



MARK'S MESSENGER

*The Parish Magazine of
St Mark's Church, Broomhill and Broomhall, Sheffield*

June 2023 *Donations welcomed and can be made via the app below*



DAMNED BAD PLACE, SHEFFIELD

**A picture from David Price's play, performed at the Upper Chapel on
Saturday, 29 April. (More pictures on pages 10 - 12)**



ROYAL CONSCIOUSNESS – REFLECTIONS ON THE CORONATION

In the run up to the Coronation, after the service details were publicised, some media attention focused on the moment in the service when the congregation and viewers around the world were to be invited to pay homage to the King. This was an adaptation to previous coronation services, where princes and lords queued up to pay homage. There was something of an outcry; were we really being asked to promise to obey the King...was this a reasonable thing to ask of us? The media discussion amplified the controversy, with the actual moment in the service seemingly less dramatic, more like a vote of support ('God save the King') than a vow of obedience. Arguably, the more concerning acts of *public obedience* on coronation day were those enacted by the police, using the new powers given to them to respond to public disorder, to arrest peaceful protestors and even some monarchy supporters mistaken to be protestors.

As a member of clergy in the Church of England, making vows to the monarch is required at ordination and in licensing to new posts. For some clergy, this act is entirely congruent with their faith as part of the Church of England, with the monarch as the head of the Church. For others, and especially those raised in non-conformist backgrounds, this vow, though taken seriously, can seem a bit odd. I have become used to making these vows now, but the first time did raise some questions for me. What did I mean when making these vows, how did I feel about the monarchy, and what did I believe about an established Church?

I was brought up in a religious and strongly non-conformist family. I can remember wanting to be in the Brownies, mostly because my friends went, but wasn't allowed to on the basis that I shouldn't be making a vow to anyone but God, and certainly not to the Queen. It did make me wonder what exactly was going on at Brownies... but I happily joined a ballet class instead. In listening to the media reporting about the coronation, and in the conversations I have had with neighbours and friends, I have been reminded that whilst some people hold strong views on the monarchy (either for or against), many of us do not. Many find themselves ambivalent or believing it's better than other options. My own feelings about watching the coronation, and the vows I take to the King as a member of clergy, are like the reaction I had when my own daughter

asked to join Brownies – yes, that’s fine. But taking a more ambivalent view does not necessarily mean disengaging from theological questions about how we act as Christian citizens.

This year the St Mark’s Logos Bible Study Group is studying the Old Testament Prophets, beginning with Jeremiah, and then looking at the twelve minor prophets. In doing this we have been drawing on the work of the Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann. One of the themes he draws on is the idea of Royal Consciousness. I asked Marc James, who has recently joined the group, and who has been doing some extra reading on this, to reflect on this theme and the coronation.

Marc writes:

By the time you read this it will all be over. I am writing when there are still two days to go and the BBC and ITV news and discussion programmes have reached, I hope, full Coronation saturation point. I have just joined St Mark’s Logos group and have found a book, Walter Brueggemann’s The Prophetic Imagination, really useful in helping me interpret the Coronation.

Some of our media are determined to present a binary choice between monarchy and republicanism as the only authentic response to events. I disagree, this is not a binary choice and either system can be used to oppress people. One of Brueggemann’s key ideas, in this book about biblical prophecy, is what he names ‘Royal Consciousness’. Royal Consciousness, against which Jeremiah and Amos raise prophetic voices, is the entrenched privilege Brueggemann identifies with the reign of King Solomon. Under Solomon a self-perpetuating elite around the court not only controlled resources for their benefit but created a static, official, view of the world which was imposed on everyone else. Key to this imposition is the elite message that Yahweh favours them and, to use my modern paraphrase, ‘this is the only way to run society and have moral order’. Brueggemann’s theme of Royal Consciousness, is not anti-monarchy per se, but explores how the prophets challenged the ordering of society by appealing to the God’s justice.

The prophets in challenging this, are not really focusing on specific aspects of injustice, rather they are questioning this way of seeing and organising society. Royal Consciousness is shared both by

the privileged who benefit, and the rest, who are in varying degrees used to generate resources and whose voices are marginalised. I have found Brueggemann's theme of Royal Consciousness helpful as I reflect on the stories we tell about our society, as we approach the Coronation.

I think our society is socially and politically ordered in ways that benefit wealth holders; these are an increasingly invisible, small, disengaged elite. Most of society I think shares in a form of Royal Consciousness used to create this imbalance. Our Royal Consciousness maintains the widespread belief that how society is currently organised is inevitable as some kind of 'Natural' order.

The history of our monarchy, and its religious ties, enabled a type of Royal Consciousness to be implemented in our culture and society. Our monarchy is presented by established interests as a natural control on the risky political will of party interests, which are democratically expressed opinion. The monarchy is also presented as an exemplar of service; we are to respond by learning and following rules and thus aspire to share in the advantages of living well in society. As I participate in this rule keeping, I receive some benefits. Under this I aspire to hold enough wealth to make my life as free as I can from unwanted change. I own a house, have savings and an occupational pension. I too have a 'castle', I too have a share in Royal Consciousness.

Brueggemann's book analyses the imaginative tools with which the prophets cut through Royal Consciousness. Hope for us lies in their creation of an alternative understanding of God in radical social change with care for individual and community thriving in way that does not exploit each other or the environment. I too can try to access a countermanding imaginative capacity to see my way, and act, at least some of the time, outside Royal Consciousness.

If you would like to read more about this, *Prophetic Imagination* by Walter Brueggemann (2001, Fortress Press) is a good place to start.

Revd Dr Beth Keith and Marc James

PROFILE: RICHARD CARWARDINE



Writing a profile of oneself, as the *Messenger's* editor has invited me to do, is more difficult than it sounds. How to prevent it reading like a shamelessly self-promoting job application? Or, worse still, an obituary? Much better to be interviewed, say over a cup of coffee, so the interrogating journalist can write it up with witty put-downs. But that's not the St Mark's way. The solution? To interview oneself.

Who are you? Richard Carwardine.

That's an unusual name. Where are you from? I'm a Cardiff-born Welshman with the Herefordshire surname of my great-grandfather, who sought his fortune in the Welsh valleys where, over a century later, I grew up. During my childhood, you would commonly hear the boast: 'Lloyd George knew my father.' The Liberal PM was a great hero of the Nonconformist chapels where my family worshipped. He was also a great womanizer, which is why you never heard anyone claim, 'Lloyd George knew my mother.' But my schoolmaster, Congregationalist father *did* know LG and admired his radicalism.

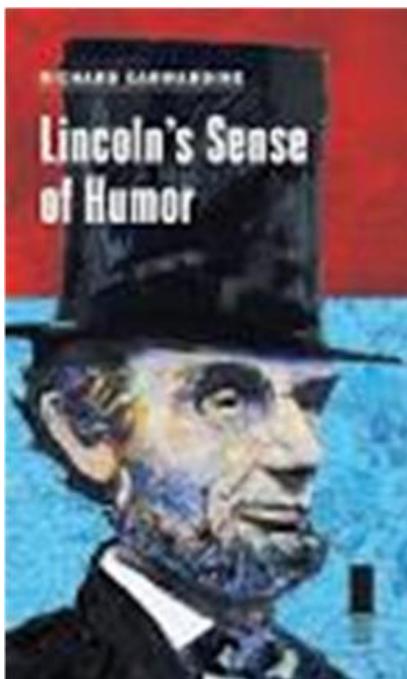
When and why did you come to Sheffield? To take up a lectureship in US history at the University of Sheffield in 1971, three years into my still unfinished Oxford doctorate. I knew nothing about the city, imagining it to be short of clean air and aspirated consonants. I was wrong on both counts. I discovered an outstanding set of colleagues, the most outstanding of whom became my wife. The future was set.

Was that it? Well, no. I made my way up the Sheffield pecking order, to Professor of History and Dean of Arts, teaching and writing on American politics and religion. Then in 2002 I was elected to the Rhodes Professorship of American History at Oxford. (Yes, *that* Rhodes.)

Did Oxford regret the appointment? They might have done. But before they had the chance to rethink, I had the good luck of winning the Lincoln Prize for the year's best book on the American Civil War

era. My political biography of Abraham Lincoln, after hitting the US jury's sweet spot, gave me street cred amid the dreaming spires.

So, was that it, until retirement? Er, no. In 2010 Corpus Christi College, Oxford – my undergraduate college – elected me its President. Curiously, I had played the role of President in a play written for a special College celebration in 1967. Forty-plus years on, life mirrored art. With Linda's help, I presided over the College's 400th anniversary celebration of the King James Bible (1611), whose translators included a group under the Corpus president of the time; and later over preparations for Corpus's 500th anniversary in 2017.



What next? A long overdue book on religion and the American Civil War. *Righteous Strife: Religious Nationalism in Abraham Lincoln's Union* (New York: Knopf 2024).

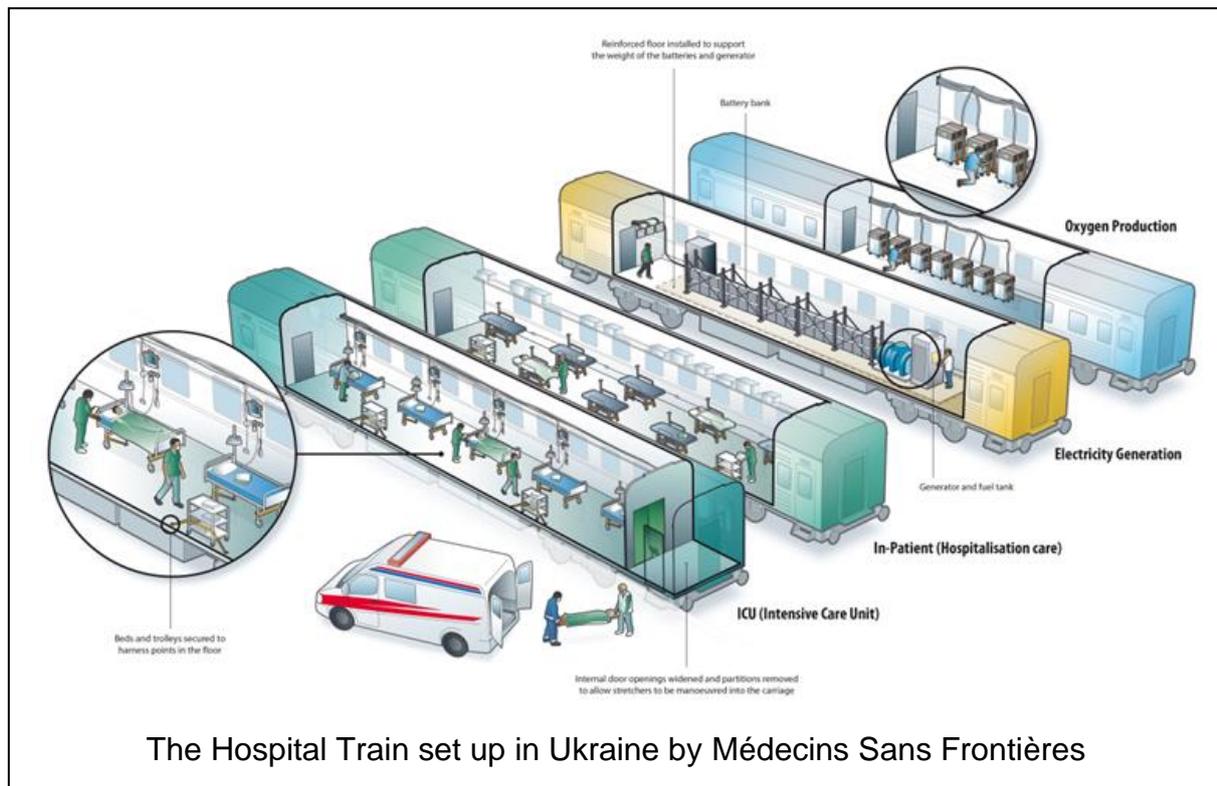
What have been your most memorable American experiences? Dodging tear gas during Berkeley campus riots in 1970. Driving across the US with Linda in 1975. Turning down a White House meeting with President George W. Bush. Accepting the state of Illinois' highest honour, *The Order of Lincoln* (thanks to my pal Governor Rod Blagojevich, later imprisoned for taking bribes).

So, Lincoln is your hero? Yes, but no more than Shakespeare.

Why Shakespeare? Acting has been an important to me. After performing on stage and film with Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor in the 1960s, I recognized I could do little more to advance their careers. They thanked me when I told them they would have to fend for themselves. As a co-founder of the Abbey Shakespeare Players at St Dogmaels, a Pembrokeshire village with Benedictine ruins, I have played many Shakespearean roles, ranging from Benedick, Malvolio and Bottom to Lear, Prospero, Richard III and, most recently, Cardinal Wolsey. But my biggest role has been playing God in *Noyes' Fludde* at St. Mark's.

Richard Carwardine

CAN ANY GOOD COME FROM WAR?



Clearly Putin's invasion of Ukraine, driven by a deluded desire to return to a greater Imperial Russia by seizing territory, has caused immense loss of life, injury, suffering and displacement, let alone huge material damage. Yet some good things have also happened.

Firstly there has been a realisation that, having stood by while Crimea was seized, and later parts of Donetsk and Luhansk, Putin would, like Hitler, not be appeased by shrugging our shoulders to territorial gains by military force. Our inaction rewarded his illegal 'annexations', encouraging further expansions. If not stopped he would continue. This has led to united action by many nations in support of Ukraine in its need to resist aggression. One of Putin's aims was to curb the expansion of NATO but this has backfired, leading to greater unity and the application of more states to join the defensive alliance. It has also led to more support for the EU amongst member states, seeing it as a bulwark for democracy. It also sends a signal to other states that might have been considering similar military territorial expansions.

Secondly it has led to an examination of energy sources. Not only is it foolish to depend on energy imports from potentially hostile states, but also a realisation that renewable sources offer more independence and cheaper energy, let alone the critical importance of cutting CO₂ emissions by reducing fossil fuel burning. Indeed 2022 saw a 29% increase in renewable sources

over 2021, but despite this the International Energy Agency (IEA) states we are still on too low a path to meet 2050 goals – it is only half what is needed to reach zero emissions. ‘Renewable energy overall will become the largest source of global electricity generation by early 2025, and the world will add twice as much renewable capacity from 2022 to 2027 as in the previous five years.’ And the Financial Times writes, ‘Solar power is undergoing a boom as the energy crisis drives a shift to renewable energy and is expected to surpass coal power by 2027.’ But we must continue doing all we can individually and collectively to continue cutting carbon and keep pressing our government to take determined co-ordinated action: encouragingly, the latest IEA report forecasts that renewable electricity growth will accelerate faster than ever. Within five years, its total capacity is likely to exceed 4,800GW – or more than 60 per cent above 2020 levels, and the equivalent of all current global fossil fuel and nuclear capacity combined.

Thirdly there has been a huge response by humanitarian and other agencies, helped by donations and crowdfunding, to give aid to Ukraine. For example Médecins Sans Frontières (<https://msf.org.uk/>), as well as running mobile clinics in previously Russian occupied areas, has set up a hospital train with intensive care and inpatient carriages for evacuating patients from near the front lines. Many other existing and new organisations help with supporting reporting by Ukrainian media organisations driven from their bases (<https://2402.org/> and <https://holod.media/en/>), with supplying equipment to the Ukrainian forces e.g. humanitarian aid, surveillance drones, night sights (<https://prytulafoundation.org/en/>), or anti-drone systems (<https://u24.gov.ua/shahedhunter>), and many more.

Fourthly, as with all disasters, there has been an outpouring of individual compassion and assistance, from people opening their homes to refugees to those themselves taking aid into Ukraine or helping evacuate disabled citizens, and in some cases losing their life in the process.

So although as with any war there are brutal regimes very willing to inflict hurt and damage in furtherance of their misguided aims, good responses are called forth. It can be seen in terms of evil versus good; there are times when the other cheek cannot be turned and force must be used to battle the forces of evil.

Michael Miller

Michael adds: A worthwhile charity set up by pharmacists and linked to CAFOD is: <https://medicinstoukraine.com>.

60 YEARS OF ST MARK'S NEW CHURCH

The celebrations of St Mark's Diamond Anniversary got off to a splendid start with the Sponsored Swim at King Edward's Swimming Pool when, through a combined effort, no fewer than a total of 28km (1,032 lengths of the pool) were swum. At least £200 was raised as a result. Special thanks must be given to Sandra and the counting team along with Briony who co-ordinated the catering team. This was followed by an excellent Chinese and Wine evening organised jointly by Mark and Emily Ansell and Gerry's Bakery, Walkley.

The play written and produced by David Price entitled *Damned Bad Place, Sheffield* was an enormous success and coverage of this is contained on other pages. This event also raised something in the order of £1,000, split equally between St. Mark's and Upper Chapel, Norfolk Street.

By the time this edition is published it is likely that the photo competition will be drawing to a close and be on display in church or at the Picnic on the Green where all kinds of things will be happening (see the Church website) or notice board in Church.

Rob Wilks

ST MARK'S CHEESE AND WINE EVENING



The cheese and wine tasting

Photo: Mark Ansell

DAMNED BAD PLACE, SHEFFIELD



A group of dissidents: Joseph Mather (Joe Forde), Blind Stephen (David Willington and William Broadhead (Dez Martin).

This play was written and produced by David Price, based on the words uttered by George III in a meeting between a young girl and her nanny (ably played by Victoria Wassall and Naomi Wassall). At that time in 1793 Sheffield was looked on as a city that lay under a pall of smoke and had few attributes of other places of distinction within the kingdom that George reigned over.

The central character Joseph Gales (played by Richard Carwardine) was a strong Unitarian and attended the Upper Chapel, where the performance of this play took place. His wife Winifred Gales (Linda Kirk) set the scene at the outset aptly speaking from the centrally positioned pulpit. As Unitarians she and her husband were both keen to see political reform, even if it needed similar action to that seen in the recent French Revolution. There was considerable unrest among industrial workers at that time, encouraged by the writings of Joseph Gales in his radical newspaper the Sheffield Register, which published tracts by reformers such as Thomas Paine.



A nurse (Naomi Wassall) and child encounter King George III (David Price) on Weymouth Beach.

The Sheffield Register came across as distinctly against some of the Government reforms of the day such as the Enclosures Act. Gales, along with assistance from his Senior Printer (Jane Padget) and to a lesser extent the Rev. Joseph Evans, Minister of the Upper Chapel (played by Philip Booth) was against these reforms and reported on them in the Sheffield Register.

Naturally there was tension between the Unitarians and the established Anglican Church, led by the Revd. James Wilkinson (played by Revd. John

Schofield!). The vicarage was Broom Hall, and a hayrick there was set on fire as a form of demonstration. At this point in the play the audience was encouraged to join in as part of the riots triggered by the Enclosures Act, and had to shout out slogans including "Burn down Broom Hall".



Joseph and Winifred Gales with Revd Joseph Evans, Minister at Upper Chapel (Philip Booth).

The audience was invited to take part again in a riot outside the Cutlers' Hall after the Royal Proclamation of George 3rd was declared and shouted slogans such as "God Save great Thomas Paine". Joseph Gales had published the first cheap edition of Thomas Paine's "Rights of Man".

Eventually troops came to arrest Gales, who had become deeply involved in Sheffield's campaign for parliamentary reform, and who had tried to

order pikes (for self-protection), and he fled to Hamburg. Winifred Gales remained behind to sell the Sheffield Register to James Montgomery (Anne Padget) who promised to look after all those whom Gales had tried to help. Winifred Gales finally travelled to be reunited with her husband and they settled in America.



The play ended with the audience invited to sing Ebenezer Elliott's People's Anthem. The play had given the audience a fascinating insight into some of the struggles of Sheffield's working class and the support they got from the Unitarians.

Shelagh Marston

Letitia, a young girl condemned to the pillory by James Wilkinson, Vicar of Sheffield.



Colonel Athorpe, a Magistrate (Frances Gray), and James Wilkinson (John Schofield) interrogate Winifred Gales.

THE HOME DONATIONS COMMITTEE



It's at this time of year that the Home Donations Committee starts to meet and discuss the charities we gave to last year and those we might give to this year. We aim to direct our giving so we have an impact on the causes of social injustice in Sheffield and I wanted to highlight one of the charities we support to this end. We know that there is a bottle neck in getting destitute asylum seekers good legal advice and the impact is huge when an asylum seeker is able to submit an asylum application and access increased support as well as getting secure status in the UK. South Yorkshire Refugee Law and Justice (SYRLJ) provide exactly this legal advice in Sheffield. Here's an excerpt from their recent letter to supporters.

The past year has been a very exciting and positive one for SYRLJ, set strangely against a backdrop of an increasingly scary and difficult landscape for those in our field of work. From the passing of the Nationality and Borders Act – which makes life for those who seek sanctuary in the UK even more difficult than it already was – to the ongoing cost of living crisis and the effects of this on the most marginalised in society, the external situation feels very bleak. We have therefore been focusing on strengthening our organisation and our service so that we can offer hope and strength to those we work with in the months and years to come.

In February we recruited our new Legal Manager who has been a real asset to the team, transforming our legal service and bringing in new systems and processes to ensure the work we do for our clients is of the highest possible standard.

Since April 2022 we have provided substantive legal representation to 65 people, one off legal advice to 64 people and we have submitted 25

immigration applications, enabling these clients to exit destitution and access more support. We have secured grants of status in the UK for 11 of these clients which means they can now finally move on with their lives and with being part of our community without the insecurity and hardship they have faced for so many years.

This is just one of the charities we support last year. At the end of 2022 we donated the following:

£1975 to Citizens Advice Sheffield

£1500 to S2 foodbank

£500 to S6 foodbank

£1000 to the Ben's Centre

£1000 to Food Works

£1500 to South Yorkshire Refugee Law and Justice

£1000 to Sheffield Churches Council for Community Care

£1000 to Carers Centre hardship fund

£1000 to Broomhall Girls group

£500 to Broomhall Centre

£25 to Church Action on Poverty membership

The home donations committee is made up of David Price, Dez Martin, Rosie Hunt, Donna Bawden and Chris Ware. We welcome new members of the committee; please email chrispjw@hotmail.com to find out more.

Chris Ware



JOHN SCHOFIELD WRITES:

This year sees the golden jubilee of my ordination as a priest, and it's something I would like to mark with you.

Even though my priestly ministry has been somewhat hidden for more than a decade, I have not ceased to be – or know myself to be – a priest. In recent years I have continued to follow the direction that my ministry took during the 1980s when I started working with groups and individuals in the processes of ministerial development and formation. First it was in-service training (continuing ministerial education and development); latterly in training and forming people in preparation for authorised ministry.

And here, through my involvement in preparing Lent courses, in facilitating the Study and Learning Group, in writing liturgical texts as well as in accompanying a number of individuals on their spiritual and formational journeys, I have been fortunate enough to continue to exercise this priestly ministry of Christian formation.

On Sunday, 20 August I hope that many of you will be able to join me (and members of my family) at the parish Eucharist where we will be able to give thanks for our ministries as members of St Mark's – as well as for God's calling to me to be a priest these 50 years. I shall not be presiding, but shall be acting as the deacon while Sue presides.

Over the years one of the people who has particularly supported me when things were rocky and rejoiced with me when they were better is David Schlafer. David is a teacher of homiletics whom I first met when he led some preaching courses in this country in the mid 90s. David will be preaching at the service on 20 August, but as he lives near Washington DC he will record his sermon for us and we will share it through our screen (shades of Mark Oakley at the parish weekend last year!). A written version of the sermon, will of course, be available on the website.

It has been a privilege to be among you these past eleven years. Thank you for accompanying and supporting me as I have lived out my priestly ministry quietly, behind the scenes, but very positively. I can truly say with the Psalmist: The share that has fallen to me is in pleasant places.

Thanks be to God for God's inestimable gifts.

John

THE LUNCH CLUB AT CHRIST CHURCH, PITSMOOR



Christmas lunch at Pitsmoor Lunch Club.

*Christ Church, Pitsmoor, is in the same Deanery as St. Mark's Church and, coincidentally, for the last fourteen years I have volunteered at the Lunch Club, where they have made me most welcome. I invited the Lay Reader at Christ Church **Nick Edmondson**, to talk about the Club. – **Rob Wilks***

WHY DO A LUNCH CLUB?

The main activity of the Lunch Club is to get people out more (or at all), and to meet new people. There's opportunity to help (especially in welcoming, and practical tasks) and to develop confidence to take on roles. Whatever difficulties and disabilities we live with, everyone's contribution is valued, and we remember that 'we are all a bit wonky, one way or another!' There are no passengers.

We hold a volunteer meeting once or twice a year. Kevin (who is partially sighted, not that you might notice it) keeps the accounts superbly, and says, 'Lunch Club is a bit like Jesus feeding 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 small fishes, and of all the 5 jobs in my working life, the work I do (for nothing) at the Lunch Club is the most rewarding. Thanks are due to all volunteers, whose commitment and good will have kept the Lunch Club going!'

There's demand for bingo and singing at times (from *Amazing Grace* to *You Sexy Thing*). Special events for Platinum Jubilee, and the annual Christmas Party brought record numbers (41 and 55) including four generations of several families.

IMPACT ON MEMBERS

'My Dad has ABSOLUTELY loved this Lunch Club. Thank you!' someone said. Mutual support has helped members cope with loss in caring relationships when living with dementia and mental and sensory frailty. Broken sleep, then separation, one's partner going into a care home, and later dying, are all so hard to accept. The predictable pattern of meeting weekly, among supportive friends, gives solace. A Curate and pastoral support leader, Sara, once said, 'The Lunch Club gives a 'safe space' where people can get out to socialize who would otherwise remain at home.' Transport is extremely important for this. Getting out after bereavement needs so much bravery when you are aware that you are in a space where you don't necessarily have to be. Ok – but it can be equally important to get out and have some fun for a bit.

CHALLENGES

Sometimes we could not run Lunch Club. There was an arson attack on the church, a family of mice came to stay on one occasion, our lift broke down (the mechanical lift enables us to get from the church to the Welcome Centre, where luncheon club is usually held) and February's heavy snowfall presented something of a challenge. Covid quite understandably disrupted Lunch Club from March, 2020. Collaboration between Sheffield Council, Sheffield Community Contact Tracers and among many local Community Groups, helped us gain confidence to restart in September, 2021, adopt sensible precautions by consensus, protect those more cautious, and get proper NHS tests when needed.

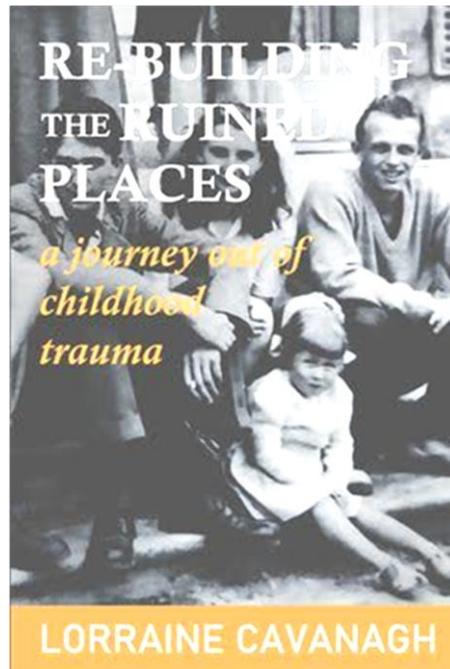
COST of LIVING

Members contribution to transport costs which went up to £2.50 in Sept 2022. The £3.00 charge per meal remains the same, thanks to tirelessly careful shopping. We economised with energy costs by using the smaller Welcome Centre hall, and the Church Council have, generously, not yet passed on any request for increased rent. Sheffield Council support us well with their grant as always.

Nick Edmondson

BOOK REVIEW:

Rebuilding the Ruined Places: A Journey out of Childhood Trauma by Lorraine Cavanagh*



Lorraine Cavanagh is an Anglican theologian, writer and priest. In this book she explores memories of her childhood; an upbringing that – although relatively affluent – was often abusive, traumatic and painful, and the ways that it has since featured in her journey into adulthood and Christian enlightenment. Writing in her ‘third age’, it is a journey that has been long, complex, often painful, but ultimately cathartic and forgiving, as she discovers the ways in which Christ has worked in her life to enable her to assimilate these events on an emotional and, ultimately, on a spiritual level.

Lorraine’s Christian faith is one that is intellectually informed, liberal and questioning, though this book is not a study in theology on an academic level; rather, her goal is to make her musings/reflections accessible to the non-specialist. She rails against theological interpretations that engender feelings of guilt, display doctrinal rigidity, or require conformity or compliance to a set of rules in order to be eligible for salvation, whether Catholic or Evangelical. Her Christian faith is more of a personal journey of self-discovery aided by a God that she can cry out to; a God that she can conceptualise in her own way, and not in ways that others have tried to do for her. Her book will appeal to all those who approach faith in that way.

A copy is in the Church library.

Joe Forde

*Ameo Books, 2022

REFLECTIONS ON RETIREMENT (so far!)



One of the allotments at the top of Hagg Hill

It's hard to believe that I've been retired for over a year now. When we were 60 in 2019, my wife retired, so after encouragement I agreed to go halfway between then and our normal retirement age of 66 (!).

So, what would I do in place of the long hours in civil engineering contracting, including a lot of time lodging away from home? Luckily the Covid crisis meant that I spent the last couple of years at home continuously, so at least I was now used to that!

Thankfully a good friend in the congregation on the Easter weekend asked me if I'd like to join his allotment society that week, as I had just retired. I jumped at the chance; after all this was exactly the thing people are supposed to do when they retire, wasn't it?! Within two days I was there and 'digging it'. The society has two plots at the top of Hagg Hill, shared by 15 people. It has been established for over a decade, and all is very neatly maintained. People keep asking, 'What do you grow?' What don't we grow? You name it we grow it. Yes, all the usual stuff from root crops to brassicas, salad crops, berries, rhubarb and even a vine!

However, I was warned of a rule of the allotments, and wondered for a moment what this onerous requirement might be... It was that no fruit trees can be planted there. This is a Sheffield City Council rule, in place for some

unfathomable reason best known to themselves. So, I looked around me and saw about 8 mature fruit trees in full blossom! I can only assume they pre-date the rule... Needless to say, we had a bumper crop of apples, pears and plums in the autumn.

The other members are a decent crowd with a few characters amongst them, so I find I can fit in all right. I usually go there on Tuesdays, but some go on Fridays or the weekends. We usually stay on after working the plot for a chat and a laugh over a cuppa and a sandwich. It's surprising what dry weather we've had on a year of Tuesdays; I think we've only been rained off twice and snowed off once.

The Hagg Hill Organic Allotment Society, as we are known, are planning on expanding by taking on new members and another plot, for which we recently joined a council waiting list. However, we mustn't hold our breath whilst waiting; the list is 5 to 6 years long! Give me a call sometime in the future if you remember or are interested by then...

Actually, what I really intended to do on retirement was get involved with a bit of 'light' civil engineering, say helping to reconstruct a preserved railway. After all, more than half my career had been in railway project engineering management, mainly for Network Rail and Transport for London. However, when I looked around at the 'heritage railways' in our region, I realised they were restoring rolling stock, but not so much extending their railways. So, I looked at other opportunities and thought about canal restoration.



Cap'n Martin Godley

I remembered the Chesterfield Canal from cycling on the towpath in previous years. After a trip out on one of their narrow boats in pouring rain, my wife and I were so impressed, we joined the Chesterfield Canal Trust (CCT). On the restoration side, they have rebuilt some 5½ miles of canal from Chesterfield, but have 8½ miles to go, including about 14 locks and a tunnel that collapsed in 1907, which is now under the M1 motorway. A few challenges then!

When I joined, someone asked that as well as those works, would I be interested in crewing on their boats and taking a skipper's course in May? I had often thought, if I ever got rich, something I'd like to buy would be a



The trip boat *Madeline* at Staveley Town Loch

narrow boat and explore the inland waterways of our country. Anyway, it never happened, so I never did! At least this way I get to operate someone else's boat as much as I like. On completing the skippers' course, I received a certificate permitting me to take up to 12 passengers on board a barge. This document is reputed to be almost identical to those held by Chesterfield taxi drivers, but for the words 'Narrow Boat' in place of 'Hackney Carriage'!

The CCT operates 4 trip boats, two on each side of the unreconstructed section. Charters are also available. These boats are normally at Tapton, Hollingwood, Worksop and Ranby. The whole canal was originally about 45 miles long, the eastern part is still connected to the rest of the network via the tidal River Trent at the village of West Stockwith, near Gainsborough. Look out for Robbie Cummings' *Canal Diaries* new trip from Sheffield via the South Yorkshire navigation and River Trent onto the Chesterfield Canal on BBC4. There are numerous CCT roles for volunteers, including maintenance, gardening, running a shop at the Hollingwood Hub and of course, joining the restoration works team and operating the trip boats and locks, etc. There are Festivals in the summer to get involved with too.

Back at St Mark's, I am carrying on helping the Fabric and Finance Committee as usual, but have also been persuaded to join the Environment Group and co-opted on to the PCC too. It looks like I won't get bored in retirement, then!

Martin Godley

WHO'S WHO

Operations Coordinator	Zoë Varcoe	office@stmarkssheffield.co.uk
Church Office		0114 266 3613
Vicar	Rev. Sue Hammersley	sue@stmarkssheffield.co.uk
		0114 266 0260 / 07904 284853
Assistant Priest & Pastoral Care Lead	Rev. Shan Rush	shan@stmarkssheffield.co.uk
		07598 156817
Liberal Theologian	Rev. Dr Beth Keith	beth@stmarkssheffield.co.uk
Childrens & Families Worker	Hannah Jones	childrensworker@stmarkssheffield.co.uk
Churchwardens	James Oliver	jamesoliver123@gmail.com
	Dilys Noble	dilysnoble@hotmail.co.uk
Director of Music	David Willington	music@stmarkssheffield.co.uk
Caretaker	Tim Moore	caretaker@stmarkssheffield.co.uk
		07483 332087
Readers	Anne Padget	07736 52777
	Jonathan Williamson	office@stmarkssheffield.co.uk
Transport Coordinator	Briony Tayler	briony@professor3.f9.co.uk
	Doreen Godden	office@stmarkssheffield.co.uk
Honorary Staff	Rev. Dr. Michael Bayley	0114 258 5248
	Rev. Dr. Mark Newitt	0114 230 4586
Lunch club	Rosalind Rogerson	0114 268 1426
Treasurer	David Armstrong	david.treasurer3@gmail.com
Library Team	Maureen Bownas	0114 230 2757
	Pauline Miller	0114 258 3678
Gift Aid Secretary	Tom Cottrell	office@stmarkssheffield.co.uk
Flowers	Mary-Jane Ryder	0114 230 3242
Messenger Editors	Frances Gray & Shan Rush	grayfrances71@gmail.com
Safeguarding Team:		
Parish Safeguarding Officer	Duncan Lennox	0114 266 9365
Safeguarding Administrator	Sarah Jenkins	safeguarding.stmarkssheffield@gmail.com
Domestic Abuse Officer	Jane Padget	07921 863281
Sheffield Diocese Safeguarding		https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/safeguarding

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