

# HEALING WAYS

WINTER EDITION 2021

**Blessings to you**



The Church Tomorrow - Fresh Opportunities

The International Order of St Luke the Physician (UK)

## **EDITORIAL:** The Revd Chris Low

Welcome to the winter edition of 'Healing Ways' which has as its focus 'The Church Tomorrow (fresh opportunities).' As our national director makes clear in article, 'The Church Tomorrow', understanding the past and the present is essential if we are to examine how the church might look in the future.

He suggests that we are returning the earliest traditions of the church and alongside that recognises the benefits of modern technology, particularly in the form of 'zoom' and other internet systems which the church has been forced to embrace in its services as a result of the pandemic.

His second article examines some of our traditional Christmas tide readings such as, Isaiah's message (52: 7-10) and the opening to the first Chapter of St. John (1:1-14), reflecting on the fact that these point to the importance of the circumstances of Christ's birth as a reflection of his life, teachings and miracles. He adds a timely reminder that this should be our focus at Christmas.

Dr Olu Olojugbe focuses on the necessity for the church to be relevant to its time, what was effective fifty years ago no longer serves the purpose and needs of the present and will fail to do so in the future. She suggests that we need to respond to issues of equity and become more all-encompassing.



his

to

This resonates with my piece, 'Fresh Opportunities', which looks at how we have responded to 'Covid' and its effects and the desperate need to heal our environment. I pose the question, 'How can we as a healing Order' play our part in this?'

Bishop Steve discusses the importance of understanding our righteousness as a gift from God, ours by faith through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus. He explains that a favourite occupation of the devil is to highlight our failings and sinfulness in an attempt to cause us to live in a perpetual cycle of guilt and defeat. In order to combat this, we need to encourage all who love the Lord to accept that we cannot be justified through our own efforts but through God's grace alone, so there is hope for all.

I am grateful for other articles, including a poem, words of encouragement and two book reviews. Please do keep these coming. I do encourage you, our readers to submit poetry, letter, testimonies and book reviews as well as longer articles.

As Christmas fast approaches, we turn our thoughts to those for whom this will be anything but a time of celebration and joy. We have among us the bereaved; the lonely; those suffering illness; the homeless and displaced; the poor; the fearful and many who have lost all hope. We cannot meet the needs of all but we can try to make a difference in the lives of at least one or two, through small acts of kindness; giving a little of our time or resources and prayer for change within our society and our world.

I am especially delighted to see so many people choosing to give one another gifts that will help others, our family and friends are used to receiving such gifts. This year, John and I have already received part of a well and some chickens, which will bless those in far off countries. May God Bless you all with the joy, hope and peace of a Christmas that celebrates our Saviour's birth. *Chris*

## **The Church Tomorrow: Dr Olu Olojugbe**

Throughout the generations, the Church has changed to meet the needs and processes by which God is worshipped, and by which He is professed. The Church is of course not a building or buildings, but rather the body of people who believe in God through His Son Jesus Christ; Jesus' teachings and the Trinity. Christian belief is summarised in the Nicene Creed. This poster (see below) which I received as a comic, and later in its original French language version (which I was made to understand is more humorous) shows that the issue of technology has been creeping gradually into church contexts.



**“When you enter this church, it may be possible that you hear  
“the call of God”.**

**However, it is unlikely that he will call you on your mobile.  
Thank you for turning off your phones.**

**If you want to talk to God, enter, choose a quiet place, and talk to  
him.**

**If you want to see Him, send him a text while driving.”**

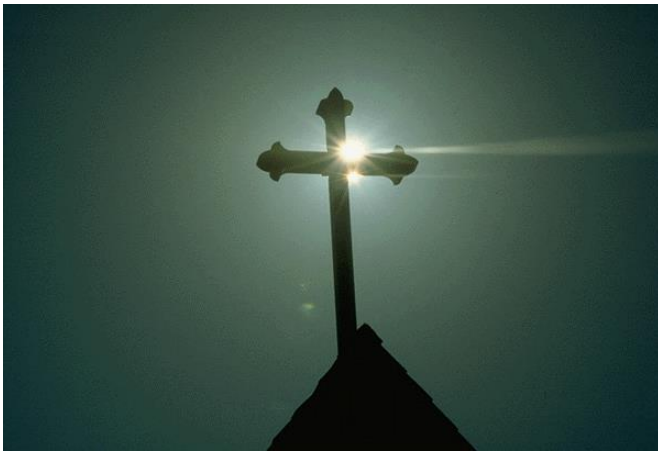
More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lock downs have enforced a rethink about what Church can be in terms of both worship, and connections with the community; not forgetting its relationship with Politics. Technology has provided us with a variety of ways by which to communicate. My own experience has been mainly via Zoom, YouTube and WhatsApp, but there are others. The telephone has not lost its importance either and in fact has become more relevant by becoming mobile too.

Renewal, of course, must always be made in view of the needs of our time, for it is for our times that the Church must work, and it is to the people of our times that we must present the Gospel. The re-evaluation of Church should therefore have a Pastoral direction and increase the participation of the laity in worship in view of the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic lock down. These issues have been discussed many years ago before the pandemic by the Council of Churches and seem to be even more appropriate now.

We must remember that the Church is missionary, it is meant to bring people to Christ Jesus. In Matthew 28 vs 19, Jesus says “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit “That is the Great Commission made to us as a Church. We live in a new world which is now able to come together as a Church through technical means as well as in the physical. This has opened new avenues to “make disciples of all nations” allowing people to worship together including people who would not have been able to attend church services ordinarily. It has also provided a means of keeping in touch without home visits.

Having said that, we need to consider the pros and cons of where the Church is heading in terms of its future and its use of technology. The Pros. During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, morning and evening church services were available via live streaming and attracted many people not only ordinary church members, but many from the local community; some from the wider UK community and even some from across the world. Prayer meetings and Bible studies have also been put on via Zoom. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is therefore made to reach a wider Community than was previously the case. Some churches have nurtured their Online Community and walked alongside as pilgrims.

Hopefully the future Church will continue as online, offline, church in person with all having equal status because church online is really



church too. There are Cons, however; we should not forget those who have no access to technology and who may be struggling with their faith and life conditions. Personal contact will have to continue for them, hence the better use of

laity. Meeting at the Table for the Lord's Supper is another issue to consider for the online Community.

Another issue for the Church as a body of Christians is also around issues concerning the equity and equality of all peoples irrespective of gender, colour, race, language, sexuality, education, riches. A course called 'Living in Love and Faith' (LLF) has been organised by the Church for us to deliberate upon. The Course aims to help us as Christians to think about what it means to be human without being partial, concentrating especially on identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. The conclusion of this consultation or debate will surely also affect the face of the church tomorrow.

Studies in the 21st century suggest that, in terms of percentage and worldwide spread, Islam is the fastest growing major religion in the world. The forecast for 2050 by the Pew Research Centre concludes that the global Muslim population is expected to grow at a faster rate than the Christian population. This presumably will be due to the young age and high fertility rate of Muslims. The growth of a religion can also be affected by factors such as persecution and politics.

In terms of absolute numbers, irreligion appears to be increasing along with secularisation generally. Despite all these factors, the Pew

Research Centre survey found that by 2050, Christians will remain the world's largest religion reaching 2.9 billion or 31.4%. Roman Catholicism is growing by 1.3% annually, Protestantism is growing by 3.3% annually and Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism by 7% annually. Europe was the home for the world's largest Christian population for the past 1000 years but now, data from the Gordon Theological Seminary shows that greater numbers of Christians live in Africa than on any other single continent.

The Church Tomorrow seems to be moving towards being all encompassing, less rigid and drawing nearer to when *the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.* (Habakkuk 2:14)

### ‘No room at the inn’



If we, as Christ's body here on earth, are to be relevant in the society of the future then we must remember that Christ chose to be born as the child of humble parents and came for the last, the lost and the least.



## **WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT: Provided by Dr Olu Olojugbe**

I came across this on facebook, where it has been widely shared; it is by Christine Makeyeva.

**You may think that you are completely  
insignificant in this world.  
But someone drinks coffee from the  
favorite cup that you gave them.  
Someone heard a song on the radio  
that reminded them of you.  
Someone read the book that you recommended,  
and plunged headfirst into it.  
Someone smiled after a hard day of work,  
because they remembered the joke that you told  
them today.  
Someone loves themselves little bit more,  
because you gave them a compliment.  
Never think that you have  
no influence whatsoever.  
Your touch, word and good deed which you leave  
behind cannot be erased.**

These are beautiful words of encouragement for all who feel that they have little to contribute.

Our theme this quarter explores fresh opportunities for the church as we look to the future, and I am conscious that many of our members have served long and well in the past and feel that nowadays age and infirmity have robbed them of the ability to effectively take advantage of fresh opportunities.

If this is you, think again. 😊 *Editor*



## Director's Corner



The request for thoughts from the Order's members resulted in several responses. The question asked was what form should the AGM/Conference take next year? Should we Zoom it, do it in person

or try to do both? Some thought that zoom only was quite sufficient, some argued for an in-person meeting and some said we should do both Zoom and in-person. I spoke to Rev. David Walton, at whose church we will hold our Conference and he tells me that it is quite possible to do both Zoom and in person, but the meeting has to be held in one room,. It looks like this will satisfy all thoughts.

The AGM is for the members. It is the one time in the year that the members can hold the Council to account, to make sure that the Order is progressing in the right manner. It is also an opportunity to offer yourself as a member of the council.

The Conference is for members and for people who are curious about the Order and want to find out a little more. We hope to be able to slant the conference to attract non-members so it will be an interesting event for all.

Your Council met on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> November and we discussed the [AGM and Conference](#). We settled on the date of [21<sup>st</sup> May 2022](#) as being the best choice. We discussed how we wanted to hold it and decided to hold it both '[in person](#)' and '[on Zoom](#)'. We want to focus

on potential new members, The opening service will be conducted by Rev. Jim Birch, Associate Director of Scotland. The Leader/speaker will be the [Rev Anne Hibbert of The Well Christian Healing Centre](#) and it would be located at [Sutton Coldfield United Reformed Church](#). More details will be found in the Spring edition of 'Healing Ways' but you can book your place for the in-person meeting by emailing me.

Jackie Shaw was inducted into the Order on 17<sup>th</sup> October, at Warrington. We welcome her and look forward to sharing the ministry of the Order with her.

The Council and I wish every member of the Order a happy and family packed Christmas, hoping that the days leading up to Christmas lead you to better and fuller journey on the way to Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit.



Love in action at Christmas.

A selection of the Christmas hampers provided by Church members for families using our foodbank. *Editor*

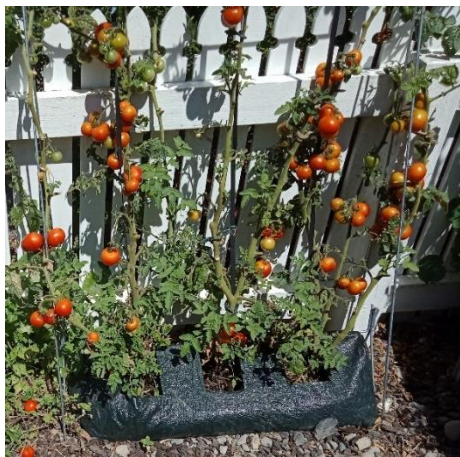
## FRESH OPPORTUNITIES: Revd Chris Low

Fresh opportunities? For what or for whom? Here's a clue, our theme for this issue of 'Healing Ways' is: 'The Church Tomorrow, (fresh opportunities)'. However, if we fail to focus on the present and how we as Church can impact society and share the Gospel of Hope, there won't be a future church. There are many initiatives in place and progress is being made but we cannot be complacent. Moreover, we are called to share the Good News of our Saviour Jesus Christ here and now, whenever and wherever we can.

Throughout time, the church has been presented with fresh opportunities and often these have been grasped and utilised to good effect. So what opportunities present themselves today that will impact on the church tomorrow?

One major initiative has been the move towards taking greater responsibility for being 'greener'. As more people recognise and reflect on the issues around global warming, pollution and sustainability, the Christian community has become more actively involved in finding solutions and taking action.

A big step forward has been the interdenominational initiative known as ECO Church. In their statement, we read,



*“Our vision is for churches of all denominations to care for creation as an integral part of loving their neighbours and following God faithfully”*

Churches are encouraged to sign up to this initiative and look at ways of becoming more eco-friendly.

### *‘Growing our own’ in small spaces*

Awareness of the need for action and accepting responsibility for the care of our planet is nothing new, however; indeed it is an integral

part of what is known as ‘The five marks of mission’. These came into being back in 1984 and were developed by the Anglican Consultative Council. Since then, they have been widely adopted as an understanding of what contemporary mission is about. The marks were adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England in 1996 and many dioceses and other denominations used them as the basis of action plans and creative mission ideas.

Some churches abbreviate the five marks to five words: TELL – TEACH – TEND – TRANSFORM – TREASURE. In 2012, the ACC added wording to the fourth mark, to include the need for Christians to challenge violence and work for peace. The fifth mark focuses specifically on the environment.

The five marks are as follows:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind
- To pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

[www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm)

Here in the Diocese of Sheffield the response to the fifth mark of mission is as follows:

*We share a passion for the environment with people of all faiths and none. The Earth is our common home. But we have a special reason – “the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Psalm 24.1)*

I found the following statement particularly compelling:

*Our concern follows from the commandment to love God and neighbour. If we love God with everything about us, we’ll love God’s creation. And if we love our neighbour as ourselves, we’ll put ourselves out for justice for our neighbours around the world who*

*are already at the sharp end of the environmental crises. The Bible says that Christ is the firstborn of creation and that all things hold together in him. So our attitudes to the created world and how we live within it are part of our relationship with Christ.*

This ties in with the Diocesan Vision to receive, walk in and reflect the light of Christ which states: *Our relationship with God's created world touches on all three aspects of our Diocesan vision .*

Members of the diocese are invited to sign up to 'Lights for Christ' and there are a number of resources available to help individuals and their churches to live as 'lights for Christ'. (For more about Lights for Christ, see [www.lightsforchrist.uk](http://www.lightsforchrist.uk).)

*For those who commit to being Lights for Christ it's also about our Personal Rule of Life. In the context of our care for God's creation and as his followers: Receiving Christ's light includes being aware of the created world, learning from it and seeing God in it. Walking in Christ's light includes living in gratitude, wonder and awe at creation and holding lightly to money and possessions. We are content with enough. Reflecting Christ's light happens when we're seen living in harmony with the natural world and responding to injustice.*

In their leaflet for church members in the diocese of Sheffield, 'Lights for Christ' offers the following:

*Awareness should lead to action. We're suggesting eight areas of everyday life, from which you could choose one or more responses.*

**Food** – eat less meat, especially red meat – you could start with a meat-free day each week.

**Clothing and other things we buy** – think before you buy – do I need it or do I just want it? Ethical buying and banking – look out for the Fair Trade logo if buying tea, coffee, sugar, chocolate, bananas, flowers or wine.

**Packaging** – reduce plastic in your shopping (e.g. keep a reusable bag with you and buy fruit and veg loose or in paper bags).



**Recycling** – make full use of recycling bins for kerbside collections.

**Energy and water** – turn the heating down – you could reduce it by 1 degree and, instead, put a jumper on if you need it.

**Travel** – walk, cycle or use public transport where possible (you could start with a car-free day) and reduce any flying.

**Land and gardens:**– use window boxes, containers and gardens to grow insect-friendly plants (e.g. lavender, geraniums, catmint) or let part of your garden go wild.

*(Opposite are cranesbill geraniums, easy to grow and propagate and much loved by bees and other insects.)*



As part of the diocese's action we are registered as an A Rocha Eco Diocese and our local churches are all encouraged to become Eco Churches. (A Rocha (Portuguese for 'The Rock') is a Christian organisation engaging communities in nature conservation. responding to the global crisis of biodiversity loss by carrying out community-based conservation projects using residential field study centres, site-based projects and wider advocacy.)

As members of a Christian Healing Order, I would suggest that playing our part in healing our environment is as important as ministering healing to individuals. To this end, I therefore encourage all members to actively involve themselves in whatever measures and initiatives are being put in place by their own churches and their governing bodies.

The worldwide impact of Covid 19 has been vast and there is a deep need for healing at personal, local, national and international levels. We will all know individuals who have suffered illness;



bereavement; loss of income and security; hardship; loneliness or mental health issues as a direct result of the pandemic.

Many of our members have responded by praying with and for individuals as well as interceding for global issues around Covid 19. But could we be doing more? We are living in unusual times which have created an even greater need for the Church's healing ministry in its broadest sense. So what can we do, as a small Order with the majority of our members being over 65?

Well, as I have said before, age and infirmity are no barrier to prayer and so we can all pledge to set aside time each day to pray for the guidance of God's Holy Spirit to lead us forward in meeting these needs both as individuals and collectively as an Order.

We are constrained by the safety protocols so necessary around the pandemic which limit some of our options such as offering 'Prayer Cloths' and services of laying on of hands. However, since we are able to meet for public worship, we can still offer healing services. Jesus often healed without using touch so we too can minister in other ways. Gathering to offer corporate prayer for healing and reconciliation using times of silence and reflection is very powerful and can be done while following the necessary protocols.

I have been impressed by the response of 'Healing Rooms' who have set up monthly zoom sessions for those seeking healing ministry. Operating in teams, usually of three members, each team assigned to their own room, ministry is offered to individuals who are 'sent' to a 'room' by the host, just as is the case when visiting a physical Healing Room. It takes a considerable amount of technological knowhow and time to set it up but it works extremely well.

I wonder though, if we are able to host our national conference on-line would it be possible to set up something similar, offering healing ministry to those in need? It's worth praying and thinking about, isn't it? Let me or other council members know what you think.

# **A Prayer inspired by a retreat on St Brigid.**

**led by Donna Worthington**

Oh beloved,

Let me take refuge in your sacred heart

Let me rest, surrendering into your loving embrace

taking sanctuary in the silence

where there is only peace

Let the light that resides there replenish me

so that I may step forward with strength

to live and love another day

Help me throw a cloak around the world

to provide shelter and sustenance to all in need

I pray that a spark from your divine fire

that resides in my  
heart ignites a fire in  
the hearts of

those that I meet

and that we can keep  
your loving fire  
burning for eternity.



**Annette Clarke-Coyne.**

It is difficult to look at the church tomorrow without looking at the church today and in the past.

After Jesus was crucified, the Apostles formed the church around Jesus' teaching. This church is ably portrayed to us in The Acts of the Apostles. The layout and the structure of the church was as close to Jesus' teaching as the Apostles could make it. This church broke away from Judaism quite soon after it was formed. To be exact, the young church did not break away from its roots, rather the Jewish authorities severed the young church from it.

Despite dreadful persecution under first Nero and then Domitian, which is condemned in the Revelation of St. John, the church prospered and expanded. It converted so many people that when it came to the emperor Constantine in 306 AD he embraced it as the Church of Rome. He convoked the First Council of Nicaea in 325, which produced the statement of Christian belief known as the Nicene Creed. His prime purpose was to ensure peace in the Roman Empire and the church was embraced into the establishment; for instance, members of the civil service were appointed Bishops to ensure that the Church remained loyal to the Emperor.

There were a number of alterations made to the early church to merge it into a part of Roman government so that, very gradually, it moved away from the Apostles' structure and made it much more political and, with this move, more secular. It became the Roman Catholic church in the west and the arbiter of who would 'go to heaven and who would not', sharing power with the civil establishment.

The structure remained in place and the church exercised its power as a separate structure of government. The pope declared crusades not just against the Muslims in the Levant (with particular focus on Jerusalem), but crusades in the Baltic region against pagans and in Spain against Muslims. Yet in the heart of Europe a more serious threat faced Christendom: heresy, which was viewed in the medieval world not as benign religious diversity but rather as a cancerous threat to the

salvation of souls. It was held to be even more dangerous than the faraway Muslims because it harmed the body of Christ from within. The most vibrant heresy in Europe was Catharism. Cathars identified two twin, opposing deities: the first was a good God, portrayed in the New Testament and creator of the spirit, while the second was an evil God. Shortly after his excommunication for abetting heretics, Raymond VI of Toulouse, a baron, was implicated in the murder of a papal legate. For Innocent III that was the final straw. In March 1208 he called for a Crusade against Raymond and the heretics of Languedoc, which began the following year and wiped out all those implicated in Catharism.

It was not until the protestant revolts (Lutheran, Anglican, Calvinism, etc.) that a series of substantial organised bodies started to oppose the Roman Catholic church. The structure of these protestant churches continued to rely on Roman bureaucracy; it was the theology which changed. The Protestant Reformers championed the Bible's literal interpretation. An influential philosopher of the Enlightenment was David Hume, who declared that miracles in the life of Jesus never happened. A combination of Calvin's Cessationalism, Scottish realism and demythologizing Scripture took a heavy toll on the practice of praying for the sick.

Christianity is finally returning to its earliest traditions – the tradition of the first 300 years. So where will the church of tomorrow be? If we look at the track through the history of the church and project it forward, we see that the Roman Catholic churches, the Orthodox Churches and all the different denominations of the Protestant churches seem to be, in general, slowly fading (apart from the evangelical parts of these denomination). In slightly over 100 years the Pentecostal church has grown from one church on Azusa Street, Los Angeles to be second only to the Roman Catholic Church and will soon overtake it in size.

However, according to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre, there were only an estimated 600 million Christians worldwide in 1910 and this has increased enormously to an estimated 2.2 billion Christian followers recorded in 2010.

The research centre has predicted that if these trends continue, Christianity will remain the world's largest religion for the next four decades with a projected 2.9 billion people practicing Christianity worldwide by 2050 and exceeding 3 billion thereafter.

Christianity is expected to remain the largest religious group throughout North America, Europe, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa, with more than 50% of each respective population practicing Christianity.

The marked spread of Christianity across non-Western countries has significantly altered the distribution of Christians throughout the planet. During the 1900s, the Christian faith was most prevalent throughout Europe and the Americas, being around 93% of the entire global Christian population. In 2010, however, only 26% of the global Christian population was located in Europe, with 24.4% in Latin America and the Caribbean and 12.3% in North America – a combined total of 62.7%. With the increase in the number of followers of Christianity in the past century has come a significant shift in their geographic distribution.

Christianity certainly isn't the only prevalent religion in the world, but it might come as a shock to learn that, amidst Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and all other major religious schools, Christianity is by far the most popular.

Global assessments conducted in 2012 revealed that the precise figures pertaining to the most-followed world religions were:

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Followers</b>	<b>% of Global Population</b>
Christianity	2.4 billion	33%
Islam	1.8 billion	24.1%
Secular/atheist/non-religious	1.2 billion	16%
Hinduism	1.15 billion	15%
Buddhism	521 million	7%

Protestantism, in particular, has spread swiftly throughout the continents of Africa, Asia, and Oceania since the early 1900s. A lot of this growth occurred after World War II, during which Africa was decolonized and the strong restrictions against the practicing of Protestantism worldwide were abolished. Modern-day Christians are spread more thinly across a number of different countries, whereas previously they were concentrated into smaller areas.

When we consider these figures and the modern tendency for communicating and interacting on-line, perhaps the rise in ‘Zoom’ and its wide use by our churches, will prove to be one of the few blessings of the pandemic. Church leaders have come to recognise that zoom provides them with an excellent tool for evangelism, enabling them to reach many more with the Gospel message than is possible through the usual face to face services.

The question for us as a healing Order is how should we respond to this trend; what opportunities can we see in it and what should be our strategy in preparation for the church of tomorrow.





# **I am the Righteousness of God:**

Bishop Steven Lyn Evans



Understanding our righteousness can be a vital component towards receiving healing. It takes away the power of the enemy, the guilt and shame are defeated by the love and forgiveness of Christ.

If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, then every day the enemy will seek to condemn you. He will use your mistakes and lies in an attempt to bring believers down, to cause you to be discouraged and depressed. He wants to rob

you of the truth of who you now are in Christ, the truth of your potential in Christ. He's known as the accuser of the saints (Revelation 12:10) and the father of all lies (John 8:44). Many believers live in a perpetual cycle of guilt and defeat. This is because they try to justify themselves through their behaviour, their own works. However, the believer's justification comes from God not our works: *Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous* (Romans 5:18,19).

How then do we take up the free gift? How are we made righteous? The answer is by faith: *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ* (Romans 5:1). From this moment on you could make a daily confession of your righteous position in Christ. Every morning in answer to the accuser's lies and negative feelings, those arrows of the enemy, use your shield of faith and employ faith. Tell yourself, *'I am the*

*righteousness of God in Christ!*' (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Don't accept anything less, Jesus paid a high price for your position, allow that truth to dwell in you. The question is are you confessing your sins more than you are you confessing your righteous position in Christ? Confessing sins has a place but often people gravitate to that in a fleshy faithless way. Confession is good but don't stay there, thank God for the truth of your righteous position in Christ, focus on Him and then move on! The truth is that Jesus has obtained '*eternal redemption*' for us (Hebrews 9:12). Someone says, "I have just sinned, how can I still be righteous?" It is not what you do that makes you righteous. It is what Christ has done at Calvary. Romans 5:19 says, *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

It is the obedience of one Man, Christ and not your obedience, that has made you righteous! God wants to establish the church in what Christ has done. He wants believers conscious and confident of their everlasting righteousness in Christ. How do we do that? We can study the Word, listen to Godly messages that remind us of our righteousness in Christ. And don't just know it in your head, speak it out, every morning, tell yourself, *I am the righteousness of God in Christ!* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

You don't need a revelation of how sinful you are. You know it when you sin. The devil reminds you of your sins. Even your friends and loved ones sometimes point out your sins. What you need, instead, is a revelation of how forever righteous you are in God's eyes, especially when you sin. And when you are conscious of this *gift of righteousness* that is everlasting, you will reign in life! (Romans 5:17).

Hello, I'd like to invite you to have a listen to our Christmas single available for purchase on iTunes and other outlets now. It's my version of God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen! Out soon, our Christmas single! Hope you enjoy it, it's sent with love! Steve

<https://www.facebook.com/435173159994670/posts/2073294746182495/?d=n>

## The Advent of Christmas: Alan Coode

Christmas is a few weeks away. What is the focus of the message for today. Is there any mention of Christmas trees or presents, bright ornaments or Father Christmas, stockings by the fire or reindeers? The focus has to be on the birth of Jesus. We need to look at what is and what is not included with it.

Until St. Francis of Assisi the church regarded the most important day in the Christian calendar as Easter, followed shortly after by Good Friday. St. Francis began the tradition of nativity scenes (also called crèches or manger scenes) because he wanted to help people gain a fresh sense of wonder about the miracles that the Bible records



from the first Christmas. With this change in focus, other traditions have developed (with the help of industry) so that it is now the premier event of the year.

Isaiah's message (52: 7-10) is one of good news and hope for the coming of the Messiah. **"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to**

**Zion, "Your God reigns!"**<sup>8</sup> Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes.<sup>9</sup> Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the

**earth will see the salvation of our God.”** It is one of prophetic joy and looks forward to the day that first Jesus is born and then all the nations turn to God. One can almost hear the bells ring as one reads the words.

Looking at the first few verses of Hebrew (1; 1-4) we see **“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. <sup>4</sup> So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.”** It reminds us that God spoke first through his prophets and then through Jesus, adding Jesus is more important than the angels.

Looking at the first Chapter of St. John (1:1-14): **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. <sup>6</sup> There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— <sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent,**

**nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. <sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."**

It is sometimes misunderstood. It starts with the words, **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."** 'The Word' should be left as it was in Greek, LOGOS, rather than translating it as 'The Word'. Why do I say this? I have to take a dog leg and touch on stoic philosophy. The stoics believed that they lived in this world under two constraints:

First, there was the 'internal' world (internal to themselves) which was governed by their own abilities and skills, over which they wished to control 'negative' emotions and build up and develop 'positive' ones.

Second, there was the 'external' world over which the stoic had little or no influence and had to accept what happened. The stoic believed that this external world follows a preordained path, a path of unceasing change, and that the path is set by the 'fates' or Providence. The stoic believed that he/she is driven by the active part or reason (*Logos*) which pervades all things, which was ruled by the 'fates'. To the Stoics, the cosmos is a single pantheistic god, one which is rational and creative, and which is the basis of everything which exists. The world is one and must arise from one principle.

The stoic develops the use of self-control as a means of overcoming the 'internal' influences, such as negative emotions, which they could control, and the fortitude to accept those 'external' influences which they could not control; the philosophy holds that becoming a clear and unbiased thinker allows one to understand the universal 'medium' (*Logos*), which was closely tied to the 'fates'. *Logos* is not to be confused with the same Greek translated as 'word'. *Logos* is the medium for things guided by fate within the cosmos, which would be a string of causes, an inescapable ordering and connection.

*Logos* may be compared to our concept of the Holy Spirit, or to an intermediary ‘medium’ between the Fates and humans. ‘Fates’ might be thought of as parallel to the gods. They dictate what the natural world does and is beyond the control of an individual human.

A better translation of the first words of St. John’s gospel might be **”In the beginning was the LOGOS, and the LOGOS was with God, and the LOGOS was God.”** which the stoic Greeks and Romans of John’s times would have understood. What John was doing was speaking to the stoics telling them that what they thought of as LOGOS was in fact God as described by Jesus. If we read this passage in this light, then it is less poetic, and we can see what John is saying and where he is coming from.

The reading goes on to describe John the Baptist’s role as a herald for Jesus and that the Jewish authorities did not understand who Jesus was, but the ignorant and uneducated did and they became children of God. these readings point to the importance of Jesus’ birth as a reflection of his life, teachings and miracles. We should not be distracted by all the other activities we are invited to participate in, unless it contributes to others coming to Jesus or brings new meaning to a person or it brings us closer to God.

I wish you all a Happy Christmas!





# BOOK REVIEWS

**“The Rough with the Smooth. Random Thoughts on Familiar Christian Themes”** Martin Tunncliffe. *Published by The Choir Press, 2020. ISBN 10: 1789631122*

I have had the pleasure of reading snippets of this book and I can recommend it to people who, like me, are interested in the challenging aspects of the Bible but have very little time to read books from cover to cover.

It is a collection of articles which the author had contributed to his Parish News from when he retired from active ministry in 1998... to challenge and inspire.

I met Martin through the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer. (FCP) and I have admired the way he witnesses to the Word. He has a deep understanding of theology and its application to life.

This book lends itself to easy, leisurely reading with the added humorous intellectually constructed stories. *Dr Olu Olojugbe*



**“FINDING THE MOTHER TREE: Uncovering the Wisdom and Intelligence of the Forest”** SUZANNE SIMARD: *edition: Illustrated. Pub: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. ISBN: 0525656103, 9780525656104*

Suzanne Simard tells the fascinating story of her life intertwined with her scientific contributions. She reveals how she discovered more and more about trees in the forests of British Columbia as she grew up. She started life with the background of a Quebecois family transplanted to British Columbia steeped in logging the old-fashioned way – selecting trees in the forest and harvesting them. Her family life impacts her desire to expand her understanding of the forest.

She started life in the BC Forest service and was appalled when the Government Department decided that the best way to handle trees matched those of a farmer who planted fields of the same vegetable and killed every other plant in the field with herbicide and insecticides. The B. C. government department approved the concept of ‘clear cutting’ whereby everything within a defined area on a mountain side or in a valley was cut down and sent to either the pulp and paper mill or the sawmill. New saplings, which were planted in the cleared earth, suffered significant numbers of sapling deaths. The department approved massive use of herbicide to kill off any competing plants or trees.

Her research, first with the BC Forestry Service and second as Professor of Forest Ecology at the University of British Columbia, showed that

- the tap roots of saplings were aided by fungi – aided in the sense that the fungi provided elements and water to the sapling and the sapling provided the fungi with things it needed.
- Why this should happen led her to grasp that the fungi were given material it needed by other trees, which were completely different from the coniferous saplings, so that different types of trees were assisting each other: birch were assisting coniferous saplings, for example.

- Further research showed that carpet spraying for “weeds” was not only ‘not good’ for the forest ecology but was a bad decision. The fungal interconnectedness of trees and plants was constructive for the growth of all species, especially the trees, which the timber cutting industry wanted to grow as quickly and economically as possible.
- Continued research showed that the largest trees, which Suzanne Simard called the Mother Trees, were actively engaged in nurturing their own saplings more than saplings of the same type from other trees. It is as though the ‘Mother Tree’ could tell which were its own saplings.
- Suzanne Simard last argued that the fungal network, which she compares with the neural network in our brains, lead her to believe trees communicate as effectively as humans but on a much slower scale.

No one has done more to transform our understanding of trees than Suzanne Simard. She shares the secrets of a lifetime spent uncovering startling truths about trees: their cooperation, healing capacity, memory, wisdom and sentience.

Mother Trees are the mysterious, powerful entities that nurture their kin and sustain forests. Though her ground-breaking findings were initially dismissed and even ridiculed they are now firmly supported by scientific data. As her remarkable journey shows us, science is not a realm apart from ordinary life, but deeply connected with our humanity.

In *Finding the Mother Tree* she reveals how the complex cycle of forest life, on which we rely for our existence, offers profound lessons about resilience and kinship, which must be preserved.

*Alan Coode*

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**Next issue: SPRING 2022: Focus: God's Redeeming Love. Contributions to the editor by 20/03/2022 please.**