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THE MAGAZINE OF THE VENTA GROUP

AUGUST 2020

















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his lockdown time has been an interesting one, hasn't it?

As far as I'm aware, there has never been such a long period of restriction on our freedoms, combined with the worry for our own health and for our friends and families. Now that we're beginning to come out the other side of it, I've been reflecting on how it has affected different people, and what has made it so challenging to so many of us. There have been some positives for most of us, though - getting to know neighbours better, appreciating the quieter roads during daily walks, noticing the wildlife in our gardens that we might have busily rushed past in more normal times... We have worked together to gather up crates and crates of supplies for the food bank, and people in our community have helped each other with shopping, prescriptions and so much more.

But still the overriding experience has

been a tricky one, and I wonder if one of the main reasons is that coronavirus has shown us that we can't always be in control of our lives. It has felt like a problem too serious to manage, an "enemy" too big to stand up against, and that has made a lot of us feel small and powerless.

It has reminded me of the story of David and Goliath in the Bible, which some of you might be familiar with. God's people, the Israelites, were used to fighting against other armies, as they moved through contested land. But they weren't used to being faced off by someone so much taller and stronger than any of their own soldiers that they felt doomed to failure! They ended up trapped for days as Goliath stood in their path, not knowing what to do for the best.

You might think that the solution would have been to find the very strongest Israelite soldier to attempt to overpower Goliath. Or to come up with a plan to outwit him, meeting brute force with superior intellect... But it turned out that God's plan was for the smallest and least impressive of all of them to defeat the giant. The shepherd boy David stepped forward with a slingshot and some pebbles, and that was that.

David knew that he was tiny and vulnerable compared to Goliath, but he chose to trust God. He found the strength to do something terrifying, by realising that God was bigger than anyone or anything, giant-like or otherwise. During this time of uncertainty and worry, we have all struggled with having our choices taken away and feeling afraid in different ways. But we can ask God to help us trust him, even if we never have before.

In our house we have been listening to a new children's song about this story, which includes the line "when all I've got is a slingshot, you're the power in me... when I feel little like little David, you're the power in me". If you have felt a bit dwarfed by coronavirus and its effect on our lives, why not ask God to help you trust him and rely on his strength - just like David did.

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FROM THE REGISTERS FUNERAL

We continue to pray for all those who have lost loved ones recently, or are remembering someone particularly at this time of year.

We are always happy to record the names of anyone from the villages whose funeral has been held recently, even if it wasn't taken by a member of our ministry team.

NEXT EDITION

Items for the next month's magazine please send by email to Henry and Eostre Caswell by email to

ventafree4all@outlook.com

By 10th of this month please. The 10th of the month will be the deadline for all copy for the next magazine for the time being.



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New Wine 2020 UNITED Breaks Out

NEW WINE - AN OASIS by Janet

Normally a place to spend a week or a few days, either on the New Wine site camping or self catering in the area – a holiday with a difference.

It's a time to be able to attend daily mornings beginning with joining with Christian Worship Bands, followed by Bible teaching sessions with a wide variety of teachers - plus a whole daily programme of seminars and workshops for all ages taking place somewhere at New Wine all day long.

New Wine is for everyone – from the babies and children through to teenagers and "older" folk and everyone in between.

Following the evening celebrations, after hours-sessions are varied and there is always something to see and do. The most difficult thing is choosing from the timetable of events and seminars what you want to go to!

Or maybe just chilling out with friends, coffee and cake!

There is a big inclusive social network: Fair trade cafe's, craft workshops – a brilliant market place where you can buy Christian books, DVDs and CDs plus fair-trade items, food and the all important fair-trade good coffee.

Apart from all of this, however, the most important thing is time away to focus more on the things of God; or maybe to discover Him for the first time.

This year, due to the coronavirus, New Wine will be unique in that everything is on line, free and available to everyone everywhere. Not one tent peg to hammer in, not one mile to travel down the roads!

We are excited to be "going to New Wine" online this year to:

- experience joining in worship with great Christian bands
- and learn from the excellent teaching

BUT most of all to:

• spend that special carved-out time with God

So why don't you:

Log on, log in at https://www.new-wine.org/breaksout and join us - "See" you there!!

A Curate's Egg by Lyn.

"A curate's egg – something that has both good and bad parts".

'm therefore wondering that actually it's not just me, the curate, it refers to! Life itself is a curate's egg. So many parts of life have good and bad bits. In your own life, there are good and bad parts. In lockdown, there have been good and bad bits.

For me, for three months, Gary and I had our adult children living with us once again, that was good. But there were some bad/challenging parts. Such as three of us getting frustrated with working from home and the Broadband connection. My son returned to Bath in June, following the news that our long-awaited kitchen was going to be installed. That was a curate's egg. Good that the kitchen was going to be put in, bad news it was going to take twice as long to put in and that Christopher was leaving us.

The last few months have been a curate's egg for us all, in one way or another. All of us have been affected and it's been good and bad. Let us not be afraid to recognise that and to cry out to God. Some of you may have heard of the story of Joseph in the bible. Joseph was one of the 12 sons of Jacob and was given a multi-coloured or ornate robe by his father. He was a dreamer who told his brothers his dreams. His brothers decided one day enough was enough and they threw him into a cistern – a large pit - before they sold him into slavery into Egypt. I wonder what Joseph did in that pit? Did he just go down calmly into that huge hole and think, oh how lovely this is and thanked his brothers? No I don't think so. It's more likely he would have cried out, shouted "Help". My favourite Psalm is Psalm 34, I have used it's words since a teenager whenever I have faced difficult circumstances. I have found it tells me what to do when I am in trouble.

This poor person called, and the Lord heard them,; he saved them out of all their troubles.

If you are facing troubles, cry out to God. I have found that he has helped me in every trouble. Tim Hughes during lockdown collaborated on a song entitled The Blessing but in 2003 wrote these words:

I've had questions without answers, I've known sorrow, I have known pain.

But there's one thing, that I'll cling to; you are faithful, Jesus you're true.

When hope is lost, I'll call you Saviour. When pain surrounds, I'll call you healer.

When silence falls, you'll be the song within my heart.

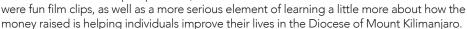
I am grateful that Tim like the writer of the Psalms expresses life, the good and the bad, the joys and the sorrows and remind us where we can turn. I pray that you too will turn to God, to Jesus the Saviour and find what the writer of the Psalm did: Drink deeply of the pleasures of God. Experience for yourself the joyous mercies he gives to all who turn to hide themselves in him.

Stoke Holy Cross Quiz Evening via Zoom

In this time of restrictions, how do you organise a fun fund-raising event, raising money for both our work with the people of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. through Tearfund and Stoke and Dunston church buildings fund? Andy Harding, aided and abetted by Carole, brilliantly solved this by organising a quiz evening via Zoom.



There was jollity, fun and good natured banter throughout the evening, in which tables of up to eight members, worked their way through a variety of quizzes. Obviously there had to be social-distancing, which was solved by everybody connecting via Zoom from the comfort of their own homes. People came from as far away as France. When tables needed to work together, breakout rooms were set up for each team. The wonders of modern technology! And, inbetween each set of quiz questions, there





And we also auctioned quite a number of items and promises donated for the evening. These included A4 sketches of your choice by young Sam Baker; Garden party music; Gluten free cupcakes; 3 hours of Gardening; a John Lewis picnic hamper; Posh Afternoon Teas; A gift card donated by Tescos; Handmade Denim Bags; some amazing Cakes; a Watercolour of Dunston church; a 45mile Return Taxi Service; Murder Mystery Dinner Parties; a Case of fine wines; IT Support Packages plus other items for sale at fixed prices.



As well as the great fun of taking part in the quiz, there was a prize for the winning team (well done to the "T Team" comprising Lyn and Gary Marsh, Chris and Karen Pearce, Steve and Tracey Oak with Simon and Angela Lincoln). And there was delicious food and drinks served up in each quiz team member's own household! (We assume this, as we all provided our own refreshments for the evening).







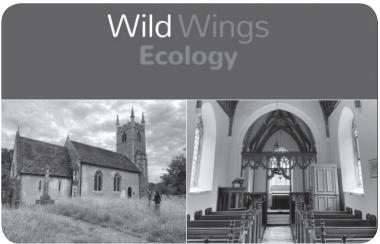
Before the evening it was possible to buy the fixed price items and throughout the evening the other items and services were auctioned. Most of these were donated by members of the church or their families. So our many thanks go to all those who donated items and promises, as well as those who so generously bidded for and bought them on the evening. Thank you too to those who sent in donations to support both causes.

The photos show our very smart looking MC for the evening, Andy Harding and some of the auctioned items. We are delighted to report that when all the payments come in we expect to have raised around £2,000.

What a great result from a really fun evening!

Re-Opening of St Remigius Church, Dunston

If you are not aware of its existence you could be forgiven for passing through the hamlet of Dunston on your way from Stoke Holy Cross village to the A140 trunk road and not even being aware of the architectural treasure hidden a few hundred metres back from the road, through the woods. Pictured here is the delightful St Remigius Church in Dunston, which has served the local community through the



centuries but, more recently, had its doors shut for reasons other than the coronavirus pandemic.

Its problem was a severe bat infestation, which has recently been the focus of a team from the Wild Wings Ecology Trust. Under the leadership of their Ecology Director, Dr Charlotte Packman, the team have carried out several surveys over a period of some time to understand the scale and nature of the problem. Five surveyors were present for each survey and, of these, one surveyor was always positioned inside the church for the duration of the survey. The surveys made use of infrared camcorders, located inside and outside of the church, with infrared floodlighting. Surveyors were equipped with full spectrum recording bat detectors, as well as using other specialised bat recording methods. The team have thus far identified the main species of bat in residence as the Plecotus Auritus (better known as the brown long eared bat) and there is also evidence of some day-roosting soprano and common pipistrelle bats.



The team hope to start remedial work in St Remigius Church this season, between October

and March and have been able to design a solution which will provide the bats with access to the church but enclose them in small roosting boxes. The work needed is considerable and expensive, yet thankfully can be funded through the Lottery Heritage Fund and so need not be a burden on the small community.

As long as Covid-19 doesn't interfere (it has already delayed the latest site survey) then we hope to be in a position to say 'The church is open' by next summer, providing a delightful venue for weddings and open air services. We will update you when works have been completed.



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Sunday 2nd August

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