of the ordinary for the magazine. However to get a couple of such contributions for one issue and both from thousands of miles away from Manchester must be unusual.

So Christward starts with some photographs sent by Fergus Walker who is part of the crew of the RRS Sir David Attenborough which is operated by the British Antarctic Survey and is currently in Antarctica on its maiden voyage. Then next up is an article from David Redhouse who is in Malaysia for three months advising the Malaysian Prison Service.

## **~ If you think it is cold in Manchester .....**

The RRS Sir David Attenborough is one of the most advanced polar research vessels in the world. The state-of-the-art ship departed the UK for its maiden voyage on 17 November 2021.

- Length: 129 metres; beam: 24m; Gross Tonnage: 15,000
- Endurance – up to 60 days
- Range 19,000 nautical miles at 13 knots (24 km/h) cruising speed; more than enough for a return trip from England to [Rothera Research Station](#), or to circle the entire [Antarctic continent](#) twice!
- Ice breaking capability – up to 1m thick at 3 knots (5.6 km/h)
- Crew approx. 30
- Accommodation for up to 60 scientists and support staff

She is also the first British polar research ship to feature a [moon pool](#) – a vertical shaft (~4 x 4 m) running through the vessel, open to both the air and sea. Using the moon pool, scientific equipment can be deployed and recovered through the centre, and most stable

part, of the hull. This is easier and safer than deploying equipment over the side or stern, particularly in the polar oceans' rough seas.

Fergus belongs to one of the two crews which alternate 3 monthly shifts on the Sir David Attenborough in Antarctica. These photos are taken as the ship is going further and further into an area of ice. One of the latest shows the view through a porthole of a single penguin.





## **..... on the other hand you can be too hot -**

“Manchester City – Yang pertama, Liverpool – Yang kedua” And so begins another round of banter with my new, Premiership football-obsessed Malaysian colleagues, facilitated by my very traditional Malay textbook which considers a grasp of ordinal numbers more important than being able to say ‘Good morning’ or ask how someone is feeling that day !

Which is very strange considering that getting the people/ relationships bit right first is a prerequisite for subsequent success with the business end of the interaction. As you may imagine I am still struggling with that particular bit of cultural adaptation ... But luckily the other big deal is food where I find it a lot easier to fit in; every meeting is accompanied by food, at the very least savoury and sweet snacks but often a full-blown meal. Since we are visiting lots of prisons this is proving a challenge even for me – our record so far is three meals in four hours !



In truth though we are simply enjoying the Malaysians’ incredible instinct for hospitality and their enthusiasm for introducing you to their cuisines, especially the particular specialities of their home State. These all share one ingredient if no other, chillies which

come in just two colours but all sizes, dried and fresh and with levels of heat from ferocious to thermonuclear. The one packet of dried red chillies which we bought on arrival looks set to outlast our entire stay here ! My efforts to cook local recipes (along with my few Malay words as above) have been acknowledged even while their authenticity has been nicely questioned by the offer of cooking lessons !



*Surely this is a Rendang*



*No it isn't - we'll teach you*

As for other impressions, as I write this the rain is thundering down and the muezzin is chanting the call to evening prayer from the minaret on the other side of the prison. It hasn't actually rained as much as I expected – most seems to have fallen last December before we arrived when there was severe flooding in this State of Selangor and next door in Negeri Sembilan where the entire stock of the prison fish farm just swam away .... However when it does rain, even a Mancunian is impressed ! (And all the more so as in the 30°C+ heat everything dries out again in record time though that

will be little consolation if a landslip by then has blocked your road or worse.)

The majority Malay population is Muslim and particularly so in the northern states where pre-meeting prayers last noticeably longer.

The other major populations are Chinese and Indian along with indigenous groups like the Iban people on Borneo. It would be rash to offer much of an opinion on these issues but things are certainly better than they were in 1969 when there was inter-ethnic rioting; it appears that everyone gets on as long as broad divisions are recognised with Malays predominating in the public sector, the Chinese in the private sector and the Indians present at each end of the market, highly-skilled professionals and menial labourers.

Whatever else the British (last in a line of colonisers) managed here, they did get the disparate populations united in the successful effort to make us leave with independence – Merdeka- achieved on 31st August 1957. Now though there appears quite some affection



for the British; while the rest of the capital, Kuala Lumpur, has been redeveloped into a dizzying array of literally some of the world's tallest buildings, Merdeka Square remains bordered on all sides by colonial

constructions including the rather ramshackle mock tudor Royal Selangor Club and the Anglican cathedral of

St Mary's both of which (given that the Club building is referred to as The Spotted Dog) are arguably tributes to an overall tolerance in a majority Islamic nation.



In a similar vein the stories Dougie – the other UK prison governor seconded here – tells of his godfather fighting in Malaya against the communists during the 1950's Emergency and his father later fighting in Borneo with the Malaysians against the Indonesians during the 1970's Confrontation always go down well often prompting parallel reminiscences. The Commonwealth War Graves in Taiping were immaculately kept (though the whites were on one side of the road and Indians on the other) and a salutary reminder that for some the experience of coming to this part of the world was only unutterably tragic not simply for them but also for those they left behind.



But nonetheless it's complicated; what makes us most uncomfortable though is an apparent belief that we have easy answers to the difficulties faced by the prison and wider criminal justice systems. We have never said we have so I don't believe we are here under false pretences but it can feel like that. In fact and not only in a spirit of appreciative enquiry but completely objectively the prison service here is managing some huge challenges incredibly well; our quarters are next to a prison built for 2,400 but presently holding 5,600 ! And in the time since the present Director there took over last August he has not had a single prisoner assault on staff (whereas back in my Oxfordshire prison with no more than 480 prisoners I see at least 1-2 such assaults each month albeit that these are very rarely sufficiently serious to require hospital treatment).

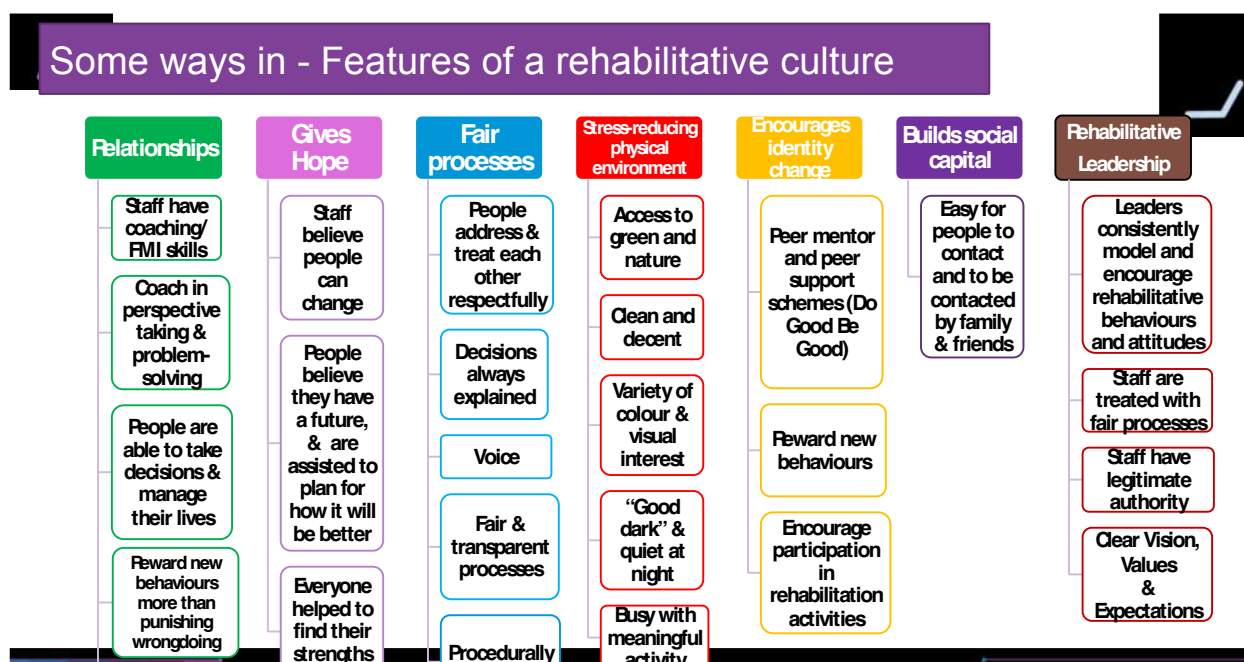
And of course some of the prisons are literally Victorian with all the lack of sanitation that entails:





So what are we doing here ? For the period of the secondment we are technically employees of the Malaysian Prison Service so our position is best described as putting our shoulder to the wheel of the Service's reform plan. This majors on reducing overcrowding by ending the courts' reliance on custody (in 2020 there were 102,000 prison sentences but just 780 community Compulsory Attendance Orders, figures which put even our own courts' "love affair with custody" into the shade !). It also seeks to develop a focus on rehabilitation to balance the traditional attention given to security (we were taken to an "open" prison which had two full-size fences topped with razor wire and a motion detection system between them, much higher perimeter security than my Category C establishment enjoys ... ).

But while the term 'rehabilitation' is in widespread use, not all the implications have yet been thought through and the culture can lag behind.



This is definitely not the case across the board though – the scale of pre-release employment schemes is breathtaking, literally hundreds of prisons being employed (alongside members of the public and on the same rates of pay) in mainstream factories operating the kind of machinery (400 ton metal presses) which I was quite saddened to think would once have been the preserve of the ‘workshop of the world’ but have now vacated Trafford Park in favour of a distinctly second rate football team ..... And for sure when working at Holloway I was never offered the opportunity to manufacture a sanitary towel as I was in the women’s prison here (despite the fact that men do not work in women’s prisons and vice versa).



Nor have we previously seen pineapples planted to form a prickly barrier preventing people approaching prison walls in order to throw over packages of drugs and mobile phones !

Nonetheless Dougie and I make our prison visits looking through the lens of the “Rehabilitative Culture” now promoted in the England & Wales Prison Service. We have offered some overall reflections to the top management of the Service here and are now working with five individual prisons to support them in developing their own plans to increase the extent to which all aspects of their

establishment give the message to prisoners that they can come back from past mistakes and lead better lives. In particular we are facilitating some training in staff having positive daily interactions with prisoners which is generally an element missing from the heavily military-based training of drill and firearms (which are not carried inside the prisons but are on escorts to court or hospital as well as by staff in perimeter watchtowers - which always induces some twitching between the shoulderblades as I take my exercise runs around the outside of the walls though my colleagues 'assure' me the risk from snakes is greater !). Hopefully too we model some of that behaviour in talking with prisoners as we go around – even getting a haircut from those trained as a 'tukang gunting'.

But while overcrowding – and Covid infections – remain so prevalent, the management 'bandwidth' to address longer-term culture concerns is necessarily constrained. So we are also attempting to support efforts to improve coordination between different parts of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and in particular to scrutinise variations between States in matters of pre-trial delays or use of the community sentence (popularly known in the UK as 'justice by geography'). Our initial analysis suggests that while nationally only 2% of prisoners have been waiting more than 12 months for their trial, at State level that proportion can rise to 18%. Similarly while one State passes community sentences at the ratio of 1:38 with prison sentences, elsewhere there are 811 prison sentences for every 1 community sentence. Since all the UN and other international guidance is clear that data-sharing and CJS coordination are the only sustainable ways to deal with overcrowding, this feels like very worthwhile work.

The third piece of work is around support for creating a probation service. The desire for such a service again appears to reflect a faith that the British path is the one to follow. But 110 years after the 1907 legislation which created our probation service, it and the prison service were merged together to create HMPPS in 2017. It therefore feels as if what the Malaysians already have, one staff group working in both prisons and the community is really the way

they should carry on going. Again there is a training requirement – articulated not least by the community-based parole officers (all staff with a minimum five years prison officer experience) themselves – to provide greater expertise in relationship building and consequent abilities to assess risk and to motivate people into stopping offending because they want to (rather than having been coerced by eg the threat that a set of prison walls will prevent from offending etc.)

I should probably stop the work stuff there as I don't have Liz on hand to vet the drafting at this point ....

What else is there to tell ? I have been several times to St Mary's Cathedral, it's no more Union Chapel than is St Mary's Turville but it's a friendly place and there's a certain wonder and comfort that even 10,000km away the same liturgy (down to font sizes and colours !) is in use and presumably providing an equal meaning.

Linen suits may sound like a colonial relic but in the aforementioned temperatures they are a godsend (unless shorts and t-shirt are an acceptable alternative !) Without air-conditioning pretty well anything is an uncomfortable experience (including I am sure being 4-5 in a cell built for one). Luckily we have that in the flat though we have nonetheless each been thoughtfully provided in our bedrooms with a large bolster which I understand is known as a Dutch wife and is to be embraced through the night in order to leach the perspiration away from you ?! (She's on the floor, it could be the only time I win the battle of the bedclothes ...)

An upside of the multicultural society here is the number of holidays – we have already celebrated the Hindu festival of Thaipusam as well as Chinese New Year (more of a fortnight's battle between fireworks and the muezzin).

The prison management college is unfortunately on the tourist island of Langkawi (the justification being its ambition to provide training across the SE Asian region which can access Langkawi via

its international airport). Measures against Covid are very rigorous from the quarantine tags we had to wear for our first five days through to the MySejahtera App on your phone with which you have to check in to every building, shop, station or taxi you get into.



Some road signs are more exotic than anything in the UK even if the only actual tapir seen so far was in a zoo (though there was some very noisy crashing and snorting in the jungle at Fraser's Hill so who knows ...)

I still struggle with the time difference (GMT + 8 hours) – the Today programme has turned into the previous day's World Tonight ! But the internet means such access to UK media is instant (and frequently more reliable than in Turville !) while conversations over WhatsApp with Alison & Ellie may be longer and more substantial than when we are actually together .... Even Alan was able to send a WhatsApp giving 48 hours notice of the Christward deadline !

Sadly the actual post has been far more of a disappointment, only one edition of the Guardian Weekly arrived and that a month late.

So I am definitely giving that up for Lent but, while sharing a flat with a whisky-drinking sweet-toothed Scotsman during the Six Nations, alcohol and chocolate could be more of a challenge though possibly not as much of one as cleaning up in a room in which

you've just trodden on a leech which has been drinking from you for the last 2 hours !.



*[Okay, that's enough copy now – Ed]*

TTFN – and see you soon (‘jumpa lagi’) on Zoom !



# **~ Playback Theatre Manchester ~**

## ***30 years and still going strong***

You may have wondered, when you've perhaps looked at the timetable of activities that go on at Union Chapel, who or what is Playback Theatre Manchester? We have held our regular monthly rehearsals at UC for many years now and are extremely grateful to your community for your support of our activities.

We are, unsurprisingly as the name suggests, a theatre group. We are unusual in that we improvise the stories of real life that our audiences tell us. There are no set scripts, no pre-rehearsed plots. Instead, our Conductor (facilitator), Actors and Musician listen and then turn the stories, voluntarily told by audience members (there is no coercion), into instant theatre through spontaneous group improvisation. So often we are asked afterwards 'How do you do that?'. The way the team work together can appear seamless and magical.

The truth is we all have stories to tell and we all experience the common stories of human life: birth and death; special events; families; friendships; growing up; growing older; acceptance and rejection; love; our struggles and triumphs. We parcel up our lives into narratives, some of which have beginnings, middles and ends; some of which we are in the centre of and don't know what the end will be. Some stories are hilarious, some tragic, some adventurous, some poignant. All of life's variety is here. Though we may begin each performance as a theatre of strangers, through the connecting power of our resonance with what we hear and witness played out, we become, over the course of an evening, an audience of neighbours.

Over the years, Playback Theatre Manchester has performed for a wide variety of groups as well as in open public sessions. Pre-Covid, we would sometimes be commissioned to perform at conferences or community gatherings of some kind. We have

performed for birthday and wedding celebrations, educational groups, corporate events, groups of seniors and carers. Over the last two years, we have done a small number of online performances and rehearsed regularly both online and, when possible, in person, using our own stories as material to practise with. One of the wonderful things about being a member of PBTM is that we check-in with each other every month. Like the long-term group of friends we are, we hold something of our life histories between us.

We have now, in 2022, been in existence for 30 years – a fairly remarkable feat for any community group. Several of our founder members are still regular attenders and highly active; others have joined more recently and a number have been and gone, sometimes leaving and coming back to us when life allows. Such is the draw of the extraordinary world of Playback Theatre - a movement which exists around the world and has been going since 1975. There are now ensembles on every continent.

***On Saturday 12th March, we will be returning to live performance at UC from 6.30-8.00pm, with refreshments and a chance to talk with us afterwards. We invite you to come along. We would like to be able to give back to Union Chapel for the generosity you have shown us. There is no charge, though donations would be gratefully accepted.***

*Diane Adderley  
Founder member  
Playback Theatre Manchester*

## **~ Snippets of Hebrew ~**

### ***Ten Commandments***

Many of us learned the Ten Commandments off by heart as children, because they were seen to be a moral code worth living by, and it was important to remember it. It was also implicitly understood that if we were to keep such commandments that life



would go well. And who could argue against the Ten Commandments? Life would certainly be the better for it, whether we knew we were obeying them as such, or just living by them unaware.

Sometimes they strike us as quite dictatorial and authoritarian. But what lies behind them?

Hosea 11

1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

The context of the Decalogue is that God has revealed his special name to Moses as “I am that I am” and that he had brought Israel out of Egypt. In Hebrew, the letters that spell the “I am” part approximate to the English letters YHVH. In order to pronounce it, there will need to be some vowel sounds. So it ends up as follows: YaHWeH, and no one knows how the ancients pronounced this, but in modern English it is yarway. In the rest of this article, I will use Yahwe, in keeping with most modern texts.

After being brought out of bondage in Egypt God proceeds to speak to them through Moses, and he tells them what the basis of their future relationship with him is to be like.

The Decalogue opens with the majestic words: And God spoke all these words saying; “I am Yahwe your God, who brought you out of

Egypt". Next comes: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me". Can you hear him shouting sternly in the voice chosen by Cecil B Demille in his famous film The Ten Commandments made in 1956?

Can you hear the smiting vengeful God waiting to pounce?

Or is it that God seeks a relationship with his people, and they didn't quite understand. But the King James translators, on a mission to stamp the divine right of kings onto the text, go for the authoritarian approach, and please the first Scottish king on the English throne. Perhaps James was a little less than certain of his authority.

Some Jewish thinkers are of the opinion that the Torah, or the Pentateuch, is not the most straightforward communication medium, and that some searching and digging is required. They would suggest that with the passage of time has come a more nuanced approach to it. I would like to contribute in my own small way to this trend. The basic idea is that when God says "I am Yahwe your God, who brought you out of Egypt" then such a statement almost demands a response. Especially the first clause. So the response to "I am Yahwe your God", is "And we are yours". The text of course does not explicitly demand any response, but it is there, none the less. This comes from Rabbi Manis Friedman on Youtube. My addition is, that the next clause "... who brought you out of Egypt" also deserves a response. Perhaps, "... and we are grateful".

Perhaps this is the sort of digging that Jesus knew his parables would require.

Then, instead of "Thou shalt have no other gods before me", a more literal translation might be "Let there be no other gods for you". A jussive sense is indicated by the Imperfect form of the verb to be. Jussive is a mood for commanding or exhorting. In Biblical Hebrew it is almost always translated as "Let it be ... ". In this case one can almost sense the "please" before the sentence.

When it says “And showing mercy to thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments”. What you might never realise, is that all three of the verbs in this sentence are participles, and not just the first one. The verb “showing”, is more active than is implied. We might think of showing mercy as a refraining from a punishment. But this word which is translated as “showing”, means making or doing, it is active. God goes out of his way to show mercy, or loving kindness. Perhaps by making rain in time, or sunshine to ripen the harvest.

There is a further refinement; the word for “keeping” means “guard, protect or attend to”. Furthermore, the verbs “to love” and “to keep”, have the preposition “for” in front of them. The verse might be “Bringing loving kindness to thousands for loving me, and for attending to my “Instructions”. Finally, the thousands means thousands of generations, and not thousands of people.

This feels very different to the King James Version.

*Geoff Walker*

## **~ News of the Family ~**

We were sorry to hear that **Beryl Dykes** has been in Stepping Hill Hospital. We send her our prayers and best wishes.

**Jess Howes** is at home from University after having had an operation to improve the implant she has to assist her heart. She is very much in our minds and we wish her a speedy recovery.

## **~ Minutes of the Church Meeting**

### **held on Zoom on 20th February 2020~**

**Present:** Gwen M, Carole W, Geoff W, Margaret E, Nicola H, Andy H (chair), Lorna R, Alan R, Margaret R, David G (Minutes), Steve R, Gwyneth HR,

**1 Apologies:** Margaret G, Enid W, Monica D

## **2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes were approved, no matters were arising not already on the agenda.

***Date of next meeting planned as 3rd Sunday in month will be 20th March 2022.***

## **3 Any Other Business**

Sophie, our BMS Link missionary is on furlough May/June, and available to visit.

## **4 Proposal for Procedure on Quotes for building work**

Steve R spoke on the document already circulated. Guidance in the document is now more explicit though it does little more than formalise previous practise. No comments, Procedure on Quotes for building work was accepted by the meeting.

## **5 Update on Pastoral Care**

Lorna R updated the meeting. Discussion documents have been previously circulated. There had been discussion at the previous deacons' meeting which had agreed to change the name of the Pastoral Support Group to something else, and to reconvene a smaller group from the previous pastoral support group members and others who are interested, to decide how to take it forward. The aim is to have a process written down formally so people do not fall through the net, while we all continue informal mutual support and friendship for everyone.

**Action Lorna:** Aim to organise a meeting before Easter, perhaps having a meeting after church one Sunday.

## **6 Approval of Lettings Documentation**

Andy H spoke on the documents previously circulated. There have been meetings between the deacons and those who used to be involved with the lettings. Today's aim was to gain approval from the meeting about the documentation and to invite people to join the Lettings Committee. Andy briefly went through the document. The need to brief and train the Administrator on how the church worked and expectations was stated. Financial justification was shown.

Comment on the need for employment contract to be fully sorted out was made, such as pension arrangements.

The aim was to have 3-5 people on the Lettings Committee, and volunteers were invited. The point was made that there was nothing documented about the roles and responsibilities of the Line Manager or the Lettings Committee. It was suggested that there be one further meeting to determine these roles. People with an interest in these roles would be urged to come to a meeting, and to not be put off by detail, or lack of it.

**Action:** Andy to invite church members to a meeting to sort details. A couple of people expressed an interest in joining the committee.

The Church Meeting agreed that the deacons were to finalise arrangements and inform the next church meeting.

Steve and Andy were thanked for all their work on this.

## **7 Update on Web Site**

Steve R has made some cosmetic changes to the church website, and added a News and Events page summarising current activities. There was enthusiasm expressed for the upgrade on appearance and content.

Next steps are to:

A. Form a group of people to feedback to Steve on the functionality across platforms and comment on content. Margaret E. and Andy offered to be involved.

B. Current photos are not current.

**Action all:** People should submit photos to David or Steve for posting, bearing in mind those in the pictures will need to give their permission for this.

C. Worship material we have used over the last couple of years which was felt to be worth posting for internal and external interest is to be added.

**Action all:** Those in the Worship Group (or more widely) are asked to forward material to Steve for posting. A draft example is available from Steve on request.

## **8 Update on CIO**

Gwyneth HR explained that conversion had been on hold while we had waited for the Baptist Pensions Scheme to sort its paperwork. Our liabilities have now been paid off, but we await a letter formally stating this from the scheme. CIO conversion is still worthwhile, and a new constitution has already been drafted. Being a CIO means that our liability as a church is reduced.

**Action** Gwyneth to contact Anthony Collins (solicitors) to see what updates there are, and if there are any changes we need to make. The church meeting agreed that Gwyneth should proceed; costs would need approval in due course.

## **9 Easter Services**

Steve R reviewed current plans:

A Good Friday reflection (at the Chapel), 7.20 for 7.30 pm, then a communion service also at the Chapel on Easter morning 9.00, followed by an Easter Celebration at home on Zoom (10.20 for 10.30).

There was some interest in the Good Friday evening service, and fuller support for the Easter day arrangements. Currently no Easter Breakfast. Deacons to review the situation in case the Covid situation changes.

David G mentioned Withington Methodist are holding a shared service Good Friday morning (time to be arranged).

## **10 Lent Series: *Remembering Jesus***

Alan R has prepared resource materials and details (circulated) for session leaders to draw on. Leaders will choose their own music. Thanks to Alan for a lot of work.

**Action:** all to consider leading a session. All those who attend Sunday Zoom services to be invited to the meetings on Zoom. Material to be posted on website.

## **11 GM Commoners**

Nicola H received a letter from GMC in late January, wanting to meet us after church one Sunday. Concern over their lack of

momentum and organisation. We agreed to set up a working group to meet them (David, Brenda, Gwyn, Andy).

## **12 Church Weekend – update and request for help with housekeeping**

David G reminded people that the Weekend this year was at Thornleigh, Grange over Sands, 24th to 26th June. David suggested we be light on content this year, focussing on talking and walking. Volunteer to help with housekeeping invited, to correspond and organise travel.

**Action:** David to send out invitations to all who might be interested.

## **13 Any Other Business**

Sophie our link missionary is on furlough in May and June. We will invite her, either in person or over the internet, but are concerned not to overload her with duties in what should be a time for family and relaxing. She has visited us before. Possibility of inviting her to the church weekend, paid for by the church.

**The meeting ended at 12:05 with the Grace.**

## **~ Lent Series ~**

### ***Remembering Jesus***

*Thursdays 7:20 for 7:30 via Zoom*

A series of reflections remembering the life of Jesus through events and stories as recorded in the Gospels. Each session, with the exception of Maundy Thursday, will feature two paintings showing how various artists have depicted the event or story. There will be a time of silent reflection on each painting after which there will be a poem or piece of prose relating the topic to us for further reflection.

3rd March:	<b>Jesus the Child</b>
10th March:	<b>Jesus the Teacher</b>
17th March:	<b>Jesus the Healer</b>
24th March:	<b>Jesus the Friend</b>
31st March:	<b>Jesus the Stranger</b>
7th April:	<b>Jesus the Offender</b>
14th April:	<b>Remembering Jesus (Maundy Thursday)</b>

## **~Easter Services~**

***Good Friday 15th April 7.20 for 7.30pm in the Chapel***

(Reflecting on the Cross. Music, readings and pictures.)

***Easter Morning Communion 17th April 9.00am in Chapel***

**Easter Celebration 10.20 for 10.30 on Zoom**

**Please note:** There will be a Good Friday Service at Withington Methodist at 10.00am. This service will probably be held in the hall at the back of the church. Entry via the car park at the rear of the building.

## **~ Rosemary Kidd ~**

We were very sad to hear of the death of Rosemary Kidd who was a good friend to us all at Union Chapel. We reproduce the obituary for Rosemary which was published in The Baptist Times.



**Rev Dr Rosemary J M Kidd  
1948-2022**

Rosemary was born in Oxford on 29th August 1948, daughter of Swithin and Marion Margetson. She was baptised, so she told us, in



a silver punchbowl in Magdalen College, Oxford, where her father was a student. Her paternal grandfather, Rev William Margetson, also educated at Oxford, had been Provost of St Mary's Cathedral (Episcopal) in Edinburgh.

Most of her growing years were spent in and around Guildford, and it was there that many of the themes which would run through her life first began to take shape. The Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra, then under Vernon Handley, launched her love of music and singing; and the rich flora and fauna of the Surrey Downs fired her life-long passion for the natural world.

At University in Swansea, Rosemary's intellectual horizons were expanded in the Department of Zoology, with its special focus on Marine Biology. As she put it: the study of worms in the nutrient-rich mud of Swansea Bay, with all their intricate beauty, went hand in hand with her radical commitment to Christian discipleship, a life-long pilgrim on the way of Jesus. She was baptised 'as a believer' in Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Swansea, by Glyn Morris, immersed both in water and in the fervent Welsh hymnody that never ceased to inspire her. She sang with the Orpheus Choir and in 1969, memorably, at the investiture of Prince Charles in Caernarfon Castle.

At Hughes Hall in Cambridge, she trained as a teacher, beginning her teaching career at Ely High School, later to become Head of Biology at Lady Edridge Girls High School in South Norwood.

Rosemary was an intuitive educator.

First meeting Richard 'across a table' at the wedding of mutual friends, her own wedding took place in the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge, accompanied by King's College Choir, at that time conducted by David Wilcox. 1972 marked the centenary of the birth of Ralph Vaughan Williams, and his music, which featured so strongly in the service, permeated her life ever after.

Taking further opportunities to teach whenever other commitments allowed, much of the next two decades were devoted to four growing children: Peter, Andrew, Simon and Hannah. She never ceased developing her own gifts: as musician and singer, and researching the wonders of the natural world.

It was during those years that she also began to exercise her own embryonic Christian ministries in the various church communities

where she made her home: Waterbeach in Cambridgeshire, Kenton in North London, Eynsham in Oxfordshire, Theydon Bois in Essex and latterly Urmston in Manchester.

It was in Manchester that, in the 1980s, once again two major developments unfolded side by side. The way that Rosemary dealt with her own surgery for Breast Cancer was inseparable from her growing conviction that she was being called to become a Christian Minister and, perhaps one day, a Hospital Chaplain. She completed both Master's and Doctoral Degrees in the Education Department of Manchester University, simultaneously gaining a First Class Honours Degree in Contextual Theology through Luther King House, also affiliated to the University of Manchester.

Rosemary revelled in being a 'minister in training', becoming deeply involved in her many placements around Manchester and its churches. In later years she would draw extensively on her experience in South Africa where, on a student bursary, she had explored church communities in

the Baptist Convention of South Africa, a newly born gathering of congregations committed to empowerment for all who had lived through the injustices of the apartheid years.

She had ministries at Newall Green Baptist Church in Wythenshawe, including a Hospital Chaplaincy. She became a Training and Development Officer for The Methodist Church, her area covering the whole of the North West Region. She then worked nationally for the Baptist Union of Great Britain, serving the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team in London. In 2008, Rosemary was part of an ecumenical team that visited communities and leaders in Israel and Palestine, following which she could often be recognised proudly wearing a symbol of Palestinian Solidarity. At every stage she immersed herself in issues of deprivation, social exclusion, political injustice and diverse causes for freedom.

From the 1980s onwards, she was hugely shaped by feminism, and became widely committed to the empowerment of women. Her doctorate, entitled *Becoming a Woman*, had looked at models of education and their subsequent impact on the development of girls and young women. Years later, the opportunity to spend several months in Kolkata, living alongside women trapped in the brutality

of India's sex-trade, allowed her to put decades of experience to work in new and creative ways.

In recent years, after retiring from paid employment in 2012, Rosemary has been deeply committed to the wider community in and around Whaley Bridge, her home for nearly twenty years. She was an active member of the local Labour Party. She served in the Uniting Church on a Ministry Team, and more recently became very much involved in the life of Whaley Bridge Parish Church. She was ever the herald of everything ecumenical. She steered a Christian Aid initiative to raise £5,000 for a project in Burkina Faso, and has been energetically committed to the work of Climatise and a Biodiversity Group, both based in Whaley Bridge. She wrote innumerable letters to MPs, her words invariably leading to action, ardently campaigning for justice, peace and freedom – for all people. After the funeral of Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the turn of 2022, Rosemary began to organise a local ecumenical initiative to celebrate Tutu's life, and to promote the values she so much admired in his remarkable ministry. For the moment, this initiative is on hold, but there are already others looking to run with her vision. It might sound as if Rosemary's life was one long struggle to meet the demands of her resolute convictions - but nothing could be further from the truth. Rosemary loved Scottish Country Dancing, dancing each week and, annually, participating in a challenging summer school in St Andrews. She loved travel: in Europe, especially France; in Australia and New Zealand; as also as in South Africa and India. The news of her untimely death has brought messages from all around the world. They express shock and sadness, but they are consistently laden with memories of laughter and fun.


Rosemary did not like the idea of 'bucket lists' - and then proceeded to create one with a single entry – a long-overdue visit to New Zealand, where she could delight in its unique flora and fauna. A whole month in New Zealand finally came about in the autumn of 2018, only eighteen months before Covid began seriously to limit world travel. She saw sperm whales from a helicopter, came face to face with Kiwis in a dark forest, and worshipped her Creator in the Cardboard Cathedral in Christchurch. She was in her element; and her minimalist bucket list was complete.

Rosemary died suddenly and unexpectedly on 24th January 2022. She had lived a life of abundance. She leaves behind: nine grandchildren (Leah, Joel, Ethan, Petra, Alma, Amelie, Samuel, Mary-Kate and Cecilia); four married children (Peter, Andrew, Simon and Hannah); and her life-long partner in marriage (Richard). She loved them all deeply, and her love will continue to live and bear fruit in their lives for the rest of their days.

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