

# MARK'S MESSENGER



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

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Photo Marco-Blazevic

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## All Change?



Photo by Chris Lawton

I suspect that when some of us hear the word ‘change’ in relation to church, lines from Henry Francis Lyte’s well-known hymn, *Abide with me*, come to mind: ‘Change and decay in all around I see; O thou who changest not, abide with me.’ Lines that repay closer attention.

Although Lyte doesn’t clarify the relationship between ‘change’ and ‘decay,’ their proximity invites us to question one of the broadly held assumptions of modernity, namely that ‘change *is* progress.’ On reflection, this is, at best, an oversimplification as any number of examples illustrate. Consider, for instance, the current development of Artificial Intelligence which may well prove to be both technological progress (computers are now able to perform tasks they couldn’t before) and societal regress (as a consequence, many more people will lose their jobs and the future of humanity may even be in doubt).

Yet, despite its ambivalent complexion, paradoxically, change is one of the few constants in life – not least in church life, where it can often prove controversial. Think of the introduction of new liturgies or technological innovations or safeguarding procedures or the prospect of reordering the interior and removing the pews!

Some potential areas of change in church life are particularly problematic because they relate to doctrinal matters that, historically, have been deemed non-negotiable. One such area currently exercising many denominations, including the Church of England, is the nature of marriage and, in particular, whether heterosexuality is a defining characteristic and, with it, the potential for procreativity. As things stand at the time of writing, the official CofE line is that, in addition to being life-long and exclusive, marriage can only be entered into by a man and a woman.

However, whilst upholding a traditional understanding of marriage, one of the fruits of the *Living in Love and Faith* consultation and discernment process is recognition of 'stable, faithful relationships between same-sex couples' and liturgical provision for 'giving thanks for their faithfulness and their fruitfulness in service of God and neighbour,' which extends to blessing such relationships (*LiLF Pastoral Guidance*, version 1).

Without wishing to dive into this particular issue, it is worth noting that the CofE's doctrine of marriage *has* changed through time. *The Convocations of Canterbury and York* affirmed in 1938 that marriage is 'indissoluble save by death,' whilst 'Further Marriage' was introduced in 2002 with the acknowledgement that 'some marriages regrettably do fail... here are exceptional circumstances in which a divorced person may be married in church during the lifetime of a former spouse.' (General Synod, 2002). So much for indissolubility!

For what it's worth, I think Jesus offers us a guiding principle when it comes to divinely-ordained institutions when, commenting on Sabbath observance, he clarifies, 'The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath' (Mark 2.27, NRSVA). That is to say, the Sabbath and the like are 'means' not 'ends,' serving a higher purpose, human flourishing. Wouldn't marriage as a source of human flourishing be extended if it was available to same-sex stable, faithful relationships as well as to their heterosexual counterparts?

Returning to Lyte's *Abide with me*, God is invoked as one 'who changest not,' which raises an important theological question. Although divine immutability (God's changelessness) is not explicitly mentioned in the great ecumenical creeds, it is implied – as it is in the first Article of Religion, the constituting document of the Church of England: 'There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions.'

Divine immutability may sound like theological speculation with little practical application, but the issue gained fresh pertinence in the World War II, in particular,

regarding the mass extermination of Jews and other minorities. Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel's account of the lynching of a young boy during his incarceration at Auschwitz expresses the protest with harrowing poignancy. As prisoners compelled to witness the execution filed passed the boy's writhing, tortured body, hanging from the gallows, Wiesel hears one of his comrades inquire, 'Where is God now?' and another respond, 'Here he is, he's hanging here on the gallows' (*Night*, 77).



Photo Jon Sailor

This answer, one assumes, is intentionally ambiguous as, in the midst of unconscionable brutality and evil, with searing clarity, God placed in the dock, it pronounces judgement on God's silence – either you are dead (immutable, incapable or unwilling to respond) or you are vulnerable (mutable, suffering with, sharing the pain). From a cell in Tegel Military Prison, awaiting trial and execution for his role in the failed execution attempt on Adolf Hitler,

theologian and Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer finds in Christ's Passion the only viable Christian verdict: 'God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us ... only the suffering God can help' (*Letters and Papers from Prison*, 360-61).

***Ian Wallis***

## **EVERYTHING CHANGES**

Everything changes. You can make  
A fresh start with your final breath.  
But what has happened has happened. And the water  
You once poured into the wine cannot be  
Drained off again.

What has happened has happened. And the water  
You once poured into the wine cannot be  
Drained off again, but  
Everything changes. You can make  
A fresh start with your final breath.

***Bertolt Brecht*** 1898-1956

## JEWISH SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS

Israel has the right of self-defence and the attack on civilians on the 7<sup>th</sup> October is a justifiably internationally condemned act, a Pogrom. Since October 7<sup>th</sup> 2023 the Israeli government has used its forces in Gaza ostensibly to destroy Hamas, in so doing bringing destruction on its Palestinian population, unsurpassed in scope and duration in Israel's short history.

We have also seen Israel Jews, including hostage families, calling for a ceasefire. In the UK Robert Cohen<sup>1</sup> has blogged on the increasing opposition to the war amongst British Jews. I have long thought that Israeli and wider Jewish opposition to Israeli government policy and actions and the war can provide non-Jews with valuable alternative Jewish perspectives on how Jews might live in relation to Palestinians and Israel's neighbouring states.

Jewish opposition to Israeli government actions comes from within the Israeli and wider Jewish community; this helps counter the claim that criticism of Israel while it is at war is Anti-Semitic. The fact that Jewish voices are challenging Israeli state actions even in wartime is significant. They are responding to a moral imperative created by well-founded evidence against a state which has claimed the mantle of Jewish identity.

Evidence assessed by the International Criminal Court<sup>2</sup> led the ICC to an outline statement condemning Israeli government, as well as Hamas actions. The International Court of Justice, after probably its longest ever investigation, found in 2024 that Israel's treatment of Palestinians is clearly contravening the international rules-based order.

Israeli Jewish opposition to its government's treatment of Palestinians comes from both secular and religious communities<sup>1</sup>. There is in-depth research and criticism of the Israeli state from within a vibrant active Human Rights community in Israel. This small but a powerful community is made up a wide variety of groups, from medics to IDF veterans<sup>2</sup>. The Israeli NGO B'T Selem<sup>1</sup> was the first NGO to provide evidence of Israeli state Apartheid policy; its report condemns Israeli government treatment of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

Opposition voices come from within a continuum of support for a two-state solution; from a Jewish state plus a Palestinian state on the one hand, to a more radical change with Jews disavowing an ethnically separate 'Jewish' State altogether for a shared multi-ethnic future.

British Jewish voices can offer critiques of Israeli government actions from the imperative of Judaism itself; the musician Joseph Finlay for example gives



some good ethical (and I would say theological) reasons for British Jews to speak out<sup>3</sup>. Seeking Jewish perspectives helps counter the dangerous stereotype that British support for Israeli government war conduct is completely solid<sup>1</sup>. The perspective of the Labour Party on Israel can be illuminated by looking at Jewish Voice for Labour, a left anti-Zionist group supporting Labour<sup>1</sup>.

Any overview of the Jewish opposition voice to Israeli government policy towards Palestinians, including those in Gaza, must include both religious and secular opposition groups. Groups with a party allegiance that support a broad approach to Human Rights for Palestinians should be included. I would include groups that recognised the international right of resistance of Palestinians but both personally and as a Sabeel-Kairos UK member<sup>1</sup> I support *un-armed active resistance* for Palestinian rights. This form of non-lethal direct action has been applied effectively in Palestine as it was in South Africa.

I am wary of publicising any groups that call for a settlement without calling for a structural change that recognises Palestinians and their right to self-determination. More liberal treatment of Palestinians under the existing order helps no one.

So why am I passionate about making Jewish voices known? I am not a Jew though the perspective of Jews was important in my childhood; one family member had beliefs we would today label Christian Zionist. I now reflect that it has been the intellectual output of four Jews expressing a thirst for justice as Jews for Palestinians that has encouraged me to study Zionism and Palestinian and Israeli history. They are; Robert Cohen, Ilan Pappé, Jeff Halper and Paul<sup>1</sup>.

If, like most *Messenger* readers, you are reading this online, the links in the footnotes will carry you to a series of useful resources. I hope to add to these in due course

**Marc James**

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<sup>1</sup>**Robert Cohen** has just finished a PhD looking at British Jewish views on Zionism (no published details yet). Robert is an anti-Zionist religious Jew who was director of Communications for the Coop. Robert has spoken in Sheffield a number of times at PSC events. Blog <https://micahsparadigmshift.blogspot.com/>. <sup>2</sup>**Ilan Pappé** is an Israeli Jewish academic, a professor of Middle East history at Exeter University. One of the New Historians in Israeli history he is a key writer on the historical arc of contemporary Zionism. Pappé is active on the left in the UK. <https://experts.exeter.ac.uk/545-ilan-pappe>. <sup>3</sup>Pappé has spoken at PSC Sheffield events. **Jeff Halper** the American Israeli founder and chair of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. This organisation opposes through legal action and disrupts punishment house demolitions of Palestinian which happen widely including to aid Settlers. <https://icahd.org/>. Jeff spoke at an event at Christ Church Pitsmoor. No not that one! **Paul** is a local campaigner with Sheffield PSC, an ex-academic and published author on the history of the relationship of the Labour Party with Israel. Paul in person is generous with his knowledge and attention to our occasional conversations; he is the son of Jewish emigrants from Hungary.

## BE THE CHANGE: WHERE NEXT AFTER THE GOLD?



St Mark's achieved our Eco Church Gold award in the summer of 2023 after a lot of work but having given no thought to what came after. We were not left in doubt for long – Bishop Graham, the Lead Bishop for the Environment, wrote to us as follows:

“With plans for the future having vision and ambition, all firmly eco-orientated, please also be apostles for caring for God's creation so that other church communities might be encouraged, challenged and walk this vital journey as well.”

So we sat down to figure out how this might look.

I became the Diocesan Eco Church champion – available to support any church that wants a bit of help.

Martin Godley and I trained as Eco Church Gold assessors – we do site visits on churches that have submitted their Gold applications, meet their teams and hear how they have applied Eco Church to their local context. We have been to Belper, Calverton and Barrowby parish churches, all of which are now the first Gold churches in their respective dioceses. And will hopefully be supporting their local churches in similar ways.

David Tayler attends Diocesan events to advise churches on some of the techie aspects of moving their buildings towards Net Zero and has hosted folk keen to see what we are doing at St Mark's.

Philip Booth organises our Heritage Open Days annually in Sept with a strong Eco Church theme included alongside the historic context.

Michael Bayley keeps us focused on the need to campaign and voice our Christian values.

Meanwhile, back at base, we are working to maintain our Gold status in all areas of the programme as we can't support others unless we continue to 'walk the walk' ourselves. The programme has been updated this year and is more demanding, so we have work to do to keep up. This involves our worship leaders, our prayer team, our music, flowers, library, catering, property and finance – you name it – all of us. Environment Group meets monthly to keep us focused and plan things.



Greetings from the Eco Church Team at St Wilfred's, Calverton



The 'Bug Church' made by the team at St Wilfred's





Here are some of us on the Broomhill Library monthly litter pick.

Our lounge and upper room are fully triple glazed now — I'm sure we will feel the benefit this winter. The next phase is to triple glaze more of the main worship area. And August sees the installation of state-of-the-art infra-red heating in the upper hall to replace our failing gas boiler. It will work on the principle 'heat the people not the space' and will be in place for the cooler days of autumn.

The progress we have been able to make encourages us and others that it is possible to address the climate and nature emergencies in practical ways. We are thankful for all the support we are shown from the wider congregation.

***Margaret Ainger, Environment Group.***

## ON DOING SOMETHING TO HELP CHANGE MINDS



Ann Pettifor

How did it come about that we invited Ann Pettifor to come and talk at Saint Marks? In June a group of us, who had once been a Lent group and just kept going, met to talk about the difficult financial position faced by the present government and its various responses. David Price wrote a paper following on from Rachel Reeves's Spring Statement which provided a helpful intellectual framework for the conviction we instinctively shared, which was that their approach was timid, inadequate, obsessed with the idea of economic growth and not likely to improve the lot of the world's poorest. As a conclusion it might have been correct but it also reinforced the frustration we had started with. We wanted to do something.

Then I had the idea that we could offer people a chance to be reprogrammed to think about money in a more sensible and humane way. Ann Pettifor is someone whose ideas always make sense to me at a really basic level.

complex For example in her book *The Case for the Green New Deal* she quotes a paradigm that Keynes promoted way back in 1933 in the *Yale Journal* just a few months after the launch of Roosevelt's New Deal. In an essay entitled 'National Self-Sufficiency', he set out the terms of a sustainable manifesto for a steady state economy. He began by sympathising with those "Who would minimise, rather than with those who would maximise, *economic entanglement* among nations. Ideas, knowledge, science, hospitality, travel -these are the things which should of their nature be international. But let goods be *homespun* wherever it is reasonably and and conveniently possible, and, above all, let finance be primarily national." (p 74)

In her provocatively titled *The Production of Money: How to Break the Power of Bankers* (2017), Ann Pettifor challenges us all: "What is to be done ... to stabilise the global financial system and restore employment, political stability and social justice? Firstly, *we need wider public understanding of where money comes from and how the financial system operates.*" ( p 9) and we need to be informed by someone capable of delivering huge dollops of common sense. Unfortunately common sense is not common and we are wrapped up in such a financial entanglement that it needs very clear thinking and political determination to get us out of it. This is something which Ann Pettifor can help us to do. Hopefully you have signed up to listen to her at St Mark's. You can also look at Ann's website, <https://www.annpettifor.com>, and find out how to access her regular newsletter.

Ann was also one of the driving forces behind PRIME (Policy Research In Macroeconomics, website: <https://primeeconomics.org>.) Here you can read articles by a group of people who share Ann's conviction that "'mainstream" economic theory has proved of almost no relevance to the ongoing and chronic failure of the global economy and to the gravest threat facing us all: climate change.' The website is dedicated to demystifying economic policy so that ordinary citizens can think for themselves about the ethics of money.

Too many of us have no idea 'where money comes from' – Ann provides a language for us to create a conversation that can lead to change.

**Michael Bayley**



## KEEPING MICROPLASTICS OUT OF OUR OCEANS

The wide variety of plastics produced has been of great benefit to humankind but a disaster for the planet, and indeed damaging to our own bodies. World plastic production is about 350 million tonnes p.a., about a



Filter in situ

million tonnes a day, half of it for throwaway single-use items. Sadly the recent UN talks seeking a legally binding agreement on tackling plastic waste collapsed because of resistance from the petrostates that produce the raw materials.

As waste plastic degrades it eventually becomes tiny particles that usually end up in the oceans. As a

Guardian leader stated, “microplastics have been found in placentas, as well as blood and breast milk. While we can't yet be certain of the full impact of the substances, we know that many have been linked to health effects and that foetuses, infants and young children are highly vulnerable. Microplastics have been shown to damage human cells in laboratory experiments, and a review published this month documented how exposure is associated with increased risks of miscarriage, stillbirth, birth defects, impaired lung growth, childhood cancer and fertility problems as an adult.” A grim self-goal for humankind. But you can do something about it.

Four years ago, separately, I and Kathy Harbord subscribed to a British start-up company developing a filter to remove microplastics from the waste water leaving your washing machine on its way to the drain. Waste water from clothes washing is a big source of such pollution into the environment, especially as so many items include synthetic fabrics. This project has now come to fruition so Kathy and I have received our brand new Bosch badged filters at half the cost of the retail price. Numbered 640, mine was among the first 1,000 produced; an environmental trend-setter as ever!





Filter filling with gunk

into the real world. If it wasn't for people like you, dreams would stay dreams. After years of developing Gulp — now the Bosch Microplastic Filter — we're incredibly proud to deliver one of the very first units to you. This innovation marks a significant step toward combating microplastic pollution, and it wouldn't have been possible without your early support.”



Filter with the gunk it collected

This message from Adam Root, Founder & CEO, was in the box: “When I started this journey in 2017, I dreamed of getting to this moment. I founded Matter with a vision to live in a world without microplastic pollution. I knew it would be hard, but I drastically underestimated the highs, the lows and the outright difficulty of taking a product

It was easy to install with the kit provided, it looks good and does the job, winking its green working light and steadily collecting slushy gunk as the waste water is pumped out. We have had to empty it once so far — it does about 20 washes — and the filter is a permanent one not needing replacements. The device has now been licensed to other countries and, as well

as the standalone add-on, Siemens and Bosch will be incorporating them within their new washing machines. It feels good to have been part of this.

***Michael Miller***

## FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRACY: SAMUEL HOLBERRY AND THE SHEFFIELD UPRISING

On 21 June we staged David Price's play *Holberry* in the Upper Chapel, in aid of St Mark's and the chapel. Holberry attempted an uprising in Sheffield to demand the vote in 1839; he was arrested and died in York prison after brutal ill-treatment. He was 27.



Ebenezer Elliott stages a peaceful protest to demand the vote for working men



Samuel Holberry arms and trains Chartists for an uprising.





The local gentry are afraid at the prospect of revolution.



Spies infiltrate Holberry's meeting to betray him to the authorities.



Holberry breaks down as he is forced to abandon the uprising.

***Photos by Manuch and Philip Price.***

## Borders, Refugees, and the Politics of Hostility in Britain



The deaths of refugees in the English Channel are not accidents of fate; they are the foreseeable consequences of deliberate political choices. Britain, a country that is bound by international law to provide protection, has chosen instead to construct a system designed to exclude, punish, and deter those who seek safety. Each life lost in the Channel is a political failure, the result of a border

regime that places sovereignty above humanity.

The **1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees**, to which Britain is a signatory, is clear: anyone fleeing persecution has the right to seek asylum, regardless of how they arrive. The Convention explicitly prohibits penalising refugees for irregular entry if they present themselves to the authorities and request protection. These principles emerged from the devastation of the World War II, when it became clear that the international community must never again turn its back on those in flight (consult <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/about-unhcr/overview/1951-refugee-convention>)

Yet, the British government has worked systematically to erode these obligations. Policies such as the expansion of detention centres, the use of military rhetoric in policing the Channel, and attempts to outsource asylum processing to Rwanda are not only ineffective — they are unlawful and immoral. They create an environment in which safe routes are deliberately closed, forcing desperate people into dangerous crossings. The drownings in the Channel are therefore not a ‘tragedy’ in the abstract sense. They are the predictable outcome of policies that prioritise border spectacle over human life.

**Successive governments have also exploited anti-immigrant sentiment for political gain. By presenting refugees as a ‘crisis’ or a ‘threat’, ministers distract from their own failings in housing, healthcare, and economic policy. Instead of addressing structural inequalities, the government scapegoats asylum seekers — people who arrive with little more than hope of safety. This politics of distraction serves only to deepen divisions while absolving those in power of responsibility.**

The role of **far-right populists** further accelerates this cycle of hostility. Figures such as Nigel Farage have built their political careers on demonising migrants, spreading misinformation, and fuelling fear. His comments about Iranian asylum seekers, in



particular, have been inflammatory and irresponsible, casting doubt on their legitimacy without any basis in fact. Such rhetoric legitimises xenophobia, emboldens extremist groups, and pressures governments to harden their stance. It is not a marginal phenomenon; it has shifted the centre of political debate sharply to the right.

Crucially, the oft-repeated claim that refugees must claim asylum in the ‘first safe country’ is a political invention, not a legal requirement. The Geneva Convention makes no such demand. Refugees have the right to claim asylum in any country they reach, including Britain. The government’s insistence on this falsehood is part of a broader strategy to undermine international law while presenting cruelty as common sense.

This hostility also obscures the human realities of displacement. **Many Iranians flee imprisonment, torture, and persecution under an authoritarian regime. Kurds, Afghans, and Syrians often escape conflict, discrimination, and political instability.** Their journeys are born of necessity, not choice. To reduce their lives to talking points in political debates is to strip them of their humanity.

Meanwhile, the asylum system itself is deliberately dysfunctional. Claimants wait months or even years for decisions, often housed in unsafe conditions, denied the right to work, and stigmatised by the press. The government describes this as a ‘broken system’ yet continues to pursue policies that prolong delays and increase suffering. It is not broken — it is designed to fail, in order to send a message that asylum seekers are not welcome.

An alternative approach is possible. The creation of safe and legal routes, the closure of detention centres, and the investment in fair, timely asylum procedures would save lives and restore compliance with international law. Community-based initiatives across the UK demonstrate that when refugees are supported, they thrive and contribute meaningfully to society. Britain’s own history, from sheltering Huguenots to resettling Ugandan Asians, proves that welcoming refugees is not a burden but a source of renewal. Ultimately, the question of asylum is not just about borders or immigration policy. It is about values.

**Does Britain uphold the principles it helped to create in 1951, or does it abandon them in pursuit of populist headlines? The Channel has become a symbol of this choice: a site where political hostility is allowed to outweigh human life.**

Every refugee who drowns at sea is a reminder that the government has chosen deterrence over compassion, cruelty over law, and division over solidarity. Britain must be held accountable — not only to international law, but to the basic moral responsibility to protect those who seek safety on its shores.

***Manuchehr***

## AUTUMN RECIPES

When the editor asked if I could contribute something along the theme of cooking as we move from a long hot summer into the season of autumn, my mind immediately went to those well-known, and rather hackneyed lines by Keats: 'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness ...' as I think that these two phrases encapsulate what makes autumn special. First the mists – a hint that the weather is getting cooler and moister as we move towards winter. And then the 'mellow fruitfulness' reminding us that autumn is the season of harvest, of preserving, and capturing the fruit and vegetable produce of the summer to enjoy on cold dark winter days. So my recipes are chosen to mirror these aspects of the season: warming food for chilly days, and puddings to make use of some of the fruit available.

First, here's a simple vegetarian bake that can be varied according to what you have available, so it's excellent for using up any ends of vegetables that are lurking in the crisper drawer of the fridge. The quantity here should serve four.

### Vegetable gratin

3 lbs mixed vegetables: eg potato, onion, parsnip, carrot, broccoli, mushroom etc.

1 pint white sauce

2 oz grated cheese, plus a little parmesan for topping

2 oz marg.

1 oz pumpkin seeds

2 oz brown breadcrumbs

2 oz rolled oats

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

Oven: fan 170°C. Peel & chop the vegetables, cook in a pan on the stove, and mix well. Tip into greased casserole dish. Make cheese sauce and pour over the vegetable mixture. Mix remaining ingredients, to give a crumble topping, and scatter this evenly over the top. Bake for 30 minutes, adding the sprinkle of parmesan for the last 10 minutes. Serve with a green vegetable.



Tomato

Photo by rezel-apacionado

**If you grow TOMATOES, this recipe works well with small ones.**

500g – 800g tomatoes (not worth it with much less)

Olive oil, salt, pepper, fresh woody herbs (thyme, oregano), or dried herbs, finely chopped onion or shallot optional), whole cloves garlic. Arrange the tomatoes in a single layer on a shallow baking tray or tin. Add other ingredients, coating everything with oil. The garlic can be squashed but left in the papery skin.

Roast for c.1hour at 150deg C, till soft and caramelised. Ease the soft garlic out of the skin and discard the skin. Cool a little then use as a salad, with some dressing, add fresh herbs, keep in the fridge with a bit more oil, make sauce, or freeze.

### **Ideas for using gluts of fruit**

Perhaps the most typical fruits of autumn are the apples that grow abundantly in the British climate, so here is a recipe for using up the glut of cooking apples that often occurs at this time of year. I inherited this one from my mother – easy to put together if you're in a rush, and versatile, as it can be served warm or cool, with custard, cream or yoghurt as you prefer.

### **Apple Torte**

4-5 cooking apples  
4 oz sugar  
4 oz plain flour  
2 teasps baking powder  
1 egg, unbeaten  
1 tablespoon melted margarine  
Cupful of raisins and chopped nuts  
1 teasp vanilla essence

Peel apples and chop into small chunks. Place in a large bowl and add all the dry ingredients, then break the egg on top and mix well together. Spoon into a large greased casserole dish, and bake in a moderate oven (180°C, gas mark 4, fan 170°). until the apples are tender and the top is browned.

## Pickled Damsons

This has an intense sweet-sour flavour that can become addictive! Will keep for years.

300ml malt or red wine vinegar

1kg dark brown sugar

1kg damsons

A small stick of cinnamon, a few cloves

A few allspice berries, a knob of ginger, bashed flat

The pared rind of ½ lemon, all tied in muslin

Dissolve the sugar in the vinegar. Add spices and boil briefly.

Add the fruit and simmer till tender.

Use a slotted spoon to put the fruit into prepared jars – about 2/3 full – boil the liquid to thicken somewhat, then fill up the jars. Cover and label. Leave a few weeks before eating.

NOTE: most recipes tell you to prick or slit the damsons – slow and tedious. A couple of days or more in the freezer works just as well.

## Damson Gin

500g damsons, previously frozen (see note to previous recipe)

125g granulated or caster sugar

1 orange, pared rind

1l. gin

Put fruit into a large sterilised jar or other glass leakproof container with the sugar and the orange rind.

Add gin or vodka and leave for **3 months** in a cool place, shaking up to dissolve the sugar in the early weeks. After the 3 months, strain into a jug and pour into small bottles



Photo Townsend-Walton-

**Enjoy!**

***Pauline Miller & Briony Tayler***



## Panentheistic contradictions



Sitting on the Bolehills,  
once again  
I have a profound sense of peace, of God in everything  
and everything in God.  
This is not some nature mysticism but it feels profoundly right —  
air breezing by,  
sun warming even in October, clouds scudding along.  
But then I think

how do I square this  
with Gaza  
with Ukraine  
with homeless people on our streets with food bank queues.

I await enlightenment,  
or more honestly I struggle on  
with contradictions,  
being aware  
of some reasons, some of the causes. So even in the peace  
there is disquiet  
in the hopefulness,  
and the shadow of intractability.  
Kyrie eleison.

***John Schofield***

## **What is happening with our partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) ?**

### ***Update and new appeal for support.***



As many of you know, a big part of my work over the last 15+ years has been engaging with coffee communities in eastern DRC. Along the shores of Lake Kivu and on the slopes of the Rwenzori mountains around Virunga National Park coffee is the main source of livelihoods for hundreds of thousands of people. Here, in addition to the usual challenges of isolation, lack of infrastructure and endemic poverty encountered by many in East Africa, armed conflict and instability make it even harder to build durable community development. This instability is driven primarily by fighting over control of the region's huge mineral deposits, which if properly managed should actually be a source of

wealth.

In January of this year, two months after my latest visit, there was a major rebel incursion through the coffee growing regions bordering Rwanda. This resulted in hundreds of thousands of people fleeing their homes, in addition to the millions who were already displaced by previous fighting. Despite ongoing peace talks, the situation remains unresolved.

The St Mark's church community have engaged with the communities in eastern DRC in two ways. The first is supported through the International Development Committee. This is an inspiring 'eco-champion' initiative with young people, which is run by one of my coffee partners CongoAgri Platform. I will be presenting a short report on this in the next edition of the Messenger.

The second is an emergency response to the impact of the latest fighting in and around the city of Goma. Here hundreds of children have been left

orphaned and homeless. We have chosen to focus our support on destitute orphans from the Batwa pygmy communities who also face issues of marginalisation and discrimination. Through an appeal to individuals in the congregation in April we were able to send over \$2,000 to grassroots Batwa organisation Adelipo, enabling them to place 100 orphans with host families. Through some additional support from other sources this arrangement has been sustained. Now in September the new school year is starting. Places in schools are available, but children need shoes, uniforms and satchels, as well as notebooks and pens. If they are not equipped and dressed appropriately, they will either be excluded from school or will suffer discrimination.

In response, we are now making a further appeal for support. If you are able and would like to contribute, here is a list of what is needed for each child:

<b>Primary school children</b>	<b>Per child</b>
Notebooks and pens	£15
Uniforms	£15
Shoes	£7
Satchel	£7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£44</b>
<b>Secondary school children</b>	<b>Per child</b>
Notebooks and pens, pencil case, calculator	£35
Uniforms	£25
Shoes	£14
Satchel	£12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£86</b>

Adelipo provide me with receipts for all the support that they provide for each child.

***Richard Hide***

*Que será, será*  
*Whatever will be, will be*  
*The future's not ours to see ...*

One of the things that as a town planner I was deeply concerned with was the management of change in the way in which land was used and developed. Indeed, change was at the root of so much of what I did. In preparing land-use plans, the question was always how we could best predict future demands and what change would be necessary to accommodate them. At the same time, we would be faced by proposals from developers (a term that covers everything from individual householders to multi-national corporations) which always involved change of some sort.

And there's the rub. As Doris Day so memorably sang, the future is inherently unknowable and actually working out what change might occur as result of whatever decisions I (and others, of course) took is as much an art as a science.

The only certainty is that change there would be. The work of the town planner was to make intelligent guesses about future impacts and to try to work out on the basis of experience what might happen in the future. But in any case, the questions that follow are always whether change is desirable, whether desirable change can be willed into existence, or whether change is to be resisted as in some way harmful to the public good. And again, what I might consider to be a positive change as a result of decisions taken, may well be viewed as wholly undesirable by those who feel they would be affected by them.

For some, change to the environment in which they live is often perceived as destabilising, something to be resisted at all costs. Much scorn has been poured on 'nimby' ('not in my backyard') opposition, particularly to new housing in undeveloped countryside. Many people do not want a cherished – or at least a habitual – view to be 'desecrated' and feel that proposals to develop diminish the rightful enjoyment of what has been theirs, by custom if not by law. But how is that to be balanced against the welcome change of environment that new housing may represent for those who benefit from it?



The art of town planning is thus knowing how to balance these conflicting interests, to enable the public at large to accommodate the need for change, and to ensure that those who carry out development on whatever scale understand the impact of change on those affected by it. Put like that, it would seem that town planners exercise the judgment of Solomon and have, somehow, superior wisdom in making decisions. They don't. What they do is to weigh up probabilities and come forward with appropriate solutions to the problems of desirable and undesirable change. Even that is not the end, however. Planners like any others involved in managing change bring values to bear on their decision -making that are not always explicit. How you view competing interests and what value you place on change is inherent to the process.

Change is often seen as unwelcome or even threatening and may result in a retreat from the realities of an endlessly changing world. In the end, we have to accept that change there will be and understand that our attitude to it is informed by our core values. And in the end, *que será, será* and we need to embrace, rather than resist change.

**Philip Booth**



Photo Pictorial Meadows

## BOOK REVIEW:

### ***CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF 'FAITH IN THE CITY'***

by Terry Drummond and Joseph Forde. Sacristy Press.



This important book was co-edited by our own Joe Forde. It is a series of essays by a well chosen team of writers, recalling the 'Faith in the City' (FITC) Report of 1985, discussing its follow up and considering how these urban issues look today. On 10 August, the book was discussed at St Mark's in our Thinking Faith series.

The FITC Report was the Church of England's most powerful intervention in national affairs since the war. It argued that deindustrialisation was hugely damaging the lives of many people in industrial towns; it called for major remedial action by Mrs Thatcher's Government and the churches. The Thatcher Government rejected the Report as inconsistent with its neo-liberal agenda, but some Ministers, notably Michael Heseltine and Peter Walker, took the Report seriously.

The FITC Report had a much bigger influence on the Church. It led some clergy to follow a vocation in depressed urban estates. The Church Urban Fund (CUF) was created to fund local projects. In Sheffield Diocese, Stephen Lowe, Archdeacon of Sheffield from 1988-99 (later Bishop for Urban Life and Faith), led a big programme of projects, many funded by CUF. At St Mark's, in 1989 our new Vicar, Adrian Alker, asked me to chair a group which raised £20,000 from our congregation and £20,000 from church reserves for the rebuilding of St Bartholomew's, Netherthorpe. This group then became the Faith in the City

Task Force, which was active at St Mark's under a variety of names until a few years ago. It needs reviving.

As Joe and his co-editor point out, the Report was very influential for twenty years after its publication, but:

‘in the period since... there has been a change of emphasis, with more money being invested in what are perceived to be new and innovative forms of outreach and evangelism as a response to the steady decline in affiliation and observance...since the 1960s.’

This is the case in Sheffield Diocese. Around 2010, the Diocesan posts concerned with urban regeneration and social responsibility were replaced by posts concerned with ‘parish support’ and evangelism. Our Diocese had been a leader in urban regeneration, but I suspect that our Diocese now does less than, for example, Liverpool Diocese (see Chapter 5 of the book).

The book includes fascinating essays by Alan Billings on his involvement in the original Commission and by Ian Duffield and David Walker, Bishop of Manchester, and others on their experiences in following up the Report.

What we should be doing now? Ian Duffield calls for a continued emphasis on the urban poor and powerless, but warns against ‘utopian’ thinking. He argues that ‘however poor people are today, it is of a different order from previous times’. This is complicated. It is certainly true if the comparison is with Victorian times. But is poverty now less than in 1985? Niall Cooper, who recently retired as CEO of Church Action on Poverty, believes that poverty is now worse than in 1985. Unemployment is lower, but child poverty has increased. ‘Austerity’ has cut social security and damaged local authority provision. In 1985 people survived without food banks. Perhaps they relied on friends and neighbours — on social networks that have now disappeared. People today are probably more isolated and lonely. Certainly, inequality has increased and we now have a better appreciation of the damage that inequality does in eroding trust, increasing anxiety and worsening health<sup>1</sup>.

In the book, Susan Lucas, Archdeacon of Southend, points out that the FITC Report was written just when neo-liberalism was beginning to take over the western world. She wants the church to advocate a credible alternative to neo-liberalism in line with the Fourth Mark of Mission — ‘to transform unjust structures of society.’ Similarly, Jenny Sinclair (Catholic convert daughter of David Shephard, former Bishop of Liverpool) believes that our society suffers from a ‘malign culture’. She draws attention to the value of Catholic Social Thought and urges us spend more time with our neighbours, listening to them.

There is much to challenge today's Christians in this book.

**David Price**



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