

# THE GRAPEVINE

*Monthly Magazine of Botley Baptist Church*

WHAT!  
No Social  
Distancing?



**JULY 2020**

## **JULY PRAYER DIARY**

Wednesday	1	Thanksgiving for the start of the new normal
Thursday	2	Those with hearing and vision problems
Friday	3	Those comforting the bereaved
Saturday	4	Happy SAFE family gatherings
<b>SUNDAY</b>	5	Adapting to the new way to worship <b>(C)</b>
Monday	6	Those who are recovering from illness
Tuesday	7	Wendy Swadling; Beccy Summers
Wednesday	8	NHS re-opening routine services
Thursday	9	Schools planning for now & the future
Friday	10	Cleaners working to make venues safe
Saturday	11	Sporting events behind closed doors
<b>SUNDAY</b>	12	Those leading worship worldwide
Monday	13	The opening of gyms & swimming pools
Tuesday	14	Mary Timbrell; Ann Thomas
Wednesday	15	For good weather on St Swithin's day
Thursday	16	Those wary of what the future brings
Friday	17	Preparation for holiday times
Saturday	18	Those who can now celebrate marriage
<b>SUNDAY</b>	19	For comfort and challenge of worship <b>(C)</b>
Monday	20	Office workers slowly returning to work
Tuesday	21	Nigel Thomas & Riyanka John
Wednesday	22	The Armed Forces in their new role
Thursday	23	People facing changes in life & routine
Friday	24	Those working in social care
Saturday	25	All those travelling today
<b>SUNDAY</b>	26	Revd Kalyan Das taking our service today
Monday	27	Those in pain awaiting operations
Tuesday	28	Freda Trafford; Helen Watson
Wednesday	29	Thanksgiving for family and friends
Thursday	30	The Seacourt Bungalow residents
Friday	31	A good future for West Way Square

**(C)** COMMUNION

# PASTORAL MUSING

I am starting to miss the lockdown! For 100 days, I felt secure in the knowledge, confined to my home was safer than outside, where the bogeyman, the 19th incarnation of Corona was waiting!

The question I am still trying to answer is, safer from what or whom?

The barrier, curtain, gate, door whichever metaphor you prefer, is being slowly lifted; some are rushing through the opening unaware of new realities beyond, others are taking small steps into what was familiar territory but is now “the unknown”, and some prefer to err on the side of caution and stay at home, perhaps open the curtains a wee bit wider to see who among friends and acquaintances are venturing out.

The mixture of fear, dread and anxiety is an unhealthy cocktail of emotions. The two extremes, of rushing out as if nothing matters, and hiding at home out of fear, both have an impact on mental health. A plan to manage the journey out of lockdown is helpful.

I love the story of Noah. He is portrayed as a simple man whose aim in life was to please God. The author of Genesis describes Noah as *a righteous person, the*



*only blameless person living on earth at that time, and he walked in close fellowship with God (6:9). The earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence (vs 11-12)...*

God observed ... *everyone on earth was corrupt. Nothing escapes God's attention.*

Seeing this level of corruption of the human heart and mind, it is no wonder, God was **grieved** in His heart, that He had made us (6:6)

Noah's life offers pertinent lessons as our lockdown eases.

It is difficult for us to think of a world in which there was only **ONE** righteous person. After the flood, the world returned to its old ways, and once again, the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was “great in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis

18:20-21) and once again the righteousness of Abraham (v19) , saved one man's family, Lot. It's interesting how God leaves a trail of evidence to familiarise us with what is to come! Both Noah and Abraham point to the absolute righteousness of One who is the Son of God, who came to rescue us for eternity with the Father!

I do not measure up to Noah and Abraham's righteousness, but Christ presents me to the Father (*See Father, I died to save this one for eternity*) and God accepts me as righteous (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). We are chosen "*that we should be holy and blameless before [God]*" (Ephesians 1:4)

It was Noah's righteousness, his implicit trust in God, that saw him through almost 13 months of lockdown and isolation on a 3-deck, 450 foot long ship, teeming with animals. Imagine Noah's faith and trust in God when He closed the door to the boat (7:16), just as daunting, as being told by the PM, *You must stay at home, behind closed doors!*

Noah was a farmer, used to waiting through the seasons until the time for harvest. Noah would have known how birds announced the start and end of seasons, and he uses a raven and a dove to know the time

when to disembark and release the animals, which was just the time when God said, *Leave the ship and release all the animals*, that he did.

It is said, *Patience is a virtue*, a saying which lets us believe, we have the power within us to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset. The human spirit becomes restless when tied down, wanting to be set free to do as it pleases, which is rebellion against God who is way ahead of us, planning to restore us into the perfect world He created. To be restless when God wants us to rest, to want freedom when God wants us to *hang in there*, is to say to God, *Thank you, but no thank you. I'll take it from here. Things are going from bad to worse; You don't seem to be in control, nor do you seem to care.*





Reflecting on periods of waiting in the past 30 years, I found encouragement in two promises of God:

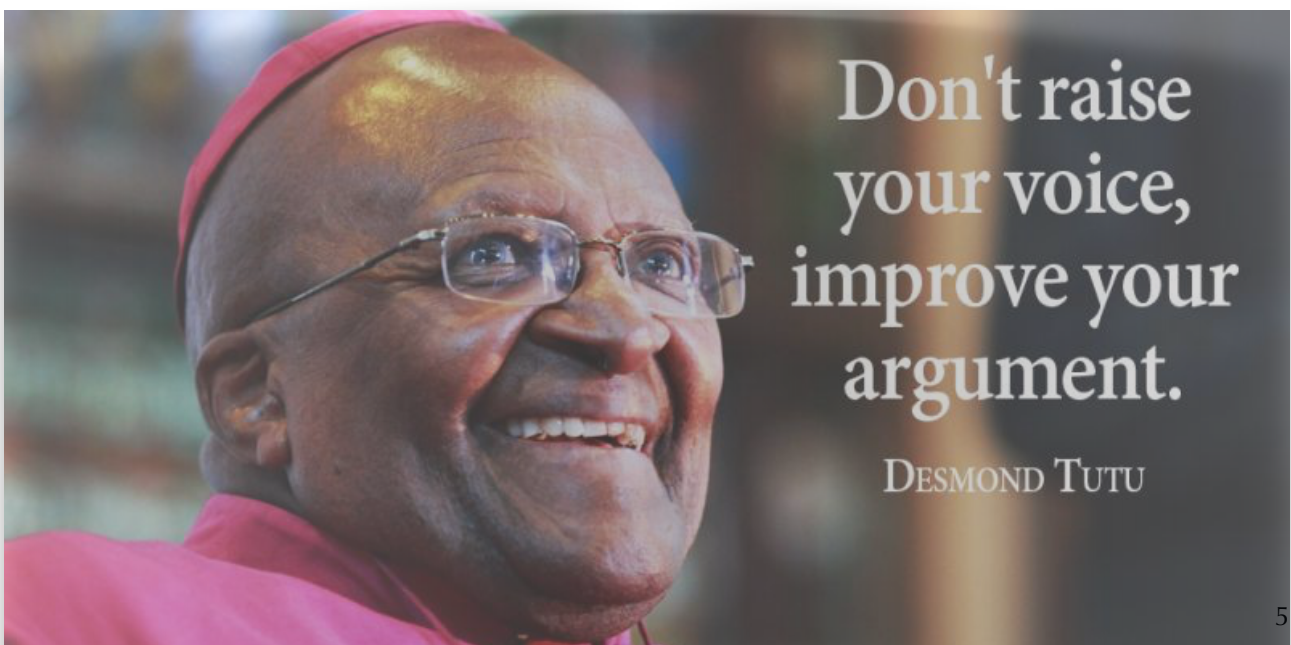
God told Jeremiah to inform and encourage the Hebrew people who were in exile, *Work for the peace and prosperity of the city I sent you into exile. Pray for it, its welfare will determine your welfare. ... I know the plans I have*

**for you; plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.** *When you pray, I will answer. If you look for me with all your heart soul and mind, you will find Me ... 29:7 and 11-14.*

Then came the calming assurance, **I will never leave you nor abandon you.** (*Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Psalms 55:22; Chronicles 28:20; Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 13:5-6 to name a few*).

Waiting is both a journey in faith and an act of Trust. Waiting can be challenging, rigorous and stressful. In our anxious, restless state, we long to return to familiar things, to get back to what we know and enjoy. But God has greater plans for each of us. Wouldn't you want to wait and see His plans before we throw it out?

Kalyan



**H**arry Hunter is the pen name of a retired academic who lives with his wife (and cat) at West Kilbride on the Ayrshire coast, who writes in the distinctive rhyming acrostic. Through 2019, he added a new rhyming acrostic each month, but in 2020 he changed tack and is progressively re-writing the 'Acrostic Bible'. Here's one he wrote for these strange Covid-19 times (based on John 20 and Acts 1):

**L**ike fugitives they hid, for fear of the Jews,

**O**utlawed now that their Lord had been slain.

**C**onfined to a locked room, Mary brought glad news

**K**indling hope they had not believed in vain.

**D**arkness fell: suddenly there was the Lord, whose

**O**utstretched hands blessed them. He bade them remain

**W**atchful till He sparked Pentecost's fuse –

**N**ever would the world be the same again.

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## ... is a RACIST

**W**e approach the term in the wrong way. If we ask the question, WHAT is a Racist we start by examining definitions, and explore conditions in society, economics and personal circumstances which make a person a racist. This question presumes a person is not in control of their lives, and are a victim of circumstance.

The real question begins with **WHO** ...?

Our approach should be to understand the person, and as difficult as it is, engage them in dialogue. This is not easy, as it is an evil which has to be expunged from their hearts and minds. There is only one person who can do this, the Holy Spirit. Who then is a racist?

Racism is given birth by ignorance. It is nursed on regular feeding of preconceived ideas, not based on reason or actual experience. At the right time, it is weaned onto intolerance, and introduced to prejudice. Its first level of achievement is to demonstrate the difference between those who hold a different opinion from itself.

By late childhood, it chooses bigotry as its diet of choice and hangs around others who share its staple diet. During its pre-adult stage, it's character is shaped by hostility and coloured by hate.

As it enters adulthood, it has an exalted view of its own life, an inherent belief of being superior to everyone in authority, power, or status.

Racism is known for its very visible personality, split into four parts: anger leading to violence, loss of the ability to gracefully dialogue and respectfully reason, finding safety in numbers and being a part of the crowd, ending with belonging to the herd, but not agreeing on the best feeding ground, nor who should be leader.


A racist is very uncomfortable when singled-out for dialogue and will retreat to raising its voice, even shouting well rehearsed phrases.

I have concluded that a racist is very uncomfortable in its own skin, being who they are, because something in their very being is fighting to suppress the image of God in them. To me, there is only one person who is responsible for this!

Racism is not restricted to “white privilege”; tribal differences, polarity in education, nationalism, social hierarchy, anything by which one considers themselves to be above other, that person is a racist.

Only a person can be a racist. It therefore stands to reason if you cannot reason with the person, then pray God to reason with the person. This is a worthy approach; I have seen great results and I commend it to you.

*Contributor requests to be Anonymous*



**‘I REGRET’ IS NOT  
AN APOLOGY NOR  
IS IT REPENTANCE.  
TO REPENT IS TO  
OWN THE OFFENSE,  
CONFESS IT, AND  
TURN FROM IT AND  
BE FORGIVEN.**

**JACK GRAHAM**



## When Gremlins capture Church Bulletins

“The ushers will come forward  
and take our ties and offerings”

The audience is asked to remain seated until  
the end of the recession.

The Ladies Bible Study will be held Thursday morning at 10.  
All ladies are invited to lunch in the Fellowship Hall after  
the B.S. is done.

ITEMS for PRAYER & PRAISE  
Update on our Minister's illness:  
GOD IS GOOD! Dr. Hargreaves is better.

The rosebud on the altar this morning is to announce the  
birth of David Alan Belzer, the son of  
Reverend and Mrs. Julius Belzer.

## Journeying through the Seasons of Life

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.*

(Ecclesiastes 3:1)

**I**n the beginning, God created the seasons. He said, *‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.’ And it was so.* (Genesis 1:14-15)

Climatically, the year of the Hebrew Bible is divided into two seasons: hot and cold (Genesis 8:22), summer and winter. The agricultural year was also divided into two seasons, ploughing/planting (seedtime) and harvest, putting in and taking out that which is a blessing to you and others.



We, too, journey through seasons in life. Seasons may come and go, but there is a time for everything; everything has a season (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Nature teaches us when seasons change from spring to summer to autumn and to winter.

Ultimately, God, who created the seasons, is in control of the

seasons, both seasons in nature and the seasons of our lives. Like the farmer, the key to navigating through the seasons begins with knowing which season you are in, as there are many more seasons in life than there are in nature!

If all is going well, you might be in a happy season. To navigate this season, Jesus' brother, James, tells us, *Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise* (5:13). He teaches us, in the happy season and in every season, our priority is to praise God because He is worthy of all praise!

Identifying and recognising which season of life we are in can be difficult and we find ourselves at a loss how to live fully in Christ during that season. You may be weeding, instead of harvesting, because you have not identified the season properly. You might be in a season of transition, of grief, of conflict, illness, unanswered prayers, new challenges. You might be in a dry season,

when God is quiet, or you cannot hear His voice or sense His presence, as you once did. Navigating through these seasons gives you opportunities to draw closer to Him, continuing to read His word, and to talk to Him in prayer, even when He is quiet. The Psalmist says, “Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him” (37:7).

A dry season is a good time for self-examination, asking the Holy Spirit to help you identify any impediments causing God’s silence, or dryness of the heart and soul. The Holy Spirit can and will help remove obstacles to the flow of God’s blessing, but you have to follow His guidance to journey through “dry” seasons into the presence of God.

You might be in a waiting season, waiting for circumstances to change, waiting on something to be completed, or waiting on your purpose to be revealed. Waiting can be difficult and stressful. God will never forget you. He wants you to fall in line with His plans and purposes, pruning and chiselling away what’s not needed. Waiting can be a place of crushing and breaking while God shapes His character in you.

Abraham waited until he was 100 years old for the birth of the promised son. Moses went through a 40-year waiting season in the wilderness, before God called him to “bring My people out” of Egypt. Joseph waited in pit before he was rescued, waited in prison, falsely accused of attempted rape, before he was released and promoted to second-in-command in Egypt, so that God saved him and his 11 siblings.

It is crucial for us to understand that journeying through the wilderness is important, because that is where God prepares us to join Him to move forward with His plans.

You might be going through a season of very difficult times. Know with deep assurance that God is with you right where you are, working in you and around, even though you might not understand what or why. Remind yourself you are journeying through seasons and this season too will pass. God does His supernatural work in you and through you. If you need comfort, let Him comfort you. If you need strength beyond yourself, let Him strengthen you or use His strength. If you need wisdom, ask and the Bible promises that it will be given to you (James 1:5)

Identifying the season you are in helps you do what the season requires you to do, but whichever season you are in give glory to God for His promise. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Praise Him you are being shaped (sometimes hammered in the hot furnace) into His character. Whichever season you're currently in, remember that God is making everything beautiful in its time (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Resisting God's work in you blinds you to new opportunities, new relationships, new paths, or new dreams that God is building for His kingdom.

Each of us is journeying through our own unique season. I would encourage you, as I try to do the same myself, to get into the Bible and find the person with whom you identify the most and put yourself in their journey. Extract every bit of revelation you can from their life. Seasons are "opportunities for growth" that keep you progressing towards the ultimate fulfilment of God's plan and purpose for your life.

*- Contributed by Elisabeta Cretan*

## **FAMILY NEWS**



**M**ention the word "family" and people will chirp in with all kinds of stories about family life during the past 100 days. Among all the good that has come out of the lockdown, families have re-discovered them-selves. Stories of time spent together enjoying common activities, and a few not-so-good, stressful times.

The easing of restrictions on movement has opened doors for some of us. Gillian in going in for surgery on 2nd, the same day Robin has a check up, Margaret is due in hospital on Friday 10th and Elisabeta has a long overdue Doctor's appointment.

Both Angela and Margaret are improving after insect bites left them in pain. Peter is back in his home and was at Church last week. He seems much

improved, now sporting a beard and dark glasses! Jeanine says Helen is much better now, more lucid during daily phone conversations.

Met Ann Clark walking by yesterday. She still has pain in her right shoulder. Briony has moved to Oxford, working at the JR. Please pray for Ann's son Tim and his wife Kate who are expecting their first child.

Diane and Christoph celebrated their wedding anniversary on 28th June. We wish them well and pray for them, praying also for several people celebrating birthdays coming up in July: George on 8th, Gillian on 15th, Narola on 24th and Jayshree on 29th. Also Graham and Margaret celebrate their wedding anniversary on 8th.

By the time you read this, the Manna Café would have moved over to the new Church and settling in. Anna is keen to start with pick up and home delivery meals, which does not break any present rules.

A note from our Treasurer Alan, to thank everyone for keeping up their tithes and offerings, some dropping it into the Church letter box, others setting up a direct debit or online transfers. Your mindfulness and faithfulness to help maintain Church finances is very much appreciated.

Isn't it just wonderful that we have been blessed with excellent weather during most of lockdown? What a blessing! Recent rains have brought joy to those who enjoy gardening and those growing fruit and veg.

As summer sets in (we hope it does!) and the bar-b-que season swings into action, the Fire Department has issued caution, especially to those using single-use bar-b-ques, to exercise caution when lighting and disposing of. A few fires caused by careless disposal of hot coals has damaged several hectares of land.

Enjoy the summer cautiously, and savour every moment.

*Kalyan*



## Coronavirus and Changing Church

**N**ew research has given insight into how churches have responded in the coronavirus crisis. Evangelical Alliance surveyed churches 700 churches and 196 faith-based organisations across denominations and released the report on 11 June, which highlights a range of church concerns, outcomes and practical and prayerful responses.

Highlights from the survey:

59 % of UK churches are reporting a marked increase in people interested in finding out more about the Christian faith.

70 % of church leaders reported a surge in the number of people who would not normally attend church, now attending during the lockdown.

45 % of Church leaders reported, preparing and delivering material for Sunday services is currently taking up most of their time.

The report stated, churches across the UK have done 'a great job' of bringing their Sunday services online, adding, 'Interestingly churches with larger congregations are far more likely to prerecord their Sunday service; those with smaller congregations prefer to broadcast live.'

88 % of church leaders said their churches are working tirelessly to meet the needs of vulnerable people struggling during the coronavirus pandemic. Of these churches, 72 % are working in partnership with either local authorities, other churches or charities.

Gavin Calver, EA CEO, described the results of the survey as '*both encouraging and exciting*'. He wrote, '*Whilst you'll also see in the report statistics that highlight some of the challenges both churches and charities are facing – challenges that we are to work together to surmount – the overarching message is that we have shown great agility, creativity, fortitude and faith as the church of God in this time.*

## **WHY YOU'RE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET! 3 KEYS TO REOPENING YOUR CHURCH WELL**

*By Carey Nieuwhof*

**Y**ou've been operating in crisis mode for months now.

You've made pivot after pivot with little time to process or prepare. You've made the best decisions you could with the information you had and prayed that it would work.

Adrenaline has ruled the day.

As we move into the heat of summer, it looks like you might be able to come up for air. You might even be finding what feels like a new groove.

Perhaps your perspective on what "church" actually is has shifted. Online church can work. In fact, it is working! Your ministry has continued to exist despite the odds. Giving hasn't been impacted as much as you feared. You may have actually seen an increase in attendance and engagement. How amazing!

**BUT**.....you are not out of the woods yet!

Much of the world is now moving in the direction of re-opening and this will undoubtedly affect your church. It's time for you to think beyond this pandemic into the future of your ministry.

It's exciting to consider the prospect of "going back to normal." But the truth is, there is no "going back to normal."

There will continue to be new obstacles and realities in the road ahead and you must remain adaptable.

As you move towards re-opening your church, you must continue to innovate.

If we've learned anything over the last 30 years as we've helped churches fund their vision, it is this: economic stress doesn't cause financial hardship, it exposes it. The ingredients were lying beneath the surface all along.

Are you beginning to feel that today? Are you concerned that, while you may have survived to this point, the months ahead still feel a little scary? Now is not the time to stop innovating.

Resist the temptation to relax and instead get serious about these 3 key components of your ministry foundation

## **1. FOCUS YOUR MINISTRY**

Simple is almost always better, especially now.

Instead of trying to be all things to all people, focus hard on who God called you to reach and what you do best to reach them. Focus on the areas within your church where you naturally excel.

Identify what is absolutely essential for moving forward and jettison the rest.

Here are some key metrics to help you evaluate which ministries qualify:

- Alignment with your core mission and vision.

- Alignment with The Great Commission

- Number of people engaged

- Correlation to church growth

- Measurable results or impact

## **2. FLEX YOUR STAFF**



Borrowing from Jim Collins, you want to spend some time evaluating whether you have all the right people on the bus and whether they are in the right seats to help you execute your new focused ministry plan.

This is an area that many church leaders struggle with because they aren't willing to make the hard but necessary choices.

There are some vital questions you have to explore here but, what's most important is to follow through on the answers.

Where do the strengths of your staff align best with the new focus?

Where do you have gaps that need to be filled?

Which people don't really fit? How do you help them transition well?

Where can you mobilize volunteers to replace or supplement full-time staff?

What is your plan for investing in those people continually so that they are well prepared for the changes and growth ahead?

Who can come alongside your church and offer new expertise and perspective for the season ahead?

### **3. RETHINK YOUR FINANCES**

You've simplified your ministry and aligned staff and volunteers to make it work. Now it's time to assess your finances and determine what is needed to provide sustainable and predictable funding going forward.

Here's a truth we've witnessed over and over at Generis as we've helped churches fund their vision for the last 30 years: The economy doesn't cause financial stress, it simply reveals what was lying beneath the surface all along. If your approach to generosity is not supported by effective systems and concrete principles of biblical stewardship, you will consistently experience a gap between your resources and your vision.

#### **What can be done to close that gap and get healthy?**

Here are 7 great places to start.

Spend some time evaluating overall giving data and what it is telling you about your people and their commitment to your mission.

Develop a purposeful process to surface and express gratitude to new givers.

Cast vision for the value of recurring giving and recognize the people that take that step.

Implement a system to catch lapsing givers before they fully leave your church.

Tailor giver communication based on different levels of engagement and commitment.

Pay very close attention to changes in giving patterns. There are stories behind those changes and you don't want to miss them.

There are very few things that are more powerful than connecting stories of life-change to the generosity of your people. So, make story-telling a regular part of your worship experience.

There are very few things that are more powerful than connecting stories of life-change to the generosity of your people. So, make story-telling a regular part of your worship experience.

## **RE-OPENING THE CHURCH MATTERS.**

We know that you look forward to the day you can physically gather together with your church body. As you eagerly wait for that day to come, don't waste the time you have today to be strategic and to continue innovating so that your ministry can thrive in the face of an ever-changing reality for months to come.

Generis has recently released a free resource that can help you navigate this 3-part framework.

It's called "Beyond: Forward Focus – Planning the Critical Next Seasons for Your Ministry:" ***Download it [HERE](#).***

If you're looking for help tailoring this to your unique situation and culture, learn more about our ***Forward Focus Framework Coaching***.

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*Today's post is written by Steve Caton, Chief Growth Officer at Generis. Steve works closely with the Generis Leadership and Consulting Team to develop innovative*

*strategies to help churches and organizations close the funding gap by creating a sustainable culture of generosity that can fund their vision for years to come.*

## *Life in The Slower Lane*

Fred said to his eighty-year old buddy:

'I hear you're getting married?'

'Yep!'

'Do I know her?'

'Nope!'

'This woman, is she good looking?'

'Not really.'

'Is she a good cook?'

'Nah, she can't cook too well.'

'Does she have lots of money?'

'Nope! Poor as a church mouse.'

'Well, then, is she good in bed?'

'I don't know.'

'Why in the world do you want to marry her then?'

'Because she can still drive!'

## SECRETARY'S NOTES

**G**reat excitement with the announcement that “places of worship can open for private prayer”. Kalyan quickly arranged an on-line deacons' meeting. Of course the gremlins struck! Kalyan, Elisabet, Penny and I could all see and hear each other on screen. Marian had problems, but was able to join in via telephone, so we could all contribute to discussion. Then nobody could see or hear me. I could still hear everybody else and see all but Marian. Frustration!

The catch is in the detail of the definition of private prayer “as a person or household entering the venue to pray on their own. Not as part of a group, any led prayer or communal act. They should maintain social distance. Public worship, streamed or otherwise is not permitted whilst visitors are in the building”. All very restrictive, no hymn singing or responses. There are notices displayed in the church windows detailing the times and days that the church will be open, and I have no doubt that they appear elsewhere in the Grape Vine. Elsewhere the work on West Way Place goes on apace, most of the scaffolding has now been removed and access paths and roads mostly in place. The last Mace/SDC Community Liaison Group minutes (March) forecast that the present tenants the Co-Op, Chancellors, Iceland, Lloyds Chemist and Tesco would be moving into their new stores in July and August, but no information about other probable tenants.

*Ted.*

**L**ast month, I wrote a little about my introduction to Botley Baptist Church. When we moved to Hazel Road in February 1966, the neighbour who first introduced himself to us, and mentioned the Church was William Hitchcock of number 16. The Minister at that time was John Matthews who saw the move to the then new church in Westminster Way. We continued to attend sporadically, now with our three children, changes of employment, and further education courses meant, at times we missed successive Sundays. It was not until after the arrival of David Rowland



(1974) that we were near to regular attendance, still passing the communion elements or avoiding those Sundays. We chose to ignore a couple of approaches on church membership, but found ourselves being drawn closer into fellowship.

Learning some of the history of the Baptist movement, I was particularly taken with the story of the Botley congregation, its support from New Road and doggedness in raising funds to establish and maintain a regular meeting place. How, a never large congregation "kept the Faith" through two world wars and were always looking to remain close to the centre of the local community. Prepared to move as that centre migrated westwards.

Then David was gone, intrigued and attracted by the challenges of being the Ecumenical Officer for Coventry and Warwickshire in 1996. Hedley Feast came to continue much of David's ministry including links with the other local churches. He repeated the membership invitation which this time we did not ignore!

*Ted*

## *Life in The Slower Lane*

**M**orris, an 82 year-old man, went to the doctor to get a physical.

A few days later, the doctor saw Morris walking down the street with a gorgeous young woman on his arm.

A few days later, the doctor spoke to Morris and said, 'You're really doing great, aren't you?'

Morris replied, 'Just doing what you said, Doc: 'Get a hot mamma and be cheerful.'

The startled doctor said, 'I didn't say that! I said, 'You've got a heart murmur; be careful.'

## "Can you sleep when the wind blows?"

**A** farmer owned land along the Atlantic coast. People were reluctant to work on farms along the Atlantic due to the awful storms that raged across the Atlantic, wreaking havoc on the buildings and crops. The farmer interviewed several applicants for the job, but received a steady stream of refusals.

Finally, a short, thin man, well past middle age, approached the farmer.

'Are you a good farm hand?' the farmer asked him.

'Well, I can sleep when the wind blows,' answered the little man.

Though puzzled by his answer the farmer, desperate for help, hired him

One night an offshore wind howled. Jumping out of bed, the farmer rushed



next door to the hired hand's cottage shouting, 'Get up! A storm is coming! Tie things down before they blow away!'

The little man rolled over in bed and said firmly, 'Sir. I told you, I can sleep when the wind blows.'

Enraged by his response, the farmer hurried outside where to his amazement, he discovered all the haystacks had been covered with tarpaulins. The cows were in the barn, the chickens were in the coops, the doors were barred and all shutters were tightly secured. Everything was tied down. Nothing could blow away. The farmer then understood what his hired hand meant, so he returned to his bed to sleep.

When you're prepared, spiritually, mentally, and physically, you have nothing to fear. Can you sleep when the wind blows through your life? The hired hand in the story was able to sleep because he had secured the farm against the storm.

We will then be able to 'sleep when the wind blows' and sing in the morning,

**it is well with my soul!**

## **Opinion**

# **What it is really like to be a minority in a UK church**

24th June 2020

*Dionne Simpson outlines the common problems and prejudices Christians of colour have encountered inside white majority churches*

Too many of our Christian brothers and sisters have stayed quiet about issues of racial justice.

These same Christians will fight hard for the rights of unborn children and donate to charities working in poverty-stricken African countries. Their children are encouraged to become charity tourists, spending a gap year in impoverished places to 'help' black people without ever realising that they are needed at home.

The following are just some of the ways Christians of colour are commonly overlooked in many white majority churches...

### **Overlooked due to 'culture'**

Minorities in churches are often overlooked for leadership because their 'culture' doesn't fit. Many experience disapproving looks for the way they worship (with exuberance and uninhibited noise and movement) which runs counter to the predominant white-majority church culture

They are expected to take responsibility for controlling themselves so they 'fit in'. Whether spoken or (more often than not) unspoken, the implication is: "Don't be too loud, don't wear such bright colours, don't dance too provocatively, don't holla and whoop 'Amens', don't speak in tongues too loudly and don't clap in a way which highlights our own incompetence in keeping time."

### **Overlooked because of who I am**

Being told that "I don't see colour" is a refusal to acknowledge that God made us all different and unique. God picked my perfect skin tone. When asked

where I'm from, I explain that I was born in the Midlands to which the reply comes, "No, I mean where are you really from?". My identity is removed with a single breath. They try again: "Which African country is your family from?" They always look perplexed when I say, "we are not African." My identity, culture and family is Black British. Yet I still don't fit your perception of who I should be and where I am from.

### **Overlooked in leadership**

I've seen churches boasting about their ethnically diverse congregations, yet their leadership is made up of mostly white men, and occasionally white women. Some of these churches are filled with pictures of a white Jesus, a white Mary and a white Joseph.

### **Overlooked in worship**

Songs may be restricted to the same three or four chords typically found in modern worship songs, which are written by white people for white people. We can't play songs written by black artists because "our congregation won't know the songs", "they are too difficult to play", or "its too fast and exuberant and not reverent enough."

.And yet there is an exception...if a white artist records a song written by a black person, it somehow becomes more palatable. After all, why honour Sinach's 'Way Maker' when we can have it watered down and re-done by a white worship leader in order to make it more "acceptable" to us? Make no mistake, when this happens, white church leaders are making a statement. They're saying that our culture, music and way of worshipping is not appropriate, and therefore not as good as the white majority equivalent. They're saying that unless we conform to the white, middle class way of church, we can never be accepted.

### **Chameleons**

Of course, much of the above will be vehemently denied by some leaders. And I know many might be offended by my observations. But that's ok.

It takes courage and bravery to assess ourselves, to be truthful about the constructs of our churches. It's good to see many white church leaders are beginning to do this.



But to my dear brothers and sister of minority, I say this: We have played chameleon all our lives. We've bended and blended and modified and restricted who we are to fit in and be accepted. We may need to do this for a little while more. But God has made our people strong, resilient, wise and honourable. We must continue to love our white Christian brothers and sisters as they walk through this change with us. As we support them (and challenge them) we must also expand our capacity to be gracious, merciful and forgiving, just as our Lord Jesus Christ was to us.

*Dionne Simpson is a prophetic worshipper, passionate apostle and servant of God. She is the founder of Wirral Worship Collective and Christians of Minority*

*Premier Christianity is committed to publishing a variety of opinion pieces from across the UK Church. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the publisher.*

*“You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all the people some of the time, which is just long enough to be president of the United States.”*

*- Spike Milligan*

## THE WILL OF AMRITA PRITAM

Fully conscious and in good health I am today, writing my will.



After my death

Ransack my room

Search each item

That is scattered

Unlocked

Everywhere in my house

Donate my dreams

To all those women

Who between the confines of

The kitchen and the bedroom

Have lost their world

Have forgotten years ago

What it is to dream

Scatter my laughter

Among the inmates of old-age homes

Whose children are lost

To the glittering cities of America.

There are some colours

Lying on my table

With them dye the sari of the girl

Whose border is edged

With the blood of her man

Who wrapped in the tri-colour

Was laid to rest last evening.

Give my tears to all the poets and around,  
even though you might not

understand what or why.

Every drop will birth a poem, I promise.

My honour and my reputation  
Are for the woman  
Who prostitutes her body  
So her daughter can get an education.  
Make sure you catch the youth  
Of the country, everyone  
And inject them  
With my indignation  
They will need it  
Come the revolution  
My ecstasy  
Belongs to  
That Sufi  
Who  
Abandoning everything  
Has set off in search of God  
Finally,  
What's left  
My envy  
My greed  
My anger  
My lies  
My selfishness  
These simply,  
Cremate with me."

*Amrita Pritam was an Indian novelist, essayist and poet, who wrote in Punjabi and Hindi. She is the first prominent female Punjabi poet, novelist, essayist and the leading 20th-century poet in the Punjabi language, equally loved on both sides of the India–Pakistan border. She is also acclaimed writer of English prose.*

# A Baptist Church in Botley

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<b>Minister</b>	Kalyan Das
<b>Secretary</b>	Edward Beaver
<b>Treasurer</b>	Alan Woodward
<b>Editor &amp; Accounts</b>	Gillian Guest
<b>Administrator</b>	Elisabeth Cretan
<b>Deacons</b>	Penelope Allen Elisabeth Cretan Marian Woodward

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## **Phone**

07742 662 668

## **Email**

[botleybaptistchurch@gmail.com](mailto:botleybaptistchurch@gmail.com)

## **Website**

[www.botleybaptistchurch.org](http://www.botleybaptistchurch.org)

## **Address**

*One Church Way, Oxford, OX2 9TH*

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*Editor's discretion/decision is final.*

*Thank you.*

*Editor: Gillian Guest*